

## Helping the Ryot

By

S. N. VENKATARAMAN, B. A., B. Sc. Ag.,

State Marketing Officer, Madras.

To Agricultural workers in all walks of life whether in the field or in the laboratory, the most essential function is to help the ryot. The nature of the help and the capacity for help may vary with the position of the worker as well as the ryot. Help has to be rendered to the small illiterate ryot, the bigger land-lord, the manager of large Farms and on occasions to the ryots' community as a whole whether in any one locality or on wider field. Within the past decade partly due to the high prices following the war and partly due to the need for meeting shortages, there has been a greater intensity on the part of the ryots to take up agricultural improvements and this drive for better agriculture is likely to gain more and more opportunities in the five year plan for India, which is now finalised by the Prime Minister.

The great merit of the Five year plan is its large emphasis on agriculture. Agriculture provides the raw material for industry, the nucleus for expansion of Commerce and in a large measure the food for the common population. In the Five year plan, the allocation to agriculture and commodity development is of the order of 360 crores, to irrigation, 168 crores and to multipurpose irrigation and power 266 crores, or altogether about 37% of the total finance of 2,069 crores for the plan. Although the amount of 794 crores is by no means small its actual use spread over five years will depend on the proper utilisation to a country which is now producing annually about 5,000 crores of agricultural produce, besides a large standing wealth in the cattle populations.

Many agencies have their part to play in this work of agricultural expansion. There are social benefits as in the community programmes which should bring in a general expansion of living standards increasing amenities, better housing, better education and better purchasing power to ryot populations. These should be directed to meet the fundamental needs of the ryot as the freedom to cultivate his crops, freedom from exploitation and the freedom to market his produce without which agriculture can never have a stable existence. To a certain extent, Legislative enactments in the regulated markets will give freedom of markets to the ryots but the essential need of the plan is to work a proper price pattern, a pattern which should be able to produce by 1955-56, the increased target production of 6 million tons of food grains, 42 lakhs of bales of cotton, 54 lakhs of bales of Jute, 6.3 million tons of Sugarcane and 5.5 million tons of oilseeds. To a large extent, the irrigation programmes which are expected to cover 69 million acres, the power



programmes and the fertiliser programme of 4,50,000 tons of ammonium sulphate and 1,60,000 tons of super phosphate will provide the means to reach the targets of production but the actual realisation of the target will depend on the provision of facilities which will encourage the ryot to direct his cropping to reach the production goals.

The ryot can no longer be called conservative. He has grown millions of acres every year under improved seed and utilised lakhs of tons of fertilisers. Even in such large scale improvements involving heavy capital outlay like the Tractor schemes over seven lakhs of acres have been covered in India, which is by no means small. There has been also increasing use of green leaf and compost and a wider application of pesticides to valuable crops. All of this has been possible because the ryot has been profited by the endeavours and that he has been convinced of the utility thereof, over and above the costs. This should be the guiding principle in all agricultural improvements. Agricultural production should be related to agricultural costs, so that there should be a profit incentive to reach the targets through agricultural improvements. In other words, price patterns should work towards price support as well as agricultural stabilisation.

In the expansion of the agricultural plan, a necessary feature is the proper balance between large and small holdings, while the ultimate action should be an increase in the land cultivated by owners, there should be also facilities for agricultural enterprise through large farms which alone in the present state of agriculture can take up large commercial improvements. It may be said that the larger the farm, the greater its capacity for surplus food or production. Thus while hegemony in land ownership should be avoided, there should be scope for land management and enterprise, at any rate, till such time as production targets are more or less reached.

The five year plan following on an intensive drive for increased production will give to agricultural workers, opportunities for work and service to ryots which will cover an extensive field and on an intensive scale. To research workers there is great opportunity to enlarge their sphere of activity. Future Agriculture requires research work of a very high order as in the harnessing of waters to new crops and areas the provision against flood famines and cyclones, the remedies against pest invasions and, if possible, the creation of artificial rain or the utilisation of atomic energy in the service of the land. Research may even change the patterns of employment, providing for mechanical aids which will place lesser people on the land and more people in the industries. But whatever the method the aim of the research worker in helping ryots should be to place before them material and knowledge which will enable them in a comprehensive as well as extensive scale to utilise their land and crop resources to the greatest advantage.



To extension workers, the agricultural plan will provide, not only material for disseminating increased knowledge among ryots but also conditions which will give them better living standards and a greater utilisation of their resources. Apart from the social aspect which will be covered by the community schemes the aim of the agriculture worker should be to give a greater technical education in the application of improvements so that the ryot will not only be in a position to apply them, but will also get necessary endeavour to expand that knowledge in new lines and over wide areas. Opportunities there will be to help the individual ryots, as in providing cheap manure or seed or to help the larger community of ryots in providing amenities like pest control or crop improvement over a wide field; but in developing such opportunities there is great scope for technical workers to enrich the field and their contribution will have a very important place in not only improving the quality of work, but making it lasting to the large population of ryots and to the country at large.