

AGRICULTURE FARMERS WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

The Department of Agriculture & Cooperation was earlier implementing 51 schemes for development of agriculture and welfare of farmers in the country. These schemes have recently been restructured into 5 Centrally Sponsored Missions, 5 Central Sector Schemes and 1 State Plan Scheme. This scheme assists setting up of agribusiness ventures in close association with banks. It catalyses private investment in setting up of agribusiness projects thereby providing assured market to producers for increasing rural income and employment; strengthens backwards linkages of agri-business projects with producers; assists farmers, producer groups, and agriculture graduates to enhance their participation in value chain through project development facility; and arranges training and visits of agripreneurs setting up identified agribusiness projects. Venture capital assistance in the form of equity will be provided by Small Farmers' Agriculture-Business Consortium (SFAC), to be converted into a term loan till the bank term loan is fully repaid. Venture capital after it becomes term loan could be repaid to SFAC in lump sum or in four quarterly installments together with interest at the same rate as the term loan. SFAC will provide financial assistance up to a ceiling of Rs.5 lakh depending upon size, location, activity and coverage for preparation of bankable Detailed Project Reports through empanelled consultants/institutions. Assistance will also be provided to State SFACs for undertaking promotional activities for agri-business development. This scheme will be implemented with the assistance of National Institute of Agricultural Marketing (NIAM), Jaipur; MANAGE, Hyderabad; federations of industry associations such as CII, FICCI, ASSOCHAM, Ph.D., State SFACs, SAUs and others to vigorously publicise the benefits of Venture Capital Assistance Scheme to prospective entrepreneurs and produce organizations.

Keywords: Agriculture, Farmers, Welfare, Schemes, Mission, Development.

INTRODUCTION:

Agriculture plays a pivotal role in the Indian economy. Although its contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) is now around one sixth, it provides employment to 56 per cent of the Indian workforce. Also, the forward and backward linkage effects of agriculture growth increase the incomes in the non-agriculture sector. The growth of some commercial crops has significant potential for promoting exports of agricultural commodities and bringing about faster development of agro-based industries. Thus agriculture not only contributes to overall growth of the economy but also reduces poverty by providing employment and food security to the majority of the population in the country and thus it is the most inclusive growth sectors of the Indian economy. The 12th Five Year Plan Approach Paper also indicates that agricultural development is an important component of faster, more inclusive sustainable growth approach.

The structural reforms and stabilization policies introduced in India in 1991 initially focused on industry, tax reforms, foreign trade and investment, banking and capital markets. The economic reforms did not include any specific package specifically designed for agriculture. In the postreform (since 1991) period, India has done well in some indicators such as economic growth, exports, balance of payments, resilience to external shocks, service sector growth, significant accumulation of foreign exchange, Information technology (IT) and stock market, improvements in telecommunications etc. GDP growth was around 8 to 9% per annum in the period 2004-05 to 2007-08. India is now 2 trillion dollar economy. Investment and savings rates were quite high 32 to 36%.

However, there have been exclusion problems in the country. In other words, real development in terms of growth shared by all sections of the population has not taken place. We have problems of poverty, unemployment, inequalities in access to health and education and poor performance of agriculture sector. One of the excluded sector during the reform period was agriculture which showed low growth and experienced more farmers' suicides. There are serious concerns on the performance of agriculture sector in the country. The post-reform growth was led by services. Commodity sector growth (agriculture+industry) has not been higher in the postreform period as compared to that of 1980s. Particular worry is agriculture sector which showed lower than 2% per annum in the decade of mid-1990s to mid-2000s. There are also concerns on food security and livelihoods.

PROGRAMMES & SCHEMES OF AGRICULTURE FARMER'S WELFARE:

1) Schemes of Extension Division

The schemes of Extension Division are encompassed under the broad umbrella of NMAET (National Mission on Agricultural Extension and Technology). NMAET consists of 4 Sub Missions:

- (i) Sub- Mission on Agricultural Extension (SMAE)
- (ii) Sub-Mission on Seed and Planting Material (SMSP)
- (iii) Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM)
- (iv) Sub-Mission on Plant Protection and Plant Quarantine (SMPP).

The Sub Mission on Agricultural Extension (SMAE) pertains to Extension activities. It focuses on awareness creation and enhanced use of appropriate technologies in agriculture & allied sectors. It has four main components, namely:

- i. Support to State Extension Programmes for Extension Reforms
- ii. Mass Media Support to Agricultural Extension
- iii. Establishment of Agri-Clinic and Agri-Business Centres by Agriculture Graduates (ACABC)
- iv. Extension Support to Central Institutions

The aforesaid components of Sub Mission on Agricultural Extension (SMAE) were run as separate schemes of Extension Division. These were recently subsumed under the umbrella of SMAE. Brief details about these are given in the subsequent paragraphs.

