

REGIONAL GROWTH OF AGRICULTURAL SECTOR: POTENTIAL AND PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

Agriculture is the largest economic sector in India and its development is of paramount importance to the progress of the economy as a whole. In view of this importance, this booklet on "Agricultural Development in Rural Areas" has been prepared. The people working in rural areas with some concepts and ideas about various agricultural development programmes in the rural areas. In the context of Indian conditions the concept of agricultural development in the rural areas may be defined to mean the measure taken to bring about economic and social changes in the rural areas, especially for the poorest of the poor. Growth with social justice is the basic aim of Indian planning particularly in field of agriculture. This programme aims at increasing the agricultural productivity by using modern technology and motivating the farmers for the adoption of the same. A similar programme, Intensive Agricultural Area Programme (IAAP) was started during 1964- 65 with the same objective, but with a less intensive staffing pattern, supervision, establishment of laboratories and centres. Processing of agricultural produce used to suffer due to lack of processing units near the production areas. Bulk processing of products turned out by agriculture has been done in urban-based industries. This delay in the processing of the produce used to reduce the quality. So, a need was there to establish rural industries which also create employment.

Keywords: *IAAP, back-wardness, agricultural inputs, farm machinery, irrigation facilities, cropping pattern*

Introduction

India is a land of villages. More than three-fourths of the rural population is dependent on agriculture which contributes about 40% of national product. Agricultural sector of rural areas still follows the conventional methods of cultivation due to which rural India still remains in a state of back-wardness where people had been living barely at subsistence economy. Hence there is a need to understand the nature and level of motivation of the farmers and also the incentive which would be meaningful to them in order to encourage their productivity efforts.

Agriculture is an integral part of the rural life and agricultural development programmes should be devised in order to meet the needs of the farmers. Efforts should be made to bring science and technology closer to the farmers in order to utilize the limited available resources efficiently to increase the productivity of the land. The other important aspects like supply of agricultural inputs, farm machinery, irrigation facilities, cropping pattern and general aspects like health, housing facilities, sanitation, welfare programmes for people should be given due importance.

The Concept

In the context of Indian conditions the concept of agricultural development in the rural areas may be defined to mean the measure taken to bring about economic and social changes in the rural areas, especially for the poorest of the poor. Growth with social justice is the basic aim of Indian planning particularly in field of agriculture.

In order to accelerate the rate of agricultural development in rural areas, three major changes have been introduced so far. These are institutional change, technological change and infra-structural change. Institutional change refers to those measures which are related to agrarian relations favourable to the tillers of the soil and the size of the unit of cultivation. Technological change implies the method of farming and introducing yield raising technology. It consists of several biological and mechanical technologies such as high yielding variety of seeds, chemical fertilizers, pesticides, use of machinery etc. Infrastructural change includes facilities like irrigation, credit, marketing transport etc. Technological change further refers to the knowledge used in improving agricultural production.

Factors for the Stagnation of the Indian Agriculture

The real problem of Indian agriculture is that there are 100 many people who are dependent on it causing over crowding. Illiteracy and unemployment are aggravating poverty among rural people. Other factors affecting the agricultural production adversely India is pointed out by the Agricultural Production Team. They are:

- dispersal of the limited available resources over a wide area which could not exert appreciable impact on the productivity of agricultural land
- unconformity of the state plans with the targets laid down by the Planning Commission,
- lack of organization of the country wide productivity movement in agriculture,
- non-availability of the adequate inputs particularly fertilizers .
- lack of concerted actions on the part of the Government to develop irrigation facilities through major, medium and minor works,
- under utilization of the existing minor irrigation facilities and lack of effective steps on the part of the government to set-up a suitable machinery to ensure maximum utilization,
- lack of support from the Rural Electrification Corporation for irrigation projects,
- Insufficient implementation of land reform measures,
- small investment in industries producing agricultural inputs,
- non-adoption of recommended practices by the farmers, and
- Poor techniques of production.

Keeping these factors in view, Indian government has taken up several programmes oriented towards agricultural development since Independence.

Agricultural Development Programmes

The Development Programmes, that were initiated by the government aimed at initiating and directing a process of change with a view to transform the social and economic life of villagers. This can be achieved by initiating various progressive schemes of socio-economic development programmes. These programmes related to the rural as well as agricultural development. They are briefly explained in the following pages.

Community Development Programme (C.D.P.)

The community development programme was launched in 1952. This programme was implemented in units of blocks, each block covers an area of about 400 to 500 sq. kms, with about 100 villages and a population of about 1 lakh. The finances for the community development programme were shared by the people and the state and central governments.

