

INDIAN COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (ICAR)



**MINUTES OF THE INTERACTIVE MEET OF AS&FA, DARE/ICAR
WITH THE FINANCE HEADS OF ICAR INSTITUTES OF
WEST ZONE**

**VENUE: CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF FISHERIES EDUCATION
(CIFE), MUMBAI.**

DATE: DECEMBER 7TH, 2015.

TIME: 1000 HRS.

**INDIAN COUNCIL OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH
KRISHI BHAVAN: NEW DELHI**

F. No. 22/26/2012/CDN (A&A)

Dated the 8th December, 2015

**MINUTES OF THE INTERACTIVE MEET OF THE AS&FA, DARE/ICAR WITH
FINANCE OFFICERS OF ICAR INSTITUTES LOCATED IN WEST ZONE HELD ON
7TH DECEMBER 2015, AT CIFE, MUMBAI.**

The Interactive meeting of the Finance Heads of ICAR Institutes located in West Zone in the Chairmanship of the AS&FA, DARE/ICAR was convened on 7th December 2015, in the Committee Room of CIFE, Mumbai.

The officers who attended the Interactive meet is attached as Annexure: I of this minute.

At the outset, Dr. Gopal Krishna Saxena, Acting Director, CIFE, Mumbai, welcomed the AS&FA, DARE/ICAR to CIFE, Mumbai. The interactive meeting was preceded by a short documentary highlighting the research activities and initiatives of CIFE, Mumbai. In his remarks Director, CIFE, Mumbai, informed about the mandate and objectives of the institute and explained in brief the present research activities of the institute.

The Officers attending the Interactive meet from various ICAR Institutes from West Zone were requested to introduce themselves and to also state briefly the mandate of the institute they represented. After the introduction, the listed agendas were discussed as under:

1. OPENING REMARKS BY AS&FA, DARE/ICAR

AS&FA, DARE/ICAR in his opening remarks highlighted the purpose of the Interactive Meets with the Finance Officers of Institute. He informed that this was the fourth such meeting in a series of such zonal meetings already successfully convened with the finance officers of ICAR institutes located in Northern, Southern and Eastern region respectively. The primary purpose was to acquaint the Finance and Accounts Officers of their role and responsibility in a scientific organization like the ICAR. Agricultural Research in ICAR is fully funded by the Government and since this funding comes from the taxpayer's money, ICAR is accountable to the Parliament. AS&FA observed that a good institution is one which puts all information in public domain in a transparent manner. He advised the officers to refer to the "Indian Business Manual" which he said will settle many of their queries and also guide them on how to maintain transparency. It is the responsibility of the Finance & Accounts Officers to ensure that the Rules laid down by the Government are followed scrupulously and the funds are utilized in a judicious manner. But this does not entail a veto power to the Finance Officer who are required to interpret the rules and bring it to the notice of authority so that decisions are taken as per rules and the institutions does not invite any adverse comments from the Audit. The Finance Officers must understand that they interact with highly educated officers/scientists of sound knowledge and integrity in a scientific organization like ICAR. However, their role as finance officer is to ensure that transparency and

accountability is never allowed to be compromised. While expressing his satisfaction over the fact that there is no PAC paras against ICAR, the AS&FA, DARE/ICAR, nonetheless, expressed his deep concern over the fact that over 900 audit paras (925 to be precise), reported by various units of the C&AG in Inspection Reports (IR) pertaining to all the ICAR units, is pending which, he felt, calls for immediate remedial action for their settlement. He further observed that many of these paras relates to procurement matters and it is here where a proper advice from Internal Finance can help reduce observations by external auditors. While there are audit paras related to procurement, the fact that none of the units have reported a difference of opinion is indicative of the fact that the interpretation of rules by the Finance Officers on procurement matters is not adequate or there might be a possibility that decision was taken by the Director without regard to the opinion of the Internal Finance. In either case, this should have got reflected in the Half-Yearly Statement of Difference of opinion, the absence of which is quite intriguing- the AS&FA concluded.

The AS&FA, DARE/ICAR thereafter requested Director (Finance) to take up the listed agendas.

