

Prof. Zulfiqar Ali Leads Agricultural Innovation in South Punjab



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The Muhammad Nawaz Sharif University of Agriculture (MNSUA), Multan, has witnessed a remarkable journey since its establishment in 2012. Initially operating from a single building, the university transformed into a dynamic center for research and education under the visionary leadership of Prof. Dr. Asif Ali (Tamgha-e-Imtiaz), who became Vice Chancellor in 2016. He successfully reclaimed the university's land from encroachers and laid the groundwork for its academic and infrastructural advancement.

Now, the university enters a new chapter under the leadership of **Prof. Dr. Zulfiqar Ali**, who currently also serves as Vice Chancellor of the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad. His return to MNSUA, where he previously served from 2015 to 2022 in key positions like Director ORIC and QEC, marks a promising revival in agricultural innovation for South Punjab.

A distinguished academic, Dr. Zulfiqar Ali earned post-doctoral fellowships from China's Jiangsu Academy of Agricultural Sciences and the University of Sydney, Australia. With over 100 MS and 20 PhD scholars mentored under his supervision, he has significantly contributed to national agricultural development. His leadership saw the ORIC of MNSUA recognized as South Punjab's first by the Higher Education Commission.

Among his notable achievements is the introduction of Pakistan's first high-yield, water-efficient hybrid wheat cultivars (18A1 and 18A2). He also led efforts to develop new cotton cultivars and secured research funding worth nearly \$3 billion. Under his watch, the university was ranked first in Pakistan and 154th globally in the 2020 UI GreenMetric rankings. His work has led to multiple patents, especially in biotechnology and food innovation.

Recognized with the **Gold Medal in Biotechnology (2017)** and the **HEC Best Teacher Award (2020)**, Dr. Zulfiqar Ali has also been honored with the **Research Productivity Award**. In 2023, he served as Director of

Programs and Projects at the Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS), where he reoriented research frameworks toward actionable projects.

Now entrusted with the vice-chancellorship of MNSUA, Dr. Zulfiqar Ali pledges to elevate the university as a hub for agricultural advancement and economic development in South Punjab. In his address, he reaffirmed his deep understanding of the region's challenges, including water scarcity, poverty, and limited access to modern technologies. He emphasized the need to transfer research to the ground level, introduce farmers to contemporary methods, and begin localized training initiatives.

His vision includes establishing research facilities throughout South Punjab, creating job opportunities, and fostering collaboration between academic institutions, industry, and the farming community. He stressed that agricultural scientists must engage directly with farmers and students to stimulate innovation and strengthen Pakistan's agricultural economy.

His appointment has been welcomed with enthusiasm by researchers, farmers, and business leaders alike. The unity of purpose between MNSUA and the University of Agriculture Faisalabad under his leadership is expected to create a robust framework for agricultural research and education.

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