

Intensive Agricultural Area Programme and High Yielding Varieties Programme

(A Study with reference to Coimbatore District (Madras State))

by

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To achieve the targetted goal of 120 million tonnes of foodgrains in the Fourth Plan, Intensive Agricultural District Programme was first launched in selected districts of the country. Encouraged by the results obtained, the Central Government initiated the Intensive Agricultural Area Programme in different districts of the States where favourable conditions exist for stepping-up food production. The Intensive Agricultural Area Programme launched in four districts of Madras State envisages intensive cultivation methods not only on food crops but also on crops that come in rotation in relatively larger areas where assured irrigation exists.

In addition to the Intensive Agricultural Area Programme, a High Yielding Varieties Programme was introduced in the year 1966 to create rapid strides in production, in Madras State.

The achievements recorded under High Yielding Varieties Programme in Coimbatore district, inspite of adverse seasonal conditions, were highly encouraging on account of the following factors :

The comprehensive field orientation training given to extension agency in advance of the season and also at intervals, had sufficient impact for bold approach, and established closer contacts with greater number of farming participants. Subject-matter Specialists also stressed clearly the principles and methods that are to be followed in the adoption of new package of practices which enabled the field workers to be technically sound. A model programme was also chalked out at block level for the District Agricultural Officer and the Regional Officers to guide thoroughly in the proper preparation of the plan for implementation at village-level and at block-level by assigning quantum of work to each *gramasevak* for each crop and each operation, and methods of executing it, with stress on timing the operations. A calendar of operations was also given as a guide to execute the work, in time and in season. The field extension officers and *grama-sevaks* were also tested frequently for their knowledge on the package of practices, and guidance were given wherever needed. The extension staff also conducted composite demonstrations and National demonstrations

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Prize winning article :— T. Nataraj Rolling Shield and medal, 1966.

which infused faith in the cultivators in proven recommendations which they adopted fully. The influences exerted by the demonstrations is very striking in the areas of operation.

For maximising the agricultural production, availability of full credit in time, and at reasonable rates of interest is as important as any other production requisite. The Annuity Credit Limit System was effectively enforced to help the agriculturists. This system enabled the agricultural field staff to co-ordinate the activities of the Co-operative, Public Works and Revenue Departments and helped the farmers to step up production.

The other major factor which contributed to outstanding results was the effective plant protection measures adopted as per schedule prescribed for cash crop. With careful planning, all the available plant protection appliances were utilized to the full extent. These measures had an impact on crop production and also created the awareness among the growers on the need for such action programme.

The Collector and the Officers of the Department gave a helping hand to the Agricultural Divisional Officers for raising crops successfully by regulating the meagre water resources that existed in the project areas. This regulation that was necessitated on account of drought served as an eye opener to understand the optimum usage of water in project areas.

Another feature that led to the success was the establishment of effective individual contacts and close follow-up of work in accordance to the plan, by the field staff. The field staff played effective role in the supplies of inputs and also aided for the efficient utilisation of the vital inputs to get maximum results.

The provision of input cards duly incorporating the farm requisites and utilising the cards for getting the supplies in preference to others not only educated the growers in assessing the requirements but also enabled them to procure material in full and in time, without fail. The introduction of input cards has also enabled the supervising authorities to verify and check up the follow-up action.

The following suggestions are expected to help in the successful and speedy implementation of the food production drives.

Administrative set up: There is need for reorganisation of the existing administrative apparatus at district level and at block level to successfully implement the High Yielding Varieties Programme and Intensive Agricultural Area Programme. The experience gained in the package schemes

that are implemented separately for commercial and other crops have shown that independent staff on package principles for food crops will go a long way in pushing through the programmes effectively. Since the success in High Yielding Varieties Programme depends on establishing individual contacts with farmers and effective follow-up in agricultural operations the pattern of staff need be increased at one Extension Officer for an area of 5,000 acres and one Demonstration Maistry for 1000 acres instead of the present pattern of employing one additional Agricultural Extension Officer for an area exceeding 10,000 acres which is not of help to make rapid strides.

At divisional level, the District Agricultural Officers are in charge of seed multiplication work, supply of pesticides and seeds and other services to the package areas under commercial crops. This responsibility can be taken up by the special package staff exclusively appointed for the purpose. In fact, it will aid the special staff to assess the requirements and also to plan and to move them in time towards greater progress in their schemes.

The divisional officers are to be given concurrent powers to exercise direct control over the Block Development Officers and subordinates serving in agricultural sector. There is also need to appoint a technical assistant to function as Personal Assistant to assist the District Agricultural Officers.

At present, the Deputy Director of Agriculture is in charge of four districts and is attending to administrative matters connected with various categories of staff. He is, therefore, not in a position to do justice both in extension as well as in administration. Hence there is the need to appoint at district level, a Project Officer in the rank of Deputy Director of Agriculture.

Consequent to the set up of Soil Testing Laboratories and passing on the results to the individual farmers, the services of an Agronomist will be useful for effective interpretation and follow-up of action and also to effect modifications in package of practices to suit local conditions.

The appointment of an Information Officer will be helpful to prepare audio-visual aids and to conduct campaigns to induce the farmers to take up improved practices. He will also undertake the timely projection of results and achievements recorded under composite demonstrations and other outstanding achievements witnessed in the course of implementation of the projects.

