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WAY OUT FOR REMEDIESTO AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN KARNATAKA

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Abstract:

In a country where agriculture is the mainstay of the population, measurement of agricultural productivity is of great importance. With the growth of population at a rate of about 2.1 percent per annum the measurement of agricultural productivity should not only help in locating regional imbalances in production but also suggests the methods, how production/productivity can be increased to feed the growing millions.

KEY WORDS:

Remediesto Agricultural Development , agricultural productivity , Indian Economy .

INTRODUCTION

In the first place in this work, the role of agriculture in the Economic Development in general and its contribution to the Indian Economy in particular along with an over view (in brief) of the Karnataka State's agricultural economy have been analyzed. Secondly, the conceptual clarifications of the agricultural productivity and the different approaches towards the measurement of agricultural productivity have been critically examined. Thirdly, the general environmental conditions have been examined in the state of Karnataka followed by land use patterns, size of land holdings and their distribution, the ground water resources, the potentials of important agricultural resources and the problems of waste lands etc. In addition, retrospective view of the agricultural development in the State of Karnataka has been given as historical perspective. Further, an attempt is made to examine the area, production and levels of productivity under the thirteen selected crops grouped into four broad heads: Cereals, Pulses, Oilseeds and Cash Crops. Changes in cropping patterns for each of the thirteen crops in terms of the rate of growth (with the application of linear regression) have been assessed. Further, the crop-combination regions were determined for the average values of area under the crops during the period of fifteen years (i.e., from 1993-94 to 2007-08). The study of cropping pattern, the rate of growth in area and production, and productivity of the thirteen selected crops led to the measurement of agricultural productivity and delimitation of productivity regions. After examining the different approaches towards the measurement of agricultural productivity, productivity regions have been demarcated by computing the productivity indices on the basis of the best of two different methods.

Way out for remedies to develop the following suggestions are made for reducing the regional imbalances with regard to agricultural productivity and also for the overall development of agriculture in the state of Karnataka:

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1)The long term perspective of poverty reduction required increasing food grains production to 12 million tonnes. But the state has hardly produced more than 9 million tonnes of food grains in the best monsoon years. In other words, Karnataka state is a marginal deficit state in food grains production, particularly in cereals. Besides, they are considerable shortages in the production of essential commodity like Pulses and Oil Seeds. Pulses production has almost stagnated at 6 to 7 lakh tones. However, Oil Seeds Production has almost doubled during the last two decades though their production has declined in the past five years. Hence, the future development strategy for agriculture in the State, in general, and Low and Medium Productivity regions in particular should be: to concentrate on encouraging production of horticulture crops; raising tree crops; furthering the development of Oilseeds and Pulses production; timely supply of required inputs to formers in general and to the small and marginal formers, in particular; a clear policy of promoting allied activities like animal husbandry, horticulture, farm forestry, poultry and fisheries; and encouragement to the establishment agricultural process unit either on co-operative basis or an individual basis.

2)In the light of liberalized economic policy persued by the Government of India, the Government of Karnataka formulated a forward looking agricultural development policy. This policy envisaged allowing commercialization of agriculture and appropriate institutional changes to facilitate and attract inflow of private investment under profitable commercial agriculture. Even so, the state government may have to encourage production of foodgrains through appropriate mix of price incentives and by making available the required inputs to dry land agriculture in dry areas and also required inputs to the agriculture of low productivity regions of wet areas. It is well known fact that it is dry land agriculture that contributes more to food grains production than irrigated agriculture. Irrigated agriculture has been going in the direction of commercialization and it has not been possible to enforce scientific cropping on lands which come under major command areas because of price fluctuations, and owing to farmer's preference for stable output. Therefore, more emphasis should be given to provision of extension facilities to dry land agriculture. Linked to this strategy are the watershed management in particular areas especially in Low productivity region of the state.