2. POSITION OF OUTSTANDING AUDIT PARAS

Director (Finance) in his address drew the attention of all participants towards the importance of such interactive meet which, he said, is a team effort to address the issues of concern. He stated that the AS&FA, DARE/ICAR, despite his heavy engagements, has taken personal interest to address these pending issues through such interactive meet in order to improve the overall financial health of ICAR as an organization. Hence it is expected of all the participants that they will put in all their efforts to ensure settlement of paras, adjustment of advances and reconciliation of pending figures in the Bank Reconciliation Statement.

The position of outstanding audit paras of the 22 ICAR Units were discussed. A total of 129 audit paras from up to year 2004-2005 and till the current financial year are outstanding as per the latest audit report received for these Units from the various office of Audit. Out of these 129 outstanding audit paras, 56 paras are of current period (i.e. two years or less) and the rest 73 audit paras are pending for over two years.

Each Finance Head of the participating Institutes present in the meeting briefed the AS&FA, DARE/ICAR about the outstanding audit paras pertaining to their institute, their content and issues involved. Finance Heads of a number of institute informed that replies in respect to outstanding audit paras have already been furnished to the office of C&AG but their response is awaited. They informed that they are pursuing the matter with the respective offices of C&AG and further progress shall be reported to the Council.

Institutes with large numbers of old outstanding audit paras were directed to make extra effort to get these settled. Director (Finance) stated that the Institutes must submit reply with all relevant documents for settlement of old paras to the auditors for settlement and in case of any difficulty in

framing proper reply, they may even approach the Inspection Unit at ICAR Headquarters for assistance.

AS&FA, DARE/ICAR, stated that the Director of Institutes may constitute a Committee of Senior Officers from Administration, Scientist and Finance and the Director himself, to monitor old audit paras and get these settled in phased manner by constant pursuance.

AF&AO, CIRCOT, Mumbai informed that one of the audit para pertain to stalled civil work which was entrusted to the CPWD during XIth Plan and which could not be carried out during the XI th Plan. He informed that as per instructions from SMD this has been proposed afresh in the XII th Plan. **AS&FA, DARE/ICAR directed that this particular issue may be taken up during discussion of Plan Budget with the concerned DDG.**

AF&AO, NIHSAD, Bhopal informed that one of the audit para relates to incomplete research project funded by an external agency. He was advised to forward the details of this old audit para pertaining to year 2008-2009 to Inspection Unit of Council Hqrs. for examination.

Sr. F&AO, CIAE, Bhopal informed that the concerned office of the C&AG has not provided them with the report pertaining to the year 2011-2012 and hence he has no information about the content of these 3 paras. He further informed that though he has taken up the matter with the concerned audit office they informed that probably these have got misplaced during shifting of their office from Kolkata to Gwalior. **AS&FA, DARE/ICAR directed that Inspection Unit of Council Hqrs. may take up the issue with the concerned office.**

F&AO, NRC Seed Spices, Ajmer informed that one of the para relates to non-conduct of foreign training to Scientist as per the T&C of procurement of a foreign equipment. He was advised to forward the detail of the case to the Inspection Unit of Council Hqrs. for examination.

F&AO, CAZRI, Jodhpur informed that all the 8 audit paras as reported has been settled since then and at present there is no audit para pending at CAZRI. Sr. F&AO, Nagpur informed that all audit paras in respect to their institute have been settled. This was appreciated by the AS&FA.

During the course of interactive discussion on pending audit paras with the Finance Officers of Institutes, it emerged that a few audit paras in a number of institutes were common in nature. One such issue relates to "Non-conduct of physical verification of Books and Journals and that related to missing/un-received books/journals". Deputy Director (Finance-I) in charge of Inspection Unit informed that all the ICAR units submit the "Physical Verification Report" annually which also include physical verification of Books & Journals. **AS&FA, DARE/ICAR desired to know whether ICAR has a complete data base of all the Books & Journals held by all its constituent units including those which have archival importance. He desired that a meeting with the Chief Librarian of ICAR Headquarters be convened to discuss the matter.**

Another issue that emerged as common point of reference was audit para on account of travel by private airlines and/or where air-tickets were purchased from private agency. AF&AO, NRC (Grapes), Pune informed that one of its Scientists had travelled by private airlines on official duty for which recovery is being done for settlement of audit para. He was advised that in such cases effort may be made to get the approval of MoCA giving suitable justification of the tour.