Administrative co-ordination: In addition to the Co-ordination Committee at the district level there is need to set up an Agricultural Cell confined to officials of the Departments of Agriculture, Minor-irrigation, Electricity,

Co-operation and Revenue with District Collector as the Chairman to discuss problems that could be solved within their realm without correspondence and pressure. He may be delegated with more powers to sanction materials and to stabilise the staff in field work, and to purchase and move equipment speedily to needed divisions.

The project officer may be delegated with adequate powers to keep the staff mobile for effective field work and be in charge of units like seed farms, soil testing laboratories, information workshops and plant protection squads etc. The Agricultural Cell will not only discuss problems but also undertake tours to the needed areas, examine, assess and arrange for necessary aids to give fillip to the programme on intensive cultivation.

Supply line: While distribution of fertilisers is vested with the Co-operatives and private dealers, the supply of other inputs like pesticides, seeds, implements etc., continue to be with agricultural depots. The Extension Officer, (Agriculture is heavily burdened in stocking and distributing them. Practically the Extension Officers have no mind and time to concentrate on field work for the fear that he has to answer for the huge stocks and cash transactions involved.

Though the Government have sanctioned for up-grading the posts of depot clerks to that of Assistants in order to give relief to the Extension Officer, it is found that he will not be devoid of exercising checks over supply line in depots. Seed Corporations may be started in all Intensive Agricultural Area districts to commence with, for multiplication and distribution of certified seeds and to that extent the burden of the Extension Officer may be relieved.

Corporations, private bodies and co-operatives have to take up the function of distribution of plant protection chemicals and equipments. The subsidy may be continued and reimbursed after verification of the accounts with the private bodies and co-operatives in charge. As an alternative, the prices of chemicals and equipments may be subsidised at the time of supply from the manufacture rather than granting subsidy at the time of sale to the grower. It should be made obligatory on the part of the co-operatives to operate on the tenders accepted by the Director of Agriculture on various plant protection chemicals and there is no need for the Agricultural department to purchase and move the stock to the co-operatives. The lifting of supply line from the agricultural depots will result in greater concentration of extension work by the Agricultural Officers.

The co-operatives are to be entrusted with sufficient finance to install net work of godowns at various heads and also to provide fleet of lorries for expeditious movement of materials to retail points.

Import policy is to be reoriented by importing efficacious pesticides, chemical manures in adequate quantities to meet the full requirements in advance of the season.

A beginning is to be made to manufacture plant protection appliances especially power-operated appliances indigenously so that foreign exchange can be saved.

Credit: We have to stabilise the Annuity Credit Limit system by effecting modifications based on the experience gained. There should be a greater integration of the co-operatives with agriculture. Since the co-operatives are handling supply line, it is obligatory on their part to take full responsibility for the complete supply of inputs handled by them.

There is need to simplify the procedures in administering loans. As High Yielding Varieties Programme will be further intensified, the Central Bank authorities should be able to command full financial resources, and be made responsible to assign priority to crops coming under the purview of High Yielding Varieties Programme and Intensive Agricultural Area Programme.

Training: At present, training is imparted by subject-matter specialists at all levels; but still inadequacy is felt in making it field oriented. The successful training programme depends upon the skill of trainers which is possible only when the experts are made to go to fields and take local experience also.

In all training camps, especially camps conducted to educate farmers, demonstration-cum-training camps are to be organised for the Intensive Agricultural Area Programme and High Yielding Varieties Programme, and literate farmers selected as convenors for farmer discussion groups. The discussion group is to function as an informal body and provide opportunities for the members of farmers to express their difficulties, their experiences and also gather information from official sources with a view to solve the problem. Starting of study circles or village action groups are essential to discover and develop village leadership and to equip the farmers fully to take up active part in participating in group activities.

Evaluation: Independent evaluation of the past achievements to guide the future pattern of work is very necessary at district level. The

staff in charge of the evaluation can assess the trend of progress under each component of the programme and also to assess actually the yield registered in unit areas.

Information and Publicity: Establishment of information units are highly essential to supplement the efforts of subject matter specialists and to carry out effective field oriented training as well as mass campaigns to inform the cultivators of the various elements of the programme and the proven recommendations and also the achievements recorded at farm holding to village, block and state level.

Incentives: The institution of awards for extension staff at all levels, village to divisional levels, apart from recognising the merits in personal files, is highly necessary to motivate the field workers to put forth their best. The Government should recognise the efforts of those members of the Tonnage Club who contribute to phenomenal increase in agricultural production.

Other equally high yielding varieties (apart from ADT. 27 and Taichung Native etc.) should also be recognised and included under the High Yielding Varieties Programme. There should be no discrimination when scientists pronounce that certain locally evolved strains are capable of giving equal or enhanced yields than the varieties which need introduction and acclimatisation.

The growers have pronounced judgement on the High Yielding Varieties Programme and it is a boon to them to raise the standard of living. The trend of yields recorded under the Programme is spectacular. In Coimbatore district ADT. 27 has yielded as much as 3983 kg per acre and the average for the district is 2500 kg per acre. To fulfil the aspirations of the growers for all the vital inputs there should not be any set back in supply line or in passing the technical know-how. In addition there should be stability of price of agricultural produce and it should serve the interest of both the grower and the consumer.

The implementation of all the above mentioned suggestions and recommendations will enable the food production programmes to gain momentum year after year and to achieve the National goal in agricultural production.
