

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION

Public research and extension has played a major role in increasing production and productivity in agriculture and allied sectors in the past. The nature and scope of agricultural extension has undergone fundamental changes since then. Transferring research results on farmers' fields is an important challenge facing us today. The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation has taken several initiatives to revitalize the agriculture extension system in the India. These initiatives include:

10.2 Support to State Extension Programmes for Extension Reforms: This scheme, launched during 2005-06, aims at making extension systems farmer driven and farmer accountable by way of new institutional arrangements for technology dissemination in the form of ATMA at the district level to operationalize the extension reforms. ATMA will have the active participation of farmers/farmer groups, NGOs, KVKs, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and other stakeholders operating at district level and below. The release of funds is based on State Extension Work Plans (SEWPs) prepared by the State Governments. It is proposed to cover 252 districts across all the states/UTs during the Tenth Plan.

10.3 The plethora of activities being supported under the scheme includes state-level activities viz. SAMETIs, training and exposure visits of extension functionaries, state-level exhibitions, monitoring and evaluation, rewards and incentives, etc. The district-level activities include farmer-oriented activities (training, demonstration, exposure visit, group mobilisation and capacity building), information dissemination (exhibition, information technology, and print media), research extension farmer linkages, etc. In order to ensure that key reforms under the scheme are adequately addressed, the following policy parameters are specified:

- **Multi-agency extension strategies:** Minimum 10 per cent of allocation on recurring activities at district level is to be used through non-governmental sector viz. NGOs, Farmers Organisations (FOs), PRIs, para-extension workers, agricultural entrepreneurs, input suppliers, the corporate sector, etc.
- **Farming system approach:** The activities specified are broad enough to promote an extension delivery consistent with a farming systems approach and extension needs emerging through a Strategic Research and Extension Plan (SREP).
- **Farmer-centric extension services:** It provides for group-based extension and it has necessary allocation for activities related to organizing and supporting farmer groups. In order to supplement these efforts, a provision for rewards and incentives to the best organized farmer groups has also been provided.
- **Convergence:** The SREP and SEWP would also be mechanisms for ensuring convergence of all activities for extension. At present, resources for extension activities are being provided under different schemes of the Central/State Governments. It is mandated that the SEWP to be submitted by the state

Governments for funding under the scheme shall explicitly specify the activities to be supported from the resources of other ongoing schemes as well as from this scheme.

- **Mainstreaming gender concerns:** It is mandated that a minimum 30 per cent of resources on programmes and activities are utilized for women farmers. Similarly, 30 per cent of resources meant for extension workers are to be utilized for women extension functionaries.
- **Sustainability of extension services:** It is mandated that a minimum contribution of 10 per cent should be realized from beneficiaries with respect to beneficiary-oriented activities.

10.4 The implementation status of these activities since May 2005, where these were launched is briefly indicated below:

- There are 27 states and two UTs that have already established ATMAs in 261 districts till January 2007.
- Over 1100 master trainers have been trained in 27 states.
- The SEWPs of 25 states were approved in 2005-06 and those of 20 states have been approved till 31 December 2006 during 2006-07.
- Over 421,000 farmers including 1.54 crore farm women (36 per cent) have benefited through farmer-oriented extension activities viz. exposure visit, training, demonstration, kisan melas/goshties up to 31 December 2006.
- As against BE of Rs 50.00 crore, a sum of Rs 30.57 crore has been released to the states up to 31 December 2006.

10.5 **Gender Mainstreaming:** The ATMA programme provides that a minimum of 30 per cent of available resources are to be utilized for women farmers. In order to provide necessary emphasis, the erstwhile Women Cell of the DOE has been restructured as the NGRCA. This centre is also mandated to perform functions of the Gender Budgeting Cell of DAC. The studies initiated by the NGRCA include:

- The development of a gender sensitisation module for programme implementers.
- The development of participatory material production and documentation of success stories of women farmers.
- The evaluation and impact assessment of central sector scheme, 'Women in Agriculture'.
- The assessment of incidence of benefits to women farmers under DAC schemes and its cost of delivery.

10.6 **Mass Media Support to Agriculture Extension:** This is a central sector scheme launched in April 2005 in its current form. The existing infrastructure of DD and AIR is being utilised for the production and telecast of 30-minute agricultural programmes five or six days a week. Programmes are being produced by 36 narrowcasting centres (high/low power transmitters), 18 regional kendras and DD's national channel, as well as

96 FM stations of AIR. Farmers' feedback is being collected regularly through the Audience Research Units (ARUs) of DD and AIR. State/district-level monitoring committees are mandated to guide and monitor implementation of the scheme at the respective levels.

10.7 Audio/video spots on emerging issues viz. Rabi/Kharif campaign, Kisan Call Centres, Kisan Credit Card, MSPs, etc. are also publicised through these programmes using free commercial time. The scheme also has provisions for training, capacity building, etc.

10.8 An amount of Rs 104.22 crore has been released to Prasar Bharati up to 31 December 2006.

10.9 **Agri-Clinic and Agri-Business Centres:** This is a central sector scheme which aims to promote the delivery of extension and other services in a self-employment mode. Graduates in agriculture and allied sectors are eligible under the scheme. The full cost of training in agri-business development is supported. NABARD monitors the credit support to agri-clinics through commercial banks.

10.10 During the current year (up to 31 December 2006) out of the targeted 3000 candidates to be trained, 1960 candidates including 120 women candidates. There are 730 candidates that have been trained including 13 women candidates who have set up agri-ventures. An amount of Rs 3.00 crore has been released for the implementation of the scheme.