F&AO, IISS, Bhopal informed that similar para related to travel by private airlines and/or booking of air tickets from private agents, while availing LTC, has been reported by the external auditors in their audit report. Due to non-settlement of LTC claims as per MoF instructions which has also been clarified by the SMD as well by the Finance Division at Council, the related LTC advances also couldn't be settled. F&AO, DSR, Indore informed that certain cases were reported where air tickets purchased from private agents have been got printed over Air India logo and this has been reported by external auditor in its IR. AS&FA, DARE/ICAR was surprised at such revelation. He expressed his serious concern if such an activity has indeed been reported upon by external auditors in their Inspection Report. He directed that in all such cases where the instructions of MoF have been violated immediate recovery be made along with penal interest to get the audit para settled and matter be reported to the Council of the corrective measure taken, by the Director of the institute, immediately.

Concluding the discussion on Audit Paras, the AS&FA, DARE/ICAR expressed his concern over the adequacy of internal audit mechanism. He observed that pendency of over 900 audit paras (925 to be precise) as reported by the external auditors, despite internal audit being conducted regularly by the empanelled CA firms, are indicative of the need to strengthen the internal audit mechanism. He also desired that the expenses on CA firms vis-à-vis those on C&AG needs to be examined to arrive at a decision.

3. POSITION OF OUTSTANDING ADVANCES AND ISSUES IN THEIR SETTLEMENT

The position of outstanding advances for the quarter ending 30th September 2015 received from each participating units was discussed.

AS&FA, DARE/ICAR expressed his displeasure at old advances remaining unadjusted at DoGR, Junagarh and desired that this may be conveyed to the concerned Director by a D.O. letter.

AS&FA, DARE/ICAR also desired to have a review all cases of Letter of Credit (L/C) which has not been realized and adjusted for a considerably long period. He directed that a D.O. letter seeking information on pending L/C and reasons thereof may be sought from all ICAR units, since many of the ICAR units continue to reflect these as Advances in the statement being forwarded by them to the Inspection Unit.

AS&FA, DARE/ICAR also directed that a D.O. letter may be sent to D.G., CPWD drawing his attention towards tardy progress of civil works entrusted to it and as a result huge advances lying unadjusted against CPWD in absence of Statement of Expenditure for years together as reported by various units of ICAR.

AS&FA, DARE/ICAR stressed upon the need for expeditious settlement of outstanding advances including advances to CPWD especially where the work has already been completed and the building have been put to use. He stressed upon the need for prompt settlement of outstanding advances in favour of Departmental officers on account of Contingent Advance, T/A, TTA, LTC and Medical which are lying unadjusted for years together which he said must be recovered forthwith along with penal interest. Accordingly, he directed that the Finance Heads must monitor and recommend for stern measures for settlement of advances lying pending with Departmental officers.

4. BANK RECONCILIATION RELATED ISSUES

The position of Bank Reconciliation Statement for the month ending September/October 2015 was reviewed in respect to each institute.

Deputy Director (Finance) informed that the C&AG in its Separate Audit Report for ICAR for 2014-2015 has reported pending items as on 31st March 2015 in the Bank Reconciliation Statement of 11 institutes in West Zone which include CICR Nagpur, DoGR Junagarh, NRC-Grapes Pune, CAZRI Jodhpur, CCARI Goa, NBSSL&UP Nagpur, NIASM Baramati, CIAE Bhopal, CIRCOT Mumbai, NIHSAD Bhopal, CIFE Mumbai. Personal intervention of the Finance Officer of the concerned institutes was requested to get these reconciled.

Sr. F&AO, CICR, Nagpur informed that often credits are made by bank for which the Bank does not provide any detail. These credits pertain largely to sponsored projects and other receipts of external agencies for carrying out testing etc. He stated that through his personal effort the figure of Rs. 1.31 Crores has been brought down to Rs. 0.17 crores. He informed that he is personally pursuing the matter and assured that the rest pending items will also be cleared.

The position of un-reconciled items remaining pending for over three months in the BR Statement of NIBSM, Raipur, DoGR, Junagarh, CAZRI, Jodhpur, Directorate of Onion & Garlic, Pune, CCARI, Goa and CIAE, Bhopal was found to be on a higher side. The Finance officers of these institutes were directed to get these reconciled at an earliest.

After discussion on the first three Agenda was over, it was decided that each of the participating units of ICAR shall make all possible effort for settlement of audit paras, outstanding advances particularly old outstanding advances and those against departmental officers and all pending issues of the Bank Reconciliation Statement in the next three months and submit the progress report in first week of March 2016 for further review at Council.