2) Support to State Extension Programmes for Extension Reforms

As the name suggests, this scheme supports the state governments in their Extension Activities. It aims at making extension system farmer driven by way of new institutional arrangements for technology dissemination in the form of an Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) at district level to operationalise the extension reforms. Funds are released to State Governments in accordance with the scheme guideline which is also dependant on the State Governments releasing their share of contribution.

3) Mass Media Support to Agricultural Extension

This scheme aims to enable a revamping of the extension services in the country by using electronic and print media for transfer of technology and information to the farmers. Five tier publicity and information support to the farmers and extension functionaries are provided as per activities detailed below:

- First tier Information Support through Doordarshan, All India Radio and private TV channel Programmes. The aim is to make the farmers aware of modern technologies and researches related to agriculture and allied areas. Short films, advertisements, audio-video spots etc are being relayed to popularize success-stories and good farm-practices;
- Second tier Information support through Print Media viz. newspaper ads, pamphlets and leaflets magazines, compendium of Schemes/Programmes etc.
- Third tier Information support through supporting/ organizing exhibitions, fairs, Kisan melas at National/Regional level.
- Fourth tier Information support through SMS / inward voice calls in Kisan Call Centres and Internet & Fifth tier Information support through integrating and facilitating delivery of information at the lowest level i.e. Block Level through Common Service Centres.

To harness the reach and popularity of Social media towards the benefit of Agriculture Extension, an emphasis towards using social media platform to connect with farmers and disseminate information to them is also being made with vigour.

4) Establishment of Agri-Clinic and Agri-Business Centre by Agriculture Graduates (ACABC)

This programme aims to tap the expertise available in the large pool of Agriculture Graduates. They can set up their own Agri-Clinic or Agri-business Centre and offer professional extension services to farmers. Agribusiness Centres would provide free/paid services/advice for enhancement of agriculture production and income of farmers. This is beneficial in two ways – it offers opportunities of gainful self-employment opportunities to unemployed agricultural graduates and also, supplements the efforts of public extension by providing advisory and extension services including know-how to the farmers at grass root level.

Under ACABC, a 2-month free-of-cost specialized training is provided by select institutes across the country to Agricultural Graduates interested in setting up such a centre. Subsidized loans and credit-facilities are also facilitated to the Agri-clinic entrepreneurs through commercial banks.

5) Extension Support to Central Institutions

This scheme aims towards capacity building of Extension functionaries and also, towards skill development of rural youth, farmer and farm-women. The prominent institutions involved in this effort are – Directorate of Extension (a subordinate office under Extension Division), MANAGE, Hyderabad (an autonomous institute associated with Extension Division), four Extension Education Institutes (EEIs) at the Regional level and the State Agricultural Management & Extension Training Institutes (SAMETIs) at the State level.

6) The main programmes under the scheme are as under:

A. Programmes for Capacity Building:

- i. **Extension Education Institutes (EEIs):** - Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has established four Extension Education Institutes at Nilokheri (Haryana); Hyderabad (Telangana); Anand (Gujarat) and Jorhat (Assam). These EEIs cater to the training needs of middle-level field extension functionaries working under agriculture and allied departments rainings, workshops, conferences etc. in the areas of communication technology, extension methodology, training management, Agriculture Knowledge Information System (AKIS) and Information Technology.
- ii. **Model Training Courses (MTCs):** - Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has established four Extension Education Institutes at Nilokheri (Haryana); Hyderabad (Telangana); Anand (Gujarat) and Jorhat (Assam). These EEIs cater to the training needs of middle-level field extension functionaries working under agriculture and allied departments of States/UTs of respective regions. The programmatic activities of EEIs include organization of on-campus/off-campus trainings, workshops, conferences etc. in the areas of communication technology, extension methodology, training management, Agriculture Knowledge Information System (AKIS) and Information Technology.
- iii. **Kisan Call Center(KCC) :** -The project aims to answer farmers' queries on a telephone call in their own dialect. Presently these call centers are working in 14 different locations covering all the States and UTs. A countrywide common eleven digit Toll Free Number 1800-180-1551 has been allotted for Kisan Call Center. This number is accessible through mobile phones and landlines of all telecom networks including private service providers. Replies to the farmers' queries are available from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm on all seven days of the week.

