

The Role of Agricultural Department in Community Development and National Extension Service

by

SRI K. KUPPAMUTHU, B. sc., (Ag.),
Agricultural Department, Madras.

Introduction : The Role of the Agricultural Department in the Community Development and National Extension Services is dealt in two parts viz. (1) Community Development and National Extension Services and (2) the role of the Agricultural Department, as a knowledge of the aims and objects of the former is necessary to understand the latter.

Community Development and National Extension Services : Before the advent of the British, Indian villagers were leading a peaceful life with common interests in all the varied aspects of the village, like health, wealth, education etc. With the British occupation, factions, self interest etc. gained ground in the villages and stood in the way of creation of common interests resulting in inequalities amongst the villagers and the economic exploitation of the villages at the time of attainment of independence.

During the political struggle for freedom individuals like Mahatma Gandhi, preached constructive problems for the uplift of the villagers. Organisations like Theosophical Society, Ramakrishna Mission, etc. made attempts in this direction but were not fruitful. Their programmes failed to reach that important section of the Rural Community (Agriculturists) which controls the family budget and can bring about a vital change in the mental outlook of the rural areas. The potentiality of the rural population engaged in Agriculture are very great. The only thing required is their awakening in the right direction.

With the attainment of independence the Republican Government realised that the progressive forces among the rural people should be made use of to chalk out the path for their progress. So came the Community Development and the National Extension Service as timely organisation. It attempts to instil into the villagers an ambition for higher standard of living and, a will and determination, to work for such standards and in a short period has succeeded in achieving the same. It aims and at the same time provides all facilities and assists them in their efforts to build a new life to make rural life a real one in the economic and social aspects.

The Role of Agricultural Department: The Community Development and National Extension Service has enlightened the villagers and brought in a progressive change in the rural areas. The Agricultural Department has a great part to play in the achievements of such a progressive organisation.

The Primary needs of our villagers are food, cloth, shelter and health. Adequate food supply is an essential basis for a balanced economy of all. Agriculture is the most important National Industry in our country. The local people can produce their daily necessities of food etc. but the aim is to increase their standard of living. The population of the country has been increasing at a rapid rate of 1.1 percent per year and the increased population has to be fed. The area cropped has almost remained stationary. The ryots practice Agriculture in the old traditional lines and the soils have been exhausted over thousands of years and acre yields are low. With the changing conditions and the increased needs, increased production not only to meet our requirements but a decent living standard is also to be assured. To achieve this end increased crop production is the main solution. The various scientific investigations in the field of Agronomy, Plant Breeding, Soil Science, Plant Pathology, and other Agricultural sciences, have to be made use of by transmitting them to the agriculturists in the field through extension methods.

The most important thing in the methods of extension is the proper contact with the people. When a contact is made one should be in a position to solve their problems. The problems in the field of agriculture are many, the most important of them being timeold cultural practices, requirement of manures, want of pure seeds, existence of pests and diseases, etc. The role of the Agricultural Department is then to solve these problems to the advantage of the cultivators.

For the successful solving of the problems and to achieve the targets fixed in the National Plans, the people should be convinced about the improvements suggested and their participation should grow progressively. This is possible with the educational efforts and influence of the staff engaged in the work. This has been better achieved by the Department by posting adequate men trained in scientific Agriculture to work in the Community Development and National Extension Service blocks. According to the fifth evaluation report on the working of the Community Development and National

Extension blocks there is one Agricultural Specialist appointed for a population of 59,000 or for about 7,000 cultivators household. This, to a great extent, made it possible for the Extension Officers to have more frequent contacts with the ryots, impress on them the advantages of improved methods of agriculture by adopting various extension methods and to introduce them in a large number of holdings. Even this proportion is too large for a single specialist to study the problems in the block and to personally contact all the cultivators. Still some agricultural item or other, is the most important activity in a block as per reports of the Evaluation Committee, which shows that the Department is functioning to the best advantage of the villagers and in the line chalked out by the Community Development and National Extension Service as indicated in the following paragraphs.

Cultural Practices: In the preparation of the fields and in the raising of crops improved cultural practices which result in reducing the cost of cultivation and help in the increased production have been successfully demonstrated and introduced by the Department. As a result, the demand for improved implements has been on the increase and to meet the heavy demand, proposals have been made to start the manufacturing of agricultural implements by a Government concern. Of the various cultural methods advocated and introduced, Japanese method of cultivation alone has accounted for 5 percent of increased yields. This is slowly gaining ground with the cultivators through the activities of the Department and contributes to a great extent to the achievement of the Community Development and National Extension Service.

Manuring: Proper and judicious manuring is the main problem in the successful raising of crops. Organic matter is the most important factor of soil fertility but it declines rapidly than other factors. With intensive and extensive cultivation practices this problem became more and more serious. To maintain the soil fertility the department advocated very successfully the introduction and raising of green manure crops, growing trees of green leaf manure and the preparation of rural and urban composts. Together with these, the introduction of new fertilizers and the increased use of old fertilizers and chemical manures under proper guidance of the specialists, helped for the increased crop yields. The advantages of these manures have been well realised by the ryots and the demand for the chemical manures and fertilisers has increased so much that the full demand could not be met with at present.

Improved Seeds: Improved seed accounts for 10-15 percent of increased yields of crops. Its value has been established and ryots have taken to the use of improved seeds. It is considered to be the most important achievement and the multiplication and distribution of improved seeds, occupies the highest place in the activities of the Agricultural Department in the Community Development and National Extension Service blocks. To augment the local sources of supply of improved seeds State Seed farms have been established under the supervision of the Department in the block areas. Seeds from these are further multiplied in the Village Seed Farms for distribution to the cultivators. The position now with regard to the supply of improved seeds is more favourable.

Control of Pests and Diseases: This is one of the most important of all the items of Agricultural Extension Service. All developments and efforts, in other lines however successful they are, will be of no use if this problem is not solved by the Department and properly attended to by the cultivators. Hence special attention is paid by the department to educate the ryots to adopt all preventive and control measure against pests and diseases. Suitable pesticides and fungicides are stocked in the Agricultural Depots and distributed to the ryots. They are supplied at concession rates in pest declared areas. Co-operative Societies and big land owners are advised to own their own sprayers and dusters. There is a separate staff to attend to calls and give technical advice in addition to the staff in the block.

Thus the object of the Community Development and National Extension Service to increase the food production which is the basis for a higher economic and social life in villages, has been achieved to a great extent by the Agricultural Department in the Community Development and National Extension Service.

New Irrigation Techniques in the U. S. S. R.

by
M. PAVLOV

During the next seven years, the land under irrigation in the Soviet Union will be increased by 1.9 million hectares (a hectare is equal to 2.5 acres). This increase alone is almost twice the irrigated area of a country like Iran. But the development of irrigation in the U. S. S. R. is not limited to this alone. The plan calls for