



Agricultural policy in India: need for a fresh look (1992)

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Agricultural policy in India: need for a fresh look (1992)

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Abstract

This paper presents a brief critique of the agricultural policies followed in India in the past and highlights the need for a national agricultural policy that is farmer-centred. It is argued in the paper that all-round development of the farmer should be the supreme goal of the new agricultural policy. A number of policy instruments appropriate for achieving this goal are identified and briefly discussed. Some of the instruments suggested include organisation of farmers into Anand pattern co-operatives, higher public investment in dry land agriculture, diversification of farming with higher emphasis on high value labour intensive crops, rationalisation of farm subsidies and pricing of irrigation water, and professionalisation of management in the agricultural sector. Need for involvement of non-governmental organisations particularly for organising, conscientising, training and empowering farmers and for establishing institutes for training in agricultural management is also highlighted.

Introduction

Public policy amounts to government intervention in a system or situation to promote a common public cause, or a common cause of a particular group of people when they cannot attain it on their own. Government intervention in agriculture has a very long history in India (Dandekar and Wadia, 1989 : 1–28). Some of the important landmarks in the history of agricultural policy in India during the period of British Raj include establishment of an Imperial Department of Agriculture in 1881, constitution of two Famine Commissions, one in 1880 and another in 1901, an Irrigation Commission in 1901, a Royal Commission on Agriculture in 1928, and launching of a Grow More Food Campaign (GMFC) in 1943. In January 1946, the government issued for the first time a Statement on Agricultural and Food Policy in India.

The main objective of the agricultural policies in the colonial era was to facilitate production of food and raw materials for export to Great Britain and to provide relief to farmers during periods of famines (GOI, 1976 : 62).

Consequently during the British Raj, agriculture remained, by and large, traditional and agricultural productivity stagnated at a very low level. The government did precious little to reform land tenure systems, develop irrigation facilities, and introduce new farm technology to increase farm productivity as was done in Japan beginning with Meiji Restoration in 1868. In Japan, over a period of 20 years from 1880 to 1900, agricultural output went up by 72.3% and labour productivity by 73.3%.

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After Independence, GMFC was modified as Integrated Production Programme and merged into the First Five Year Plan in 1951. Some of the important policy measures taken and agricultural development programmes launched by the government since then include Community Development Programme, National Extension Service, Land Reforms, Panchayati Raj, Intensive Agriculture District Programme, Intensive Cattle Development Programme, High Yielding Varieties Programme, Operation Flood, and constitution of various commissions and committees from time to time. While impressive achievements have been made on the foodgrains production front, output per ha and output per worker in Indian agriculture still remain at very low levels compared to the potential that exists and that has been demonstrated under good management. Most (over 76%) of the Indian farmers have land holdings below two ha and are poor. They, unlike their counter-part city dwellers, do not have access to such public amenities as good education, health care, security, transport and communication.

In 1990, a Draft Agricultural Policy Resolution (DAPR) was issued by the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), Government of India (GOI). The DAPR could be considered as a formal pronouncement of the GOI's latest national agricultural policy. But it has not aroused much meaningful debate among scholars, practitioners, politicians, public, and press. Lack of adequate and incisive debate on the subject seems due partly to limited circulation and therefore limited access to the document and partly to sheer inertia and/or indifference on the part of those who had seen the document or had access to it. A Standing Advisory Committee on Agriculture constituted by the GOI under the chairmanship of Shri Sharad Joshi critically reviewed the DAPR and prepared a document entitled National Agricultural Policy Resolution which was also issued in 1990. Similarly, The Indian Society of Agricultural Economics sponsored three regional seminars in 1990–1991 to discuss the DAPR. Some other associations and development altogether. Empowerment of farmers and building up of their capacities for development should be the major plank of the new agricultural policy. This would be in tune with the recent emphasis in development literature on people-centred development (Korten and Klauss, 1984 : Ch. 25 & 30).

