

Sailendra Bhaskar,
Correspondent, ABIDAT

*[Aban-BGU Institute for Dryland Agriculture Technology],
[A partnership between Aban, India and Ben Gurion University of the Negev,
Israel]*

'Janpriya Crest', #113, Pantheon Road, Egmore, Chennai - 600 008,
Tamil Nadu, India
Email: bhaskars@aban.com



The Real Winners in life are the people who look at every situation with an expectation that they can make it work or make it better.

In India 68 per cent of total net sown area (136.8 m ha) comes under drylands spread over 177 districts. Dryland crops account for 48 per cent area under food crops and 68 per cent area under non-food crops. Drylands produce 44% of the food grains of the country, thus drylands always have and will continue to play a critical role in India's food security. With climate change, it is expected that the area under dryland farming is likely to increase significantly and this could threaten our food security. It is with this backdrop in mind that the Aban-BGU Institute of Dryland Agriculture Technology (ABIDAT) has been set up. This unique Indo-Israel collaboration aims to take full advantage of Israel's desert farming knowledge and build sufficient human capital in India and overseas so that we might be able to remain food secure and food self-sufficient.

Dryland areas also significantly contribute to the country's pulses, oilseeds, coarse grains, and cotton production. Optimal use of dryland technologies for increased agricultural production can help to fill the demand-supply gap in pulses and oilseeds production and improve the economic status of farmers in these dry areas.

Over the course of two semesters our students will learn that drylands are not only thirsty, but also hungry too. Soil fertility in drylands is hugely limiting and has to be improved, but there is limited scope for extensive use of chemical fertilizers due to lack of adequate soil moisture in drylands. Alternate means of improving soil fertility will be demonstrated to our students so that they can become agents of change in drylands and extend their knowledge to farmers in these areas. We hope to build a bank of human resources who will make dryland farming remunerative and less risky thus ensuring that the food security of the country is guaranteed.

We wish all our students a great learning experience from the leaders in the area of desert farming. This experience will be one of a kind in India and the region and could be a game changer for students who opt to study at ABIDAT.

Sailendra Bhaskar