

Editorial

Enquire, Explain, Explore

In 100 years, between 1900 and 2000, the world population increased three-fold, from 2 billion to 6 billion. This unprecedented growth was possible because agricultural innovation and conversion of forests to farmlands enabled food production to keep ahead of demand. The world population is expected to double to 12 billion between 2000 and 2100, within the lifetime of children born now. Can agriculture continue to sustain the world? The indications are that current methods and policies, if intensified to double agricultural production, will do irreparable global damage through air, land and water pollution, deforestation, elimination of biodiversity, and climate change. The challenges we face are to simultaneously improve agricultural productivity, restore forests and oceans to good health, and stabilise the climate and atmosphere. These challenges will require sensible innovations in every developmental activity, but especially in agriculture, which we broadly define to include all production activities based on biological processes, including farm, estate, horticultural, forestry, aquatic and marine production, as well as industrial activities based on agricultural products.

Innovation does not happen by chance. When Louis Pasteur, the master of scientific discovery and innovation was asked how much of his success was due to chance, he famously replied that chance favours the prepared mind. Minds prepared for discovery and innovation are minds primed to enquire, explain and explore. A rich diet of information is part of the priming process. The UTAR Agriculture Science Journal aims to provide such a diet by treating each topic as a subject for intelligent enquiry, explanation and exploration.

We recognize that the era of lay people depending on professional scientists for advice in a top-down relationship is over. Most innovations in agriculture are now made by lay people who are better educated and have better access to information than ever before. The new relationship between scientists and lay people must now be based on sharing of information and experiences between partners.

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Francis S.P. Ng