The DAPR sets out eight objectives for the new agricultural policy. Briefly stated, they are : (1) achieving substantial (6% per annum) growth in agricultural output by increasing productivity and, thus, incomes of all those dependent on agriculture so that they " will attain minimal standards of living"; (2) promoting efficient management of land and water resources using the farming system approach; (3) providing farmers with profitable technology and necessary inputs, services, and incentives; (4) strengthening the institutional infrastructure including co-operatives and Panchayati Raj bodies and facilitating farmers' participation in the formulation of agricultural policies and programmes; (5) creation of a (congenial) production environment by providing incentives and following a positive (support) price policy; (6) implementing a land reform policy; (7) encouraging processing of agricultural produce; and (8) increasing agricultural exports.

The background note on 'Agriculture in the Eighth Plan' lists seven objectives of which five are the same as included in the DAPR. The two objectives which are included in the Background Note but do not find any mention in the DAPR are: (1) creation of employment and income generating opportunities in rural areas; and (2) removal of regional disparities in agricultural growth. These two in conjunction with one more objective that we want to suggest, i.e., reduction in rural-urban differentials in the provision of basic infrastructural facilities are more important than the others in that they articulate what the target group of the DAPR wants most urgently. They should not only be included in the DAPR but each should be given a high priority. Although there are no new objectives listed in the DAPR that were not included in the earlier Five Year Plan documents and the report of the National Commission on Agriculture, 1976, its mention of minimal standard of living for farming community, farming system approach, agro-climatic zonal planning, and watershed approach to the development of dry land agriculture represent a significant improvement over the earlier policy statements. But there is no mention in the DAPR as to how these approaches will be implemented and how the objectives will be attained.

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In our opinion, the new policy should guarantee to every farm household a reasonably adequate level of per capita income which should be on par with the average per capita income in urban areas. For computing the average per capita income in urban areas, both the average personal disposable income and the value of publicly provided services, facilities and amenities should be considered.

In addition, the issue of economic viability of marginal and small land holdings which, in 1985–86, accounted for over 76% of India's total land holdings has not been alluded to at all in the DAPR. This seems to us to be a serious omission. This issue should be highlighted in the new agricultural policy and appropriate measures to resolve it specified.

Target group

The DAPR does not clearly specify the target population. In the DAPR, it is mentioned that the "Government wishes to proclaim a New Agricultural Policy Resolution charting out the future perspective for the development of agricultural sector to meet the socio-economic aspirations of the Indian people (emphasis ours)" (p.1). Immediately thereafter, it is stated that "The Policy Resolution seeks... to build a vibrant agricultural economy for securing a better life for the farm community" (emphasis ours) (p.1). From these two statements, it is not clear as to whose aspirations are to count the most—Indian people's or the farm community's. It is necessary for the policy makers to clearly specify the target population as policies aimed at serving the aspirations of Indian people may not, and in most cases will not, best serve the interests of the farm community. In our opinion, subservience of the farm community's interests should be the first charge of agriculture and therefore the farm community should be the target population of the DAPR. The farmer should be the main focal point of the new agricultural policy and his all-round development its overriding goal.

Policy instruments

A serious drawback of the DAPR from the public policy and strategic management viewpoints is lack of any mention of the instruments that should be used to achieve the various policy objectives. Ideally, for each of the objectives, the DAPR should have specified as to what is to be done, who will do it, when, how, where, and what means should be used under what conditions to achieve a given objective. The task of the policy maker does not end with merely prescribing what should be done but he should also specify who will do the job and how, i.e., the tasks of policy formulation and implementation cannot be divorced from each other. We want to sound a caveat here that this suggestion does not mean that the DAPR should have attempted prescribing detailed guidelines and blueprints for action. We only mean to suggest that some guiding principles incorporating the lessons of past experiences should have been laid out in the DAPR. We will illustrate this point with the following example.

One of the objectives of agricultural policy enunciated in the DAPR is "implementing a land reform policy for equitable distribution of land, for consolidation of holdings and for preventing fragmentation of holdings". However, there is no mention in the DAPR as to how this objective will be realised. We know and so do the policy makers, we presume, that this objective had been included in all the plans starting with the First Five

Year Plan and has not yet been achieved. The only new instruments mentioned in the document are that all land reforms laws are proposed to be included in the IX Schedule of the Constitution so that the laws could not be challenged in the courts of law and that tribunals will be appointed to look into and settle benami transfers of land. These instruments, if and when implemented, would tackle only a part of the problem. What is needed is a complete policy package specifying : (1) precise objectives of the land reforms policy; (2) instruments to be used to achieve each of the objectives; (3) administrative and judicial structures for enforcing the provisions of the various land reforms acts; (4) mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of various land reforms laws; and (5) mechanisms for providing necessary follow up assistance to the beneficiaries of the land reforms in the form of technical knowledge, training, credit, inputs like seeds, fertilisers, irrigation water, marketing facilities etc.