5. ISSUES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF FMS-MIS

No issue pertaining to FMS-MIS was raised by any participant.

6. BUDGET, RELEASE OF FUNDS AND UTILIZATION OF FUNDS:

The utilization of funds under Non-Plan was found to be satisfactory. However, the utilization of funds under Plan in respect to a number of ICAR unit were not satisfying.

The Finance Officers of the Institute informed the House of the steps being taken in their institute for utilization of Plan funds and assured that the Plan funds would be utilized fully. AF&AO, BIHSAD, Bhopal informed that in absence of EFC clearance the allotted funds under B.E. is unlikely to be utilized in full.

AS&FA, DARE/ICAR expressed his concern on underutilization of Plan funds and stressed upon the need to expedite it so the instructions of the MoF on utilization of Plan funds every quarter. at the end of September 2015, December 2015 and during March 2015 are honoured and there shouldn't be any last minute rush towards utilization of funds in contravention to the instructions of MoF.

7. ISSUES RELATED TO PENSION AND RETIREMENT BENEFITS INCLUDING NEW PENSION SCHEME

There are three pension authorizing units in the West Zone namely CAZRI, Jodhpur, CIRCOT, Mumbai and NBSSL&UP, Nagpur.

AF&AO, CIRCOT, Mumbai informed that for the last five years no Finance & Accounts Officer has been posted to CIRCOT, Mumbai, even though it is a pension authorizing unit. AAO, DoGR, Junagarh informed that no Finance Officer has joined at DoGR, Junagarh during the last 3 years. AS&FA, DARE/ICAR informed that the Council is taking steps for filling up all vacant posts of Finance & Accounts Officer through promotion as well direct recruitment and the issue will get sorted out very shortly.

8. INTERNAL FINANCE RELATED ISSUES: DIFFERENCE OF OPINION BETWEEN DIRECTOR OF INSTITUTE AND THE FINANCE HEAD

It was informed that of the "Six-Monthly Report on the Difference of Opinion" has been received from all the units of West Zone that are participating in today's Interactive Meeting. None of the institute has reported any difference of opinion.

9. ANY OTHER ISSUE:

The following matters were discussed:

- (i) Sr. F. &A.O., NBSSL&UP, Nagpur informed that his salary for 6 days pending his posting is held up since a long time, though he has reminded the Establishment Section at Council a number of times. Sr. F. & A.O., CICR, Nagpur had similar issue wherein his salary for the intervening period during transfer has not been cleared. AS&FA, DARE/ICAR directed them to refer the matter to Director (Finance).
- (ii) F&AO, IISS, Bhopal raised the issue of non-adjustment of closing balances of the previous years in the current year releases made to the units of AICRP by its P.I. He informed that the P.I. permits the constituent units to utilize the previous year closing balance and also provides total funds as per the B.E. of the current year, which tantamount to utilization of more funds than approved B.E. during a year. **AS&FA, DARE/ICAR observed that this was not in order and an instruction may be issued for compliance by all units.**
- (iii) Sr. F. &A.O., CIAE, Bhopal drew the attention towards acute stagnation of finance officers. AS&FA, DARE/ICAR informed that Cadre Review Committee has been constituted to look into the issue.
- (iv) F. &A.O., IISS, Bhopal informed that their probation clearance is awaited. He stated that 6 Finance & Accounts Officer and 18 Administrative Officers had joined in his batch but even after completion of two years of service their probation clearance is awaited. He was directed to forward his representation to AS&FA, DARE/ICAR or Director (Finance) for taking up the matter with the concerned section.
- (v) F. &A.O., IISS, Bhopal raised the issue of limited competition even in open tender. He sought to know whether order can be placed with the firm when only single response is received even after ensuring that (i) specifications were generic, (ii) all the formalities of publicity including advertisement through CPP Portal was observed; (iii) the indenter has certified that rates are reasonable and (iv) it is felt that re-tendering will not lead to better response? AS&FA, DARE/ICAR clarified that in such cases order can be placed with the firm with the approval of an authority higher than the Director/ Head of Department of the Institute, i.e. by the Head of the Organization, with the concurrence of the AS&FA, DARE/ICAR. However, AS&FA, DARE/ICAR stressed upon the need to ensure that the specifications are not drawn on Least Common Multiple but are based on Highest Common Factor. Prior to tendering, the specifications should be got examined by a competent Technical Committee that should certify about the generic nature of the specification. Furthermore, the AS&FA, DARE/ICAR explained about the proprietary nature of a store and those held under licensee agreement. He clarified that the two should not be confused with each other since each has a different connotation. He added that institutes must carry out mandatory registration of vendors as per GFR before inviting offers through Limited Tender Enquiry, failing which it is advisable to go for open tender enquiry and follow all the guidelines of open tender enquiry.