The community development programme awakened the consciousness in the people and made them articulate their needs which they had not felt before. With the network of a coordinated structure of various extension teams, it has helped the tradition bound village communities to shed-off dogmas and overcome resistance to change and this has made its own impact on people's attitude and motivations.

Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP)

The IADP is popularly known as Package programme which was started in 1961 in seven selected districts. This programme aims at increasing the agricultural productivity by using modern technology and motivating the farmers for the adoption of the same. A similar programme, Intensive Agricultural Area Programme (IAAP) was started during 1964- 65 with the same objective, but with a less intensive staffing pattern, supervision, establishment of laboratories and centres. Later it has been merged with IADP.

High Yielding Varieties Programmes (HYVP)

The cultivation of high yielding varieties since 1966-67 has resulted in a substantial increase in food grains production. Wheat production has been more than doubled. Rice production has also increased. Bajra production has registered some increase but the progress under maize and jowar is relatively slow.

For optimizing the yields of the available high yielding varieties of rice, it has been found essential to advance their sowing time. Efforts have been directed to educate the farmers to raise rice nurseries in advance of the main kharif season. A special programme for timely supply of seedlings, by raising community nurseries at tube well points and on government farms, was undertaken in three command areas in Bihar. This programme has yielded encouraging results. Till now 698 lakh ha. of area is reported to be under high yielding varieties cultivation.

National Commission on Agriculture

This commission was set up in 1970 to examine the progress of agriculture in India and to make recommendations for its improvement and modernization. It has submitted 24 interim reports on different subjects including fertilizer distribution, seed multiplication, agricultural research, extension and training, credit services for farmers, reorientation of several developmental programmes, modernizing irrigation systems, command area development, exporting and market facing of agriculture produce, land reforms, rural employment, general necessities in rural areas etc. It has also prepared the state-wise recommendations based on climate and cropping pattern.

During 5th five year plan on recommendation of NCA, Whole Village Development Programme (WVDP) was established with an objective of promoting welfare of the people by equitable distribution of the benefit of the development. It has adopted a whole village approach for overall development of the land, efficient water management, adopting cropping pattern according to irrigation facilities thus, improving the entire village situation.

Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)

This was initiated in the year 1980 in about 5000 blocks throughout the country. The IRDP involves the development of the rural areas and people belonging to the weaker sections such as the small and marginal farmers, tenants and share croppers, landless labourers, rural artisans, scheduled castes and tribal communities. The IRDP aims at integrating field programmes reflecting the economic activities of the rural families, whose employment and development were the basic objectives. District Rural Development Agencies have been set up in all the districts in the country to implement IRDP programme. This programme concerns with the agriculture, animal husbandry, small scale industries, marketing, forestry, fisheries etc. Till 1990-91, 29 lakhs of people were reported to have benefited from this IRDP programme.

Farmers' Service Societies

The objective of the societies is to help farmers, particularly small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers by providing credit and services for increasing employment, production and income. These are financed by commercial and cooperative banks.

Agriculture Under Five Year Plans

While planning to develop agricultural sector Planning Commission has taken the following objectives:

- increase of agricultural production,
- generation of additional employment from agricultural sector,

- reduction in the inequalities of income, and
- reduction in the pressure of population on land.

With these objectives in every five year plan agricultural development has been given importance and the extent of development can be seen in the following.

Between 1951-91, production of food grains had increased by 245%, oil seeds by 260%, sugarcane by 320%, cotton and jute by 200% and wheat production increased by 816%, an excellent result.

Conclusion

The agricultural development programmes that are implemented for the development in the community in terms of providing technical skills for better living can be achieved if the level of motivation of the people in terms of their present deprivations and future requirements are well understood. Though there are many schemes for the development of rural agriculture they have not reached the target groups up to a satisfactory level. Therefore, by using proper methods attempts should be made to motivate them through an emphasis on the deprived need areas. As India is by and large an agricultural country with a vast segment of her population engaged in agriculture and allied pursuits, it is the rate of growth of the Indian rural agricultural economy which determines the overall growth rate of the national economy. Development of agricultural rural economy and the improvement of the village life are the core concern of economists and also of the agriculturists. This is the biggest challenge before the nation as majority of rural population is still living below the poverty line. The rural folks are mainly engaged in agriculture and allied sector which is still in a backward stage. The constraints in the agricultural development in rural areas need to be removed out and country should be made self-sufficient by concentrating on the achievement of the goals of the agricultural development programmes.

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