Obviously, the existing administrative and legal set ups were not appropriate to achieve the objectives of the land reforms policies followed in the past. But nothing has been said about how these set ups would be strengthened or modified to achieve the policy objectives in the future. In our opinion, lessons of both successes and failures in the implementation of various agrarian reforms in the country should have been incorporated in the document.

Organisation structure

Perhaps the most serious lacuna of the DAPR is the (implicit) presumption of the policy makers that whatever the objectives of the agricultural policy, the existing administrative machinery can achieve them. This has not been borne out by our experience with the implementation of various agricultural policies in the past. Furthermore, this is in contradiction of a well-known management principle underlying successful development programmes that for each objective, an appropriate organisation structure should be specified and that both the objectives and the structure should be congruent with the prevailing socio-economic and political environment (Paul, 1982 : 229). It is strange that no commission or committee constituted by the government so far has seriously questioned the adequacy and appropriateness of the existing administrative structure for agricultural and rural development purposes. In a way this was but to be expected because most of those who were on those commissions and committees either had been or were part of the administrative system and it would be unreasonable to expect them to demolish the system which had served them so well. Therefore, all of the recommendations and suggestions of the various committees and commissions were aimed at reforming and reorienting the system rather than evolving a new and more appropriate system for the purpose.

The existing system, even after incorporation of the various reforms evolving from the recommendations of the different committees and commissions, is not appropriate for development purposes. This is largely because the qualities, training, and orientation required for the efficient discharge of the responsibilities of maintenance of law and order, collection of revenue and taxes, maintenance of essential services etc., are just the ones that hinder development. For instance, efficient discharge of the law and order responsibility requires qualities of evasiveness, coercion, toughness, circumspectness, and capacity to dispense expedients. For developmental work, however, one needs to be receptive, open-minded, communicative, empathetic, persuasive, and have the capacity, willingness, and perseverance to go out to the people to find out what they want and then to go further and find out, in consultation with them, practicable and lasting solutions for their problems. In these days of high specialisation, how can one be expected to become adept at simultaneously handling varied responsibilities requiring contrasting personal traits, and skills?

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Therefore, what is needed is a non-conventional non-governmental organisation (NGO) structure for designing, implementing, and monitoring agricultural development programmes. The role of the government should be limited to provision of funds, creation of the necessary basic infrastructure, expansion and strengthening of agricultural production base, provision of education, research, extension and training facilities, and regulation.

Fortunately, we have in India, a living example of a non-governmental system that has been successful in promoting people-centred development more efficiently and effectively than the governmental system. This system is known as the 'Anand pattern co-operative structure' (Singh, 1986 : 312-314). The system has evolved gradually over a period of over 40 years and has been adopted by the Government of India for dairy development in the country under Operation Flood (OF). The OF programme was designed and promoted by the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), then a non-governmental organisation but now a statutory corporate body. The programme sought to replicate the Anand pattern dairy co-operative structure in selected milksheds in India. The Anand pattern dairy co-operatives formulate and implement their own policies and programmes for dairy development in their area and hire professional managers and technicians to assist in its implementation. The role of the government is limited to assisting the co-operatives financially in implementing their own programmes. The government funds for dairy development are placed at the disposal of the co-operatives.

Besides the Anand pattern co-operative structure, there are many other forms of formal and non-formal associations which could do a better job of implementation and monitoring agricultural and rural development programmes. For example, PRADAN, a Delhi-based NGO and The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (India), an Ahmedabad-based NGO, both promote people's organisations at the grassroots level to take up agricultural and rural development projects. The role of the NGOs is to organise people and help them with technical information, training and, to some extent, funds of their own. Besides, they also help the grassroots organisations to secure financial assistance from various governmental and non-governmental sources. In most cases, the performance of the programmes taken up under the auspices of NGOs has been better than that of government programmes. However, this statement cannot be generalised as there are many NGOs which do not have the necessary technical and managerial expertise and financial discipline to initiate and support agricultural and rural development programmes. The government should identify and support potentially good NGOs so that they could complement and supplement the role of the government. There is no specific mention in the DAPR of the role of NGOs in agricultural development. However, the background note on "Agriculture in the Eighth Plan" makes a casual observation that "the voluntary organisations in the area have to be persuaded to play a major role in the development of the region/villages" (P.7). We do not know how serious the policy makers are about this statement. In our opinion, this statement should have been elaborated and the role that the government wants the NGOs to play in agricultural development should have been specified.

