

## What Next in Agricultural Extension

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We have been doing extension work for more than half a century and in the recent past have covered lakhs of acres with improved seeds and green manures through village seed farm schemes. It is no exaggeration to say that *Sesbania* has become a household word and that there does not exist a single ryot who does not know *Sesbania*. Each village has got a village Agricultural Association and each taluk a Taluk Agricultural Association functioning, apart from the Divisional Ryots' Association. These associations keep constantly in touch with the department and play a great part in extension work. These associations print a large number of leaflets detailing the remedial and preventive measures to be undertaken against pests and diseases and distribute them to the public. They give wide publicity about the Village Seed - Farms, green manures, pests and diseases, crop competitions, about cotton in rice fallows, and modified Japanese method, by putting slides in the local theatres at the appropriate times and thereby inducing people to step up production.

The members of these associations can be made to be of greater service to their fellow agriculturists by arranging inter-district exchange of farmers. The ryots of one division may not appreciate the value of cash crops like cotton, turmeric etc., but they can be easily convinced by taking them to other districts where they can see for themselves the growing of these cash crops. For instance, if the members of the Nagapattinam Taluk Agricultural Association are taken to a place like Coimbatore and shown the cotton crop or taken to Karur and shown a turmeric crop and explained the several advantages of growing such cash crops, the ryots will get impressed and in the next season they will be tempted to grow such crops. Likewise, if the Coimbatore or Karur ryots are taken to Nagapattinam and shown the three-mile belt of *Sesbania*, they will get impressed and will be tempted to grow the same in the next season. Without actually seeing the crops, the Agricultural Demonstrator explaining things will not bring very good results. For this purpose the State should undertake the responsibility of running extension specials and a fleet of extension buses equipped with loud speakers and other conveniences and manned by efficient and experienced extension publicity officers should be built up like a tourist service.

In the second five-year plan, there appears to be a proposal to cater to the needs of ryots in the matter of improved seeds by running

25 acre-blocks of seed farms. These seed farms can function effectively only if the seeds produced are exchanged against ryots' grain. Without sufficient drive the entire quantity of seeds produced would not be distributed and all the villages would not be covered. By having qualified officers in large numbers, large areas of seed farms can be supervised more critically. We can appeal to the trustees of temples and other religious institutions to give us some of the lands for starting these seed farms, and the money so saved can be made use of for paying the large number of officers appointed for running such seed farms. The seed produced at such farms can be exchanged for grain. The labourers of the farm may be paid half in kind and half in cash. The seed-farms can be maintained in such a way that they will attract the neighbouring farmers and other visitors who in turn will improve the standard of farming much to the prosperity of the nation as a whole. The produce of such seed farms can be distributed by taking them in lorries to the interior villages and exchanging the seed for the villager's grain.

So then the next step in extension work is greater participation of the farmers in the work of the Department by (1) exchanging the seeds produced in seed farms for their grain (2) by organising extension special trains and extension buses equipped with loud speakers and other conveniences in which members of village and taluk agricultural associations could be taken in hundreds to neighbouring districts by experienced officers and shown and explained the agricultural activities in well-run holdings, just as we take Agricultural College students. We must create in the minds of the mass of the ryots a feeling that we and they are joint partners in a great undertaking to double production and increase the standard of living of the mass of our people within the second five year plan period.

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