Kisan Call Center agents are known as Farm Tele Advisors (FTAs), who are graduate or above in agriculture or allied areas and possess excellent communication skills in respective local languages. Queries

which cannot be answered by FTAs are transferred to higher level experts in call conferencing mode. These experts are subject matter specialists of State Agricultural Departments, ICAR & State Agricultural Universities.

The restructured KCC has a number of unique features viz. 100% call recording; call barging; voice mail service; customized IVRs; call conferencing through the experts; playing state-specific advisories during call wait time; SMS to caller farmers giving a gist of answers given by FTAs and also, registration of farmers for receiving SMS from experts on the subject area provided by them for receiving regular updates on selected crops.

B. Programmes for Skill Development:

- i. Skill Training of Rural Youth (STRY): - The component aims at training rural youths, rural artisans (blacksmiths, carpenter etc. designing/manufacturing farm implements) including farm women across the country. The training under this component focuses on specific vocational areas in agriculture & allied sectors. Both Public and Private/Non-Governmental Institutions including Vocational Training organisations, Youth Organisations (like Nehru Yuva Kendra) are actively involved in implementation of this programme.
- ii. Farmers Capacity Assessment & Certification (FCAC): - It is aimed at providing recognition to traditionally skilled farmers including farm women in various sectors of agriculture & allied disciplines through certification. The exercise of certification covers the process of “Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Skill” by testing and certification process by a designated agency. The farmers/ farm-women, after obtaining the certificate, may be recognized for getting employment in the concerned skill sector by the prospective employers in the job market.
- iii. Diploma in Agricultural Extension Services for Input Dealers (DAESI): - Agri-Input Dealers in the country are a prime source of farm information to the farming community, besides the supply of inputs and credit. However, majority of these dealers do not have formal agricultural education. In order to build their technical competency in agriculture and to facilitate them to serve the farmers better and to act as Para-Extension professionals, a self-financed “One-year Diploma in Agricultural Extension Services for Input Dealers (DAESI) Program” has been launched during the year 2003 with a course fee of Rs.20000/- to the input dealers. National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE) is the nodal agency to run this program.

I. Centrally Sponsored Missions

1. National Food Security Mission (NFSM)
2. National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)

3. National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP)
4. National Mission on Agricultural Extension and Technology (NMAET)
5. Mission of Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)

II. Central Sector Schemes

6. National Crop Insurance Programme (NCIP)
7. Integrated Scheme on Agriculture Cooperation (ISAC)
8. Integrated Scheme for Agriculture Marketing (ISAM)
9. Integrated Scheme on Agriculture Census, Economics & Statistics (ISACE&S)
10. Secretariat Economic Service (SES)

III. State Plan Scheme

11. Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna (RKVY)

The schemes are constantly reviewed and evaluated at National, State and Zonal levels and taken up during meetings with States and during Zonal and National Rabi/Kharif season Conferences to identify the deficiencies in the implementation of the schemes. The deficiencies so identified are taken up with the State Governments concerned for remedial measures, viz modification of the schemes and/or its guidelines, for effective implementation.

BRIEF DETAILS OF MISSIONS/SCHEMES

I. MISSIONS

i. National Food Security Mission (NFSM)

NFSM aims to increase the production of rice, wheat, pulses and Coarse Cereals through area expansion and productivity enhancement; restoring soil fertility and productivity; creating employment opportunities; and enhancing farm level economy. The basic strategy of the Mission is to promote and extend improved technologies, i.e., seed, micronutrients, soil amendments, integrated pest management, farm machinery and resource conservation technologies along with capacity building of farmers.

ii. National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA)

NMSA has been formulated to make agriculture more productive, sustainable, remunerative and climate resilient by promoting location specific integrated/Composite Farming Systems; conserve natural resources through appropriate soil and moisture conservation measures; adopt comprehensive soil health management practices; optimize utilization of water resources through efficient water management to expand coverage for achieving 'more crop per drop; develop capacity of farmers & stakeholders, in conjunction with other on-going Missions and pilot models in select blocks for improving productivity of rainfed farming by mainstreaming rainfed technologies.

iii. National Mission on Oil seeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP)

The Mission aims to expand area under oilseeds, harness the potential in the area/ districts of low productivity, strengthening inputs delivery mechanism, strengthening of post harvest services besides a focus on tribal areas for tree bourn oilseeds.

iv. National Mission on Agricultural Extension & Technology (NMAET)

The Mission has four components viz : Sub Mission on Agriculture Extension, (SMAE) Sub Mission on Seed and Planting Material (SMSP), (iii) Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM) and (iv) Sub Mission on Plant Protection and Plant Quarantine (SMPP). The Mission aims to disseminate information and knowledge to the farming community in local language/ dialect in respect of agricultural schemes.

v. Mission of Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)

The Missions aims to promote holistic growth of horticulture sector, including bamboo and coconut through area based regionally differentiated strategies, which includes research, technology promotion, extension, post harvest management, processing and marketing, in consonance with comparative advantage of each State/ region and its diverse agro-climatic features; encourage aggregation of farmers into farmer groups like FIGs/FPOs and FPCs to bring economy of scale and scope; enhance horticulture production, augment farmers, income and strengthen nutritional security and improve productivity by way of quality germplasm, planting material and water use efficiency through Micro Irrigation.