The people's organisations including the Anand pattern co-operatives suffer from a serious drawback at present in India. The drawback is that in majority of the cases they are captured by the rural elite and most of their benefits cornered by them and their allies. But this is common to all democratic institutions in our country including the Panchayati Raj institutions. There are no easy and short-term solutions available for this problem as it is intertwined with the problem of underdeveloped human resources. It can be resolved only in the long-run through a well-planned programme of human resource development focusing on providing adequate facilities for and an easy access to good education, nutrition and health care, vocational training, and self-employment and wage-paid employment in rural areas. In our opinion, this should receive the second highest priority next only to national defence in terms of allocation of funds and other resources. The rationale for this recommendation lies in the human capital models of development which assert that a well developed person can create/find his own ways of development and attain fullest possible development on his own. The role of the government should be to provide an enabling environment for human beings to unfold and realise their development potential. Neither the DAPR nor the background note on agriculture emphasizes this crucial

factor in development. That is why we have recommended earlier in this paper that all-round development of the farm community should be the main focus of the DAPR.

High-value labour-intensive enterprises

The objectives of income and employment generation should be sought to be achieved by means of (i) diversification by marginally switching from foodgrain crops to high-value labour-intensive crops like vegetables, fruits, etc., wherever feasible, in both irrigated and rain-fed areas of the country; and (ii) by adoption of a watershed-based strategy of agricultural development on the lines of Karnataka's model in the rain-fed areas of the country. The pursuit of this objective will also help in productively utilising the vast human resources that we have available in abundance in the country and whose development has not received the attention and resources it deserves.

For ensuring economic viability of marginal and small farmers who now account for 76% of the total operational land holdings in the country, it will be necessary to impart new skills to them and strengthen the traditional skills required for taking up new high-value and labour-intensive activities. This can be done by educating, motivating, training and enabling them to adopt the new activities. Many complementary and supplementary enterprises such as vegetable production, poultry, sericulture, bee-keeping, pisciculture, milk production etc., could be taken up by marginal and small farmers. These activities would benefit them most if they are organised into co-operative societies, preferably on the Anand pattern. Such co-operatives alone could secure for their members a fair price for their produce and an equitable distribution among them of the value-added through processing, storage, marketing etc. Since the produce of most of these activities is perishable, it will be necessary for the government and producers' co-operatives to invest a substantial amount in creating the necessary processing and storage facilities.

Development of dry land agriculture

There is a need for accelerated development of dry land agriculture which accounts for about 70% of the total cultivated area of the country, and contributes about 43% of the total foodgrains production and 75% of the total production of oilseeds, pulses, and coarse grains in the country. The per capita public investment in the dry land areas of the country is very low as compared to that in the irrigated areas. This is both anti-production and anti-equity, given the high untapped crop yield potential and concentration of the country's rural poor population in those areas. There is therefore a need for substantially increasing public investment in watershed-based agricultural development of these areas and for long-term bank loans for watershed development.

It is also necessary for the success of the watershed approach that local farmers are fully involved in formulating, implementing, and monitoring watershed development projects and that they are motivated to contribute in the form of labour to meet part of the cost of the project. This can best happen only if the farmers are organised formally or informally as has been done in many places in Maharashtra and Karnataka. Once organised, the farmers could evolve and enforce mutually acceptable rules and regulations for the repair and maintenance of various soil and water conservation structures on both private and community lands in the

watershed and for equitable distribution of benefits from the community or common property resources restored under the project.