10.11 The provision of a credit-linked back-ended subsidy at the rate of 25 per cent of the capital cost of the project funded through a bank loan, as well as full interest subsidy for the first two years on the bank credit, has recently been approved under the scheme. The subsidy would be 33.33 per cent in respect of candidates belonging to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, women and other disadvantaged sections and those from North-Eastern and hill states.

10.12 **Kisan Call Centres:** This is a Central Sector Scheme launched with the objective to provide information on demand to the farming community through toll-free telephone lines throughout the country. These call centres operate from 6.00 am to 10.00 pm, seven days a week. Replies to farmers' queries are being given in 21 local languages. State-level monitoring committees are mandated to monitor implementation of the scheme at the state level. Since the launch of the scheme on 21 January 2004, over 19.50 lakh calls have been received in the Kisan Call Centres. As against the BE of Rs 6.75 crore for the current financial year, a sum of Rs 2.21 crore has been released up to 31 December 2006.

10.13 **Agriculture Summit 2006:** The Agriculture Summit 2006 on the theme 'Reforms for Empowering the Farmer', was organized by the Ministry of Agriculture jointly with FICCI at Vigyan Bhavan on 18–19 October 2006. It sought to accelerate and consolidate the process of change in the farm sector, while simultaneously creating

awareness and better understanding of such a process. A large number of farmers from different states, representatives of private sector companies, Central and State Governments, scientists and others had participated in the Summit.

10.14 HRD Support: The DAC has strengthened a network of training institutions in the country by supporting MANAGE at Hyderabad; four regional EEIs at the regional level and SAMETIs at the state level.

- **MANAGE:** This institute provides training support to senior and middle-level functionaries of the State Governments. It also provides necessary support to the states in the implementation of the extension reforms (ATMA) scheme. Against 100 training courses planned, 78 training courses with 2030 participants have been organized by MANAGE up to 31 December 2006. Against the budget allocation of Rs 4.70 crore, an amount of Rs 3.29 crore has been released up to 31 December 2006.

The self-financing educational training courses viz. the two-year postgraduate programme in agri-business management, one-year postgraduate diploma in agri-warehousing and cold chain management, and one-year distance education diploma in agricultural extension services for input dealers are being continued during the year 2006-07 at MANAGE.

- **EEIs:** Four EEIs namely, Nilokheri (Haryana), Rajendranagar (Andhra Pradesh), Anand (Gujarat), and Jorhat (Assam), are operating at the regional level for training middle-level functionaries working in agriculture and line departments in States. During 2006-07, EEIs have conducted 85 courses with 1808 participants till 31 December 2006. Out of the budget allocation of Rs 1.50 crore, the expenditure of Rs 0.99 crore has been incurred till 31 December 2006.
- **Model Training Courses:** These courses, on thrust areas of agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, and fisheries etc., are supported by the DOE through SAUs, ICAR and other national institutes. During the current year, 12 training courses with 235 participants have been organized till the end of December 2006. Of an amount of Rs 0.23 crore that was earmarked for the programme, Rs 0.20 crore has been released till 31 December 2006.

10.15 Exhibitions/Fairs: The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation participated in the India International Trade Fair 2006 organized by Indian Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO). In addition, the Krishi Expo was organized in February 2007. The DOE supported five regional exhibitions during 2006-07; one at Ludhiana (Punjab), held between 21-22 September 2006; and those at Samastipur (Bihar), Indore (MP), Trissur (Kerala); and Umain (Meghalaya) to be organised by SAUs/ICAR institutes. The DOE participated in Agro-Tech at Chandigarh from 1-4 December 2006 and in the Kisan Exhibition at Pune from 13-17 December 2006. State and district-level fairs are supported under the ATMA programme.

10.16 National Productivity Awards: These awards aim to encourage productivity enhancement in the agriculture sector by various organizations and are given in 10 disciplines of agriculture, dairy development, fisheries, horticulture, etc. The awards are processed through the National Productivity Council.

10.17 Research–Extension Interface: A system of season-wise interface between the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, the ICAR and the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries (DAHD&F) was initiated during the pre-Kharif and pre-Rabi phases in January 1995. So far, 22 interfaces have been organized by the Department. The last interface in the series, i.e., the Pre-Rabi Interface 2006, was organized on 24 and 30 September 2006.

10.18 Pilot Initiative on Capacity Building through Distance Learning: A pilot initiative on capacity building through distance learning has been taken up in collaboration with the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). It would provide information/ knowledge to enrolled extension workers in both governmental and NGO sectors on value-added products from fruits and vegetables. During the year 2006-07, out of the earmarked funds of Rs 20.00 lakhs, Rs 19.68 lakhs have been released to IGNOU for this purpose.

10.19 Support to DOE: The rapidly changing extension scenario calls for redefining the roles, responsibilities and restructuring of the DOE to enhance its effectiveness and operational efficiency. The DOE has accordingly been restructured to meet current and future challenges.

10.20 Central Monitoring and Evaluation: The specific activities under this component include (i) central monitoring and evaluation of schemes by engaging institutions of repute; and (ii) outsourcing case studies on critical areas. The evaluation of the Kisan Call Centres scheme by ASCI, Hyderabad, has been completed. Evaluation of the mass media scheme and agri-clinic and agri-business centre schemes are under process.

10.21 Programmes for North-Eastern States: The details of programmes under implementation in the North-Eastern states are given in **Annexure 10.1**.