II. CENTRAL SECTOR SCHEMES

i. National Crop Insurance Scheme (NCIP)

The Scheme aims to provide insurance coverage and financial support to the farmers in the event of crops failure as a result of natural calamities, pests and diseases as also to encourage farmers to adopt progressive farming practices, high value inputs and higher technology in agriculture.

ii. Integrated Scheme on Agriculture Cooperation (ISAC)

The objective of the scheme is to provide financial assistance for the activities of cooperatives like agro-processing, marketing of food grains, input supply, development of weaker section cooperatives, computerization of co-operatives etc. as also to develop cooperative awareness amongst the people and to cater to the education and training requirements of cooperative personnel and State Government officials.

iii. Integrated Scheme on Agriculture Marketing (ISAM)

The Scheme aims to promote creation of agricultural marketing infrastructure by providing backend subsidy support to State, cooperative and private sector investments; to promote creation of scientific storage capacity and to promote pledge financing to increase farmers' income; to promote Integrated Value Chains (confined up to the stage of primary processing only) to provide vertical integration of farmers with primary processors; to use ICT as a vehicle of extension to sensitize and orient farmers to respond to new challenges in agricultural marketing; to establish a nation-wide information network system for speedy collection and dissemination of market information and data on arrivals and prices for its efficient and timely utilization by farmers and other stake holders; to support framing of grade standards and quality certification of agricultural commodities to help farmers get better and remunerative prices for their graded produce; to catalyze private investment in setting up of agribusiness projects and thereby provide assured market to producers and strengthen backward linkages of agri-business projects with producers and their groups; and to undertake and promote training, research, education, extension and consultancy in the agri marketing sector.

iv. Integrated Scheme on Agriculture Census, Economics and Statistics (ISACE&S)

The Scheme aims to collect/ compile data of operational holdings in the country to provide aggregates for basic Agricultural Characteristics for use as the benchmark for inter-census estimates.

v. Secretariat Economic Service (SES)

The Scheme aims to provide support and services to the employees/ officers of the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation including provision of office equipments, furniture, office accommodation, renovation of rooms, transport services, newspaper, Magazines, Publicity and Advertisement expenditure, etc.

III. STATE PLAN SCHEME

(i) Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)

The Scheme aims to incentivize the States to increase investment in Agriculture and allied sectors to achieved 4% growth in agriculture sector. The scheme is available for any agriculture activity that can increase production growth in the agriculture and allied sectors.

CONCLUSION:

The scheme will provide all 145 million farm owners in the country with a soil health card in the next three years. The budget allotted Rs.100 crore for issuing cards and an additional Rs.56 crore to set up 100 mobile soil testing laboratories across the country. The soil health card details existing nutrient status of the soil and crop-wise recommendations of nutrients and fertilizers required, making it easier for farmers to improve productivity by using appropriate inputs. “Applying fertilizer, best quality seeds and ample water is not enough. Farmers should nurture their soil and know what inputs to use and in what quantities,” Modi said while launching the scheme. “Starting soil health laboratories could be an employment avenue for rural youth. In Gujarat where every farmer has a soil health card unnecessary expenses on inputs have come down and farmers have saved a lot of money.” The agriculture ministry released Rs.86 crore for the soil health card scheme. In comparison, between 2007-08 and April 2014, the ministry had spent Rs.112 crore on the scheme. The flagship scheme of the ministry has been sanctioned Rs.568 crore for the next three years. Imbalanced use of fertilizer is has led to declining crop productivity in the country, further fuelled by a skewed fertilizer policy where urea is heavily subsidized, leading to overuse. While urea consumption increased from 59% to 66% of total consumption in 2012-13 over 2010-11, per hectare consumption of fertilizer declined from 140kg to 128kg over the same period, noted the Economic Survey of 2014. Current trends in farm output reveal that the marginal productivity of soil in relation to the application of fertilizers is declining, it reported.

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