If the watershed approach is followed, a lot of biomass can be produced which can then support many processing industries and can be used for generating bio-energy as has been done in Andaman where biomass, mainly fuelwood, has been used for producing biogas which, in turn, has been used for generating electric power. The biomass-based processing industries could also generate enough employment opportunities for the rural poor in the country. However, there will be a need for imparting the necessary education and skills to the local people so that they could take up the new activities and benefit from them. This could be done under the scheme of 'Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM)' and other ongoing programmes of agricultural and rural development.

Given the highly risky nature of agriculture in the dry land areas of the country, it is suggested that a portfolio of new technologies be developed so that the risks involved in its adoption are minimised. In this context, the need for a cyclical credit policy of the type recently adopted in Karnataka and for crop insurance in dry land areas could be highlighted. According to the present credit policy adopted by commercial banks and co-operative societies in the country, the farmer-borrower becomes a defaulter if he does not repay his crop loan within a period of one year, and he cannot get a fresh loan till he continues to be a defaulter. For dry land areas where the incidence of crop failure due to droughts is very high, and hence the chances of default are also high, this credit policy is not appropriate. It has been observed that dry land agriculture is profitable over a period of 3 to 5 years even though in any one year it may be a losing concern. In view of this, a new (cyclical) credit policy is required so as to meet the full credit requirements of the dry land farmer over the period of 3 to 5 years even when he becomes a defaulter in one or more than one year. Such a policy has been tried in Karnataka and there is no reason why it should not be adopted in other dry land areas of the country.

Subsidies on agricultural inputs

Subsidies amount to loss of revenue to the government (in the form of government expenditure) and gain to both farmers (in the form of producer's surplus) receiving the subsidies and consumers (in the form of consumer's surplus from cheaper farm commodities) of commodities produced by recipients of the subsidies. A simple rule of thumb that can be used by the government to determine whether to grant subsidy or not is to compare loss of revenue and gains to producers (farmers) and consumers from the subsidy. If the gains exceed the loss, there is a rationale for the subsidy in question. Besides, those activities which generate higher social benefits than private gains, and those which involve some risk should also be subsidised. Such activities include soil and water conservation measures, collective action for eradication of pests and diseases, newly released high yielding varieties of crops, afforestation of degraded private and public lands, pisciculture in common property ponds, etc.

Fertilisers and irrigation water are two of the farm inputs that are heavily subsidised at present; the latter indirectly by pricing it lower than its real resource cost. Gulati (1990: 1-11) examined the issue of fertiliser subsidies in relation to the prices of major crops such as rice, wheat and cotton and found that "farmers have been 'net-taxed' through pricing of fertilisers and crops". Singh (1992) argues that irrigation subsidies are justified because it is unethical to penalise irrigators by charging them high water rates based on real resource costs which are abnormally high due to widespread inefficiency and mismanagement in Irrigation Departments. What is needed, in our opinion, is both an improvement in efficiency and management and rationalisation of the water pricing policy. It is also true that quite a lot of so-called farm subsidies go to the

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private industries and public undertakings manufacturing farm inputs to cover up their inefficiency and mismanagement.

The existing policy of subsidies on agricultural inputs needs to be reviewed and its direct and indirect impacts on different categories of farmers carefully assessed. There is a lot of evidence to show that quite a significant proportion of subsidies is leaked out and that most of the amount of subsidies is cornered by the big and rich farmers. There is, therefore, a need to streamline the delivery system and to ensure that the benefits from subsidies are widely and equitably distributed.

Pricing of Canal Water

The existing (subsidised) prices of canal water and the system of charging on the flat per ha basis have led to many problems such as highly water intensive cropping patterns, wastage of water due to over-irrigation and lack of cleaning and desilting of watercourses and field channels, water-logging, salinity etc., in canal command areas. There is a need for pricing canal water as close to its full real resource cost as possible considering its productivity and for volumetric measurement of the water supplied. Whereas volumetric measurement of water supplied to water users' co-operatives has been successfully tried in some command areas such as the Ukai-Kakrapar command area in south Gujarat, pricing of canal water at its full cost has not yet been done anywhere in the country. This seems to be a highly politically sensitive issue but in the interest of using our scarce water resources judiciously this hard decision must be taken now and enforced throughout the country. The wasteful use of water and inappropriate cropping patterns could be avoided by deepening the canals below the ground-level so that all farmers in the command areas have to lift water from the canals as has been done in Egypt. This will make water costlier and more energy-intensive than at present and, therefore, the irrigators would use it more judiciously, and more command area can be covered with the same amount of water. This would also reduce the problems of seepage and water-logging and inequitable distribution of water between head-reaches and the tail-ends of canal systems. This method may be tried in some of the new projects like the Narmada project. Besides, as we mentioned earlier, there is also a need for improving efficiency and management in Irrigation Departments so that the cost of supplying water could be kept low.