(vi) AS&FA also assured the officers present that in case of any doubt they may refer the matter to him for advice.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the chair.

— 21/4/15
(R. Sahay) 10/12/2015
Sr. F. &A.O.

Distribution:

1. Junior Accounts Officer/Assistant/Senior Finance & Accounts Officer of participating Units.
2. Director, ICAR Institutes of participating ICAR Units.
3. Deputy Director (Finance) I/II/III, ICAR Hqrs.
4. Sr. F. &A.O. I/II/III, ICAR Hqrs.
5. F&A.O. I/II/III/IV/V/VI, ICAR Hqrs.
6. PPS to AS&FA, DARE/ICAR.
7. PA to Director (Finance), ICAR.
8. Media Unit, Krishi Bhavan, New Delhi.

Annexure: I

Participants of the Interactive Meet of Finance Heads of ICAR Institutes located in West Zone with AS&FA, DARE/ICAR on 7th December 2015 in the Committee Room at CIFE, Mumbai.

S. No.	Name	Designation
1.	Sri. S. K. Singh,	AS&FA, DARE/ICAR.
2.	Dr. Gopal Krishna	Director, CIFE, Mumbai
3.	Sri. Devendra Kumar	Director (Finance), ICAR Hqrs
4.	Smt. Rashmi R. Rao	Deputy Director (Finance), ICAR Hqrs
5.	Sri. O. P. Nagar	Deputy Director (Finance), ICAR Hqrs
6.	Sri. S. K. Pathak	Deputy Director (Finance), ICAR Hqrs
7.	Sri. Rajesh Sahay	Senior Finance & Accounts Officer, ICAR Hqrs
8.	Sri. K. K. Sharma	Finance & Accounts Officer, ICAR Hqrs.
9.	Sri. Ashish Roy	Registrar, CIFE, Mumbai.
10.	Sri. G. C. Prasad	Sr. F. &A.O., CICR, Nagpur & I/C NIBSM, Raipur.
11.	Sri. Prashant Kumar	Sr. F. &A.O., CIAE, Bhopal.
12.	Sri. Z. H. Khilji	Sr. F. &A.O., NBSSL&UP, Nagpur
13.	Sri. Sunil Kumar	Sr. A.O., Directorate of Floriculture, Pune.
14.	Sri. Neeraj Tahiliani	Finance & Accounts Officer, IISS, Bhopal.
15.	Sri. S. C. Sharma	Finance & Accounts Officer, CSWRI, Avikanagar.
16.	Sri. A. K. Maheshwari	Finance & Accounts Officer, DSR, Indore.
17.	Sri. Raj Kumar	Finance & Accounts Officer, CIAH, Bikaner
18.	Sri. M. S. Bhatkar	Administrative Officer, NIASM, Baramati.
19.	Sri. Sunil Chaudhary	Assistant Finance & Accounts Officer, CAZRI, Jodhpur.
20.	Sri. V. A. Shinde	Assistant Finance & Accounts Officer, NRC (Pomegranate) Solapur.
21.	Sri. S. V. Kasabe	Assistant Finance & Accounts Officer, CIRCOT, Mumbai.
22.	Sri. Munish Ganti	Assistant Finance & Accounts Officer, NRC (Grapes), Pune
23.	Sri. B. K. Acharya	Assistant Finance & Accounts Officer, NRC- Camel, Bikaner.
24.	Sri. Yashwant Sorte	Assistant Finance & Accounts Officer, CCRI, Nagpur.
25.	Mrs. Vijaya A. Bhumkar	Assistant Finance & Accounts Officer, Dte. Of O &G, Pune,
26.	Sri. R. T. Thakur	AAO & I/C F&AO, DoGR, Junagarh.
27.	Sri. S. S. Rathore	I/C Assistant Finance & Accounts Officer, NRC-Seed Spices, Ajmer.