3)The low category districts in terms of agricultural development in the state have attracted only 28.00 percent of development funds of state .Interestingly the State Finance Commission has remanded the following weightage while allocating plan outlays to Panchayat institution: (i) Proportion of population living in rural area (33.33 percent), (ii) Proportion of area covered by PRIs (33.33 percent), (iii) Illiteracy rate (11.11%), (iv) Length of roads per sq.km. (11.11%) and (v) number of persons per bed in Government hospitals (11.11%). Obviously these indicators do not comprehensively reflect the degree of development in any of the major sectors like agriculture, industry, socio-economic front, etc., therefore, there is need to prescribe different weightage taking into consideration the various development indicators to ensure proper allocation of funds to Zilla Panchayat at district level and Panchayath Raj institutions at grass root level.

Karnataka is one among a few states where attempts have been made to strengthen local Panchayat Raj institutions by empowering them to undertake all developmental activities and these institutions are also being strengthened by budgetary support. At present, role of these institutions are more or less restricted to the implementation of programmes thrust from the above. In order to implement development strategy especially for agriculture, there is greater need to ensure that these institutions are not only involved in preparing blue prints but also in evolving appropriate participatory mechanisms based on prevailing social milieu. Development indicators prepared for different sectors would be the guiding factor in planning, implementing and monitoring the development activities.

4)Of course, the performance of agriculture in Karnataka since 1950 has been quite impressive. However, stagnant level of production and decelerated trends in food grains output has resulted in shortages in recent years. The agricultural strategy based on new technology and its selective area approach has created disparities among districts of the state. there are wide variations in the rates of growth of agriculture in different districts of the state. Hence, the required infrastructural facilities are to be developed and made available in Low and Medium productivity regions on priority basis in order to increase the agricultural productivity levels at par with the productivity levels of developed districts in the state.

5)From the analysis of identification of factors determining productivity it is found that uncertain rainfall has resulted in a shift in cropping pattern towards non-food crops and non-food grains, and has nullified the impact of credit and fertilizers in raising the productivity levels. Hence, strengthening of source base is a necessary Pre-requisite for increasing agricultural productivity in the districts of Low Productivity region

of the state.

6) For Karnataka's agricultural economy to pick up in future, the following measures are required: Research in the two Universities of Agriculture in the State has to be more focussed and purposive. Immediate attention is required to bridge the wide Gap which now obtains between potential and actual yields, even on the basis of available technology. The T and V system of extension has not proved effective; emphasis should be on group contacts and demonstrations, which will result in wider dissemination. Especially for the dry land areas of the state, the focus should be a shift from a few field crops to a range of farm enterprises. The private sector should be encouraged to expand its role in seed supply at the same time strengthening certification arrangements. There has to be stability in fertilizer price policy. Irrigation investments should be made more efficient through better fund flow and project management and there has to be much wider participation of farmers in the distribution and use of water. A massive programme for restoring the capacity of irrigation tanks has to be taken up. Groundwater legislation must be introduced. The Co-operative credit structure has to be re-activated. Land laws should be amended to permit large holdings for seed and export production. Minimum support prices should ensure a reasonable return to the farmer. The emphasis should shift from subsidy to investment. While there may be a case for concessional credit for agriculture because of risk and uncertainty, there is no justification for wide ranging and heavy subsidies, from both financial and equity angles. In spite of natural disadvantages, varied agro-climatic features and diversified crop patterns can make Karnataka agriculturally resilient.