All these measures could be implemented more cost-effectively if the farmers are first educated and made aware of their benefits and are then organised into water users' associations as has been done in the Ukai-Kakrapar command area in south Gujarat. Water could be sold to such associations on volumetric basis and the associations could be given the responsibilities of distribution of water, maintenance of watercourses, collection of water charges from irrigators and payment to the Irrigation Department, and enforcement of appropriate crop patterns.

Support prices for farm produce

The terms of trade have been against the agricultural sector since the late 1970s. This has led to transfer of resources including capital from agriculture to non-agricultural activities mostly in urban areas further aggravating the problem of scarcity of capital in the sector. This trend needs to be reversed till agriculture develops to a stage when it can finance development in other sectors of the economy. To do this, the government should support prices of all agricultural commodities at levels that are remunerative to producers and close to world market prices, and that maintain the terms of trade in favour of agriculture. In India, wheat prices always and rice prices most of the time have been kept below the world market prices. This amounts to

implicit taxation of farmers which perhaps more than offsets the subsidies given to them and explodes the myth that farm subsidies are a big burden on the Indian exchequer.

Remunerative prices to farmers on a year-round basis can be best assured by farmers' co-operatives which handle supply of inputs, procurement, processing, storage and marketing of produce. This would also ensure that most of the value-added through these services goes back to the producers and distributed equitably amongst them. In fixing support prices, it should be kept in mind that, given the relatively low price elasticity of aggregate supply of farm commodities, prices have a limited role in increasing farm production and after a certain limit, non-price instruments, like irrigation, land development through various measures, crop insurance etc., become more critical factors in influencing production and hence should receive more attention than prices.

Food subsidies and exports

It is an obvious fact that in many cases the present agricultural surpluses reflect inadequate purchasing power, or in economics terms, lack of effective demand in the country. The dilemma of surplus food-stuffs, on one hand, and millions of hungry poor people, on the other, has been sought to be tackled through subsidisation of staple foodgrains. However, all available evidence indicates that the beneficiaries of food subsidies have been mostly urban consumers and the rural poor people have hardly benefited.

Furthermore, food subsidies are becoming increasingly a big drain on the public exchequer and, therefore, there is a need to replace them by direct income transfers, preferably in the form of food coupons, to the poor. The other and more recent approach to the problem of surpluses is to export them. There is nothing necessarily wrong with this approach provided that most of the resultant benefits are widely distributed among the producers, and not cornered by a few middlemen. There is at present no evidence, with the possible exception of dairy commodities, that this is in fact happening. There is, therefore, a need to channelise exports of whatever agricultural commodities are genuinely surplus through producers' co-operatives so that the benefits from exports go back to the producers. It is now a well-known fact that India has a comparative advantage in producing high value labour-intensive crops and commodities like vegetables, milk and milk products. In view of this, we suggest that such commodities after necessary processing and quality control should be exported through producers' co-operatives. But such exports should not result in unnecessary hardships to poor consumers in the country.

Agricultural research and extension

Agricultural research needs to be farmer-oriented so that it can generate profitable technologies suitable for various agro-climatic and socio-cultural conditions obtaining in the country. For this it will be necessary to follow both the land-to-lab and lab-to-land approaches; the former for identification of farmers' problems, and the latter for transfer of new technologies to them. There is also a need for focusing more research and extension efforts on livestock development, improvement of pastures and grazing lands, and on increasing

forage yields of various annual and perennial crops, particularly in the dry land areas of the country. The criteria used to evaluate the appropriateness of new technologies for the region should include, besides grain yield, fodder yield of crops and trees.

In most of the dry farming areas of the country, farmers traditionally follow a mix of different crops and livestock activities as a means of minimising weather induced risks. While developing new technologies for such areas this should be kept in mind and an optimum portfolio of various crop and livestock activities should be developed and extended to farmers in the region. Besides, it is also true that most of the disease resistant genes are found in plants and trees that grow in the dry land and tribal areas of the country and therefore we suggest that public investment should be made to preserve such plant species and to use them for breeding disease resistant varieties.

