

Vol 3 Issue 8 May 2014

ISSN No : 2249-894X

*Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal*

*Review Of
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INDIAN AGRICULTURE: PERFORMANCE AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract:

The agriculture and allied sector continues to be pivotal to the sustainable growth and development of the Indian economy. Not only does it meet the food and nutritional requirements of 1.3 billion Indians, it contributes significantly to production, employment and demand generation through various backward and forward linkages. Moreover, the role of the agricultural sector in alleviating poverty and in ensuring the sustainable development of the economy is well established.

KEYWORDS:

Indian agriculture, Indian economy, industrial development, raw materials.

INTRODUCTION :-

AGRICULTURE IN INDIA

India is essentially an agricultural country. Agriculture is the largest and most important sector of the Indian Economy. About 75 percent people depend upon agriculture and more than 75 percent live on it in villages. Besides, today it contributes more than 26.8 per cent to National output. It is said that agriculture and the rural people constitute the backbone of Indian Economy. No other activity in India dominates the lives of the entire population in the country as agriculture because most people derive their income from agriculture. It also occupies about 50 per cent of the total geographical area. Agriculture is the most important key sector in India.

About 75 per cent of the people in India derive their livelihood from agriculture. It is said that increase in investment in agriculture sector would increase agricultural output and the volume of employment. Agriculture is the most important source of capital for the planned development of the country. Agriculture is important not only because it supplies food to the growing population in the country but also as a feeder of raw materials like cotton, jute, sugar-cane, oil seeds etc. to various industries in India. It also helps to earn more foreign exchange. Agriculture helps to accelerate industrial development. In India the problem of poverty is very serious in rural areas. The only solution to this problem is agricultural development. When agricultural production increases the level of income of small formers will increase. The landlords will also offer higher wages to the labourers and the standard of living of the masses will improve.

BACKWARD AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is very important for the Indian Economy. Its size is very large. And it has the capacity to contribute much to the development of the country. But it is very backward. As such it is contributing very little to development. In order that it fulfills its role satisfactorily, it is necessary that we understand its backwardness. Following are some causes of its backwardness.

One important weakness is the slow rise in agricultural production and productivity which has occurred after many years since independence. There is a large agricultural land, about three fourth of the total cultivated land, which is still without proper irrigation or appropriate dry farming techniques and where production trend is very low and productivity still lower. Again in agriculture the size of fixed capital (tubewells, dams, ponds, machines, warehouses etc.) is inadequate. In agriculture the use of modern inputs like researched - seeds, fertilizers, pesticides etc. is not widespread. The social environment of agriculture sector is far from satisfactory.

INDIA'S FIVE YEAR PLANS - AGRICULTURE

To improve the agricultural performance the Central Government has made efforts through Five Year plans.

THE FIRST FIVE YEAR PLAN :(1950 - 51 TO 1955 - 56)

One of the objectives of First Five Year Plan was to solve food problem and to increase the output of raw materials like Jute, Cotton etc. And accordingly the output of food grains rose from 50 million tones in 1950 - 51 to 65.8 million tones in 1955 - 56 i.e. by about 20%.

THE THIRD FIVE YEAR PLAN :(1960 - 61 TO 1965 - 66)

The objective of the Third Five Year Plan was to achieve self-sufficiency in food grains and increase the output of other agricultural commodities. This plan envisaged an increase in the agricultural output at the rate of 6%.

THE EIGHTH FIVE YEAR PLAN : (1989 - 90 TO 1994 - 95)

One of the objectives of the Eighth Five Year Plan was to use the wastelands for cultivation of fruits.

THE TENTH FIVE YEAR PLAN : (2002 - 2003 TO 2006 - 2007)

The draft and structure of this plan is ready and on 17th August, 2001 the Dy. Chairman of the planning commission has announced that due weightage would be given to agricultural sector. (Daily "Sakai" - 18th August' 2001).

In this way in the last Fifty Years necessary efforts have been made by the Central Government with encouraging results. In production of food grains we are self- sufficient. Our sugar-cane production is also better. We are trying to increase the production of oilseeds. Diversification of agriculture is gaining ground. It can be said that this is the result of planned efforts.

NEED FOR HORTICULTURE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

We are self-sufficient in production of foodgrains. Our production of sugarcane is also better. And we are trying to increase the production of oilseeds. But our production of fruits is not sufficient to meet our requirement. In the last 50 years our production in fruits has not increased. According to diet experts, requirement of fruits per head per day is 85 grams. And we include maximum 46 grams of fruits in our diet per head per day. It is necessary to increase the production of fruits to meet the requirement.

In our country 85% land is dry. We cannot use this land for cultivation. In the eighth five year plan it was the objective to use such land for fruit cultivation. Again the cultivation of food grains and sugarcane is not profitable. Return on investment is less in both the cases and so it became necessary to change the agricultural approach.

OBJECTIVES

"Employment Guarantee Scheme Linked Horticulture Development Programme" was launched by the Government of Maharashtra in the year 1990-91 to achieve the following objectives

- i. To use the wasteland for fruit cultivation.
 - ii. To increase fruit production and area under fruits.
 - iii. To create employment opportunities in rural area.
 - iv. Upliftment of small and marginal farmers.
 - v. To maintain balance in environment.
 - vi. To produce fodder for animals.
- To enhance beauty of nature.

SCOPE OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH WORK

The core study area comprises of 111 villages in Baramati Taluka. The programme was launched in the year 1990-91. The study covers the last ten years, i.e. from 1990-91 to 1999-2000. India is Agro based country and Horticulture is important part of it. The programme is launched by the Government of Maharashtra under the leadership of Shri Shreed Pawar. He is from Baramati. Problems in the implementation of this programme are similar in each Taluka all over Maharashtra. So Baramati Taluka is selected for the proposed research work.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

Though the basic objectives of the Employment Guarantee Scheme Linked Horticulture Development Programme are good in principle the programme is not successful. Certain remedial measures are necessary for the effective implementation and to achieve the objectives of this programme. Though the basic objectives of the Employment Guarantee Scheme Linked Horticulture Development Programme are good in principle the programme is not successful. Certain remedial measures are necessary for the effective implementation and to achieve the objectives of this programme.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on the primary as well as secondary data. Sample survey method consisting of Ten experts were contacted and in-depth interviews were conducted. Secondary data i.e. published information is collected from Government agriculture and horticulture offices at Taluka place and District place.

Other necessary information is obtained from Agriculture College, Pune. Mahatma Phule Agriculture University, Rahuri, Maratha Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture, Pune.

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