7) Labour Productivity in agriculture: An important development during 1980-81 to 1997-98 was a perceptible rise in labour productivity in almost all the regions of state. To increase labour productivity further, the growth rates of agricultural output would have to be accelerated and attempts would have to be made to reduce the demographic pressure on agriculture through labour force diversification. The rise in farm labour productivity by itself releases forces which tend to increase income and employment in the non-agricultural sector through input, output and consumption linkages. An important policy intervention is to encourage diversification in agriculture and agro-related activities through large-scale investment in the development of agro-processing and related industries. With expected withdrawal of agricultural subsidies by the developed countries subsequent to the signing of the W.T.O. agreement, India in general and Karnataka in particular have the opportunity to increase their trade in agriculture specially in processed agricultural commodities. This could give further impetus to growth of employment in allied agriculture, agro-processing and related industries thereby leading to lessening of demographic pressure on agriculture. The Policy intervention should be of a promotional nature where stress is laid, firstly, on R and D in these activities, secondly, in creating network of information system and thirdly, in encouraging the setting up of co-operative organizations like the National Dairy Development Corporation which specialize in purchase, manufacture and exports of agricultural products. Most important, institutional credit flow to rural activities has to increase and be made easily available.

8) High growth in crop output in the state has to be sustained through continuation of policy of minimum support prices. To be effective, there is a need to develop better roads, communications and market infrastructure and a commitment by the FCI to procure all the grain that comes to the market. In particular, FCI has to be asked to be specially active in the new emerging surplus areas. Without the cultivator being given the assurance of remunerative price, it would not be possible to sustain the output of growth in the state.

9) Proper implementation of the policy by the state Government: The Agricultural Policy recently announced by the Government of Karnataka noted the recommendations of the Expert Committee on stagnation of Agricultural Production in Karnataka. The policy emphasized a much needed comprehensive and integrated approach in the development strategies of agriculture by combining horticulture, sericulture, fisheries, other field crops and animal husbandry, under a single entity. The Policy envisages opening up of agriculture and allied activities to larger land holdings by permitting private sector (such as private enterprises, corporations) to own and operate upto 50 acres. The said policy also proposes to modify the prevailing subsidy system in irrigation water rates and power supply by appropriate pricing system of inputs for agricultural purposes. The policy also takes cognizance of the declining trend in investment in agriculture and commits an investment of Rs. 1000 crores per annum for five years through reconstituted funds delivery system in order to achieve 4.5 percent annual growth in agriculture. The said policy as such is good but it has to be properly implemented at all levels. At the same time, serious lessons could be drawn from the death of ryots in recent days due to the crop losses. Who are responsible for these large scale crop losses and loss of invaluable lives of poor farmers? Can the present agricultural policy ensure any safety

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mechanism against these evils? Lost but not the least important is the question of share of producer in the consumers rupee for at once this is the determining factor for over all agricultural development. Therefore, measures to incorporate aspects of long term sustainability and stability of production and socio-economic equity need to be embodied into the policy. Further, the impact of the policy within a certain time period should be evaluated in order to make the policy meaningful. Even if the policy has not indicated any bold and progressive revamping of the agricultural sector, it is a welcome steps in so far as it is the first of its kind in the country and shows way for others to follow.

10)In the wake of economic liberalization, the state Government should attempt the following for further development of agriculture in the state, Farmers should be encouraged to go in for non-traditional crops to maximize their income in various agro-climatic regions. This should include modern floriculture, horticulture, aquaculture etc. Use of biotechnology in these new areas should be encouraged. Karnataka has got high potential for horticultural crops. Though the production of horticultural crops has increased in the recent past, the state has not been able to harness the full potential mainly because of lack of institutional support of marketing transport and storing.

CONCLUSION:

To sum up, the present study shows that there are wide regional variations in both-the levels and growth of agricultural productivity/output and also in the use of inputs in various districts of the Karnataka State. While there are areas where agricultural output has grown at a phenomenal rate exceeding 5 percent per annum, there are also regions where agricultural output has either increased at a very low rate or has been either stagnant or even declined. Similarly, there are areas where productivity levels are very high and other areas where they are extremely low. Hence, the present study has put before the community the contours of the current crisis of the agricultural economy of Karnataka and identified the areas of low levels of agricultural growth. Further, it has analyzed in detail the reasons for the low performance and suggested suitable measures for the development of agriculture in the state.

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