Training in modern agriculture

Training of farmers especially small and marginal farmers, women, rural youth, rural bankers, suppliers of production inputs and services, local officials, and politicians is necessary for agricultural development. Agricultural orientation at primary and secondary levels and organisation of vocational and technical training in agriculture and allied activities for intermediate level workers are necessary for catering to the technical manpower requirements of rural enterprises and institutions at the village and block levels.

Although most agricultural and rural development programmes provide for the training of their beneficiaries and functionaries at all levels, the trainers, the training curricula, materials, and facilities available are not upto the desired mark and, therefore, there is a need for improvements in all these aspects of training. The training curricula and materials used for bank officers and government officers also need to be improved. So far, not much attention has been given to the training of politicians in agricultural and rural development. Properly trained and oriented, motivated, and well-informed politicians can be of great help in promoting the cause of agricultural and rural development and the opposite of it can be a great obstacle to rural development. There is a need to develop appropriate curricula and facilities for training of politicians at all levels. It would be worthwhile to seek the assistance of professional rural development trainers to design appropriate curricula and develop appropriate training materials for the various categories of government functionaries, bankers and politicians. In many cases, training of trainers would also be necessary.

Professional management

Implementation of the new agricultural policy outlined here would require that agricultural development programmes be professionally managed and not bureaucratically administered following a blueprint approach. For professionalising the management of agricultural development, we need appropriately trained agricultural development managers. Such professionally trained managers with the requisite traits, skills and commitment are a scarce commodity in India at present. A very large number of such managers are required for managing agricultural development programmes and projects, rural institutions and organisations, rural enterprises and resources.

Management is not value-neutral. Agricultural development managers, besides being good professional managers, should also have values and ethos congenial to rural development, and concern and commitment to serve the rural people. Without these, a professional manager, howsoever well trained he may be, is of no use for agricultural development management. This means that education and training in agricultural development management will have to be different from the conventional education and training in management. A curriculum comprising courses in various functional areas of management, supporting disciplines, special courses in rural environment, agricultural and rural development, rural producers' organisations, rural resource management, fieldwork in villages and organisational training in rural organisations and institutions is required for training in agricultural development management. Such a curriculum has been evolved and is being used in the Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA) for training fresh and in-service rural managers. IRMA also conducts short-term refresher courses in agriculture and rural development management for in-service professionals and administrators including the Indian Administrative Service Officers. There is a need to establish many more institutes of rural management on the pattern of IRMA and to reorient the existing institutes of public administration to focus on training programmes in agricultural and rural development management (Singh, 1987 : 71-74). The State Agricultural Universities in India which now number 26 may be persuaded and assisted financially by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research to start post-graduate programmes in agricultural management.

Concluding remarks

To conclude, we can say that there is a need for a farmer-centred management-oriented approach as opposed to the existing paternalistic and bureaucratic approach to formulating and implementing agricultural policy. The farmer-centred approach to agricultural development is best exemplified by the Anand pattern co-operative model underlying the Operation Flood programme of dairy development which is currently underway in India. This model needs a serious consideration and wherever found appropriate, it should be applied to the other sub-sectors of India's rural sector. NGOs having the requisite financial discipline, professional and technical expertise and commitment to the cause of agricultural development could play an important role as catalysts in improving the effectiveness of agricultural development programmes. They should be treated by the government as partners in development and not as adversaries. Professionalisation of agricultural development management can be achieved only slowly over a period of time by inducting professionally-trained agricultural development managers at all levels in the hierarchy of development administration. Reorientation of the existing staff through short-term training programmes in agricultural development management in good institutes of rural management is also necessary. Unfortunately, at present, supply of professional rural managers and facilities for in-service training of agricultural and rural development staff are both extremely limited in our country. There is, therefore, an urgent need to establish many more institutes of agricultural and rural development management on the pattern of the Institute of Rural Management, Anand. Appropriate programmes and facilities are also needed for imparting training to rural producers, rural women, rural bankers, agri-business dealers, local officials, policy makers and planners, and politicians.

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