Status and Prospects of IP Regime in India: Implications for Agricultural Education

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Received 10 February 2014, revised 21 April 2014

Intellectual property rights (IPR) are ideas, inventions, and creative expressions based on which there is a public willingness to bestow the status of property, while technology management seeks to foster effective and efficient use of developed technology. In a dynamic global environment with changing industry and competitor landscapes, management of technologies including effective commercialization strategies using the IPR advantages gathers utmost importance. In an agrarian country like India, the process of IP awareness can be catalysed only by educating the various stakeholders like policy makers, farmers, academia, industry, researchers and consumers about the importance of IPR and technology management. As Indian agriculture is attaining new vistas in development and agri-business is becoming increasingly global, it is time for a ‘fresh think’ to prevail in the IPR debate by creating much more awareness among academia, industry, policy makers and public. The initiatives taken on these lines by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and other governmental and non-governmental agencies are explained in this paper. A paradigm shift in agri-education policies is envisaged to build the capacity of agricultural professionals in view of dynamic changes in IPR and technology management areas.

Keywords: Intellectual property rights, technology management, Indian agriculture, IPR education, technology commercialization, technology forecasting

In an increasingly dynamic social and economic environment, researchers are facing accelerating changes in technological development and its commercialization. This can be attributed to the advancement of tools of technology development, changes in supply and value chain management and increasing influence of the industry in developing and commercializing technologies by the public research system. Many see emerging technologies as a solution vector for the global challenges including that of climate change. Management of intellectual property resources has become a key issue in agricultural and resource economics over the past two decades. The changes in intellectual property (IP) dimensions in technologies involving biosciences that have occurred since 1980 make private enterprise possible in many broad research areas of agriculture and the health sciences.¹

Furthermore, universities, cooperatives and other public and non-profit institutions now have the option of licensing or selling research outputs in this area, rather than giving their results away for free. As the scope and power of intellectual property rights (IPRs) in agriculture and biotechnology has grown, their international reach has expanded. The IP regime has set up the stage for healthy competition among research centres and industries for developing and seeking novel technologies.

However, compared to developed countries, once the technology is created, not much attention is paid in the developing nations on their commercial, policy, environmental, ethical and societal implications. Hence better techniques are needed for their management, to create policy and educate professionals to commercialize and govern them. Due to the critical role of technology in a competitive environment, strategic technology management is important for farmers and agri-enterprises too. For the long-term success, the researchers as well as farmers must develop and sustain their technological capabilities to create internal and external impacts within an ever changing and market driven socio-economic context.

The National Agricultural Research System (NARS) in India is designed to cater and render technical support to farmers and entrepreneurs for managing their technologies through IP protection measures. The institutes of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)/State Agricultural Universities (SAU) are driven towards dynamicity and complexity, not only from the intricacy of the technologies that are investigated, but also because of changes in the way research is done. Resource constraints demand interdisciplinary collaboration among research institutes/universities, industries, and

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