

FUNCTIONS AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation formulates and implements national policies and programmes aimed at achieving rapid agricultural growth and development, through the optimum utilisation of India's land, water, soil and plant resources. The Department essentially supplements and complements the efforts being made by the state governments to promote agricultural production and productivity. It also directly intervenes in matters connected with trade, price policy, credit, etc.

3.2 Some of the more important functions discharged by the Department to achieve the aforesaid objectives are briefly indicated below:

- endeavouring adequate and timely supply of inputs and services such as agricultural credit, fertilisers, pesticides, seeds and implements to the farmers;
- administering the Crop Insurance Scheme to provide relief to the farmers in the event of crop failure;
- laying down MSPs for certain key agricultural commodities to ensure food security in India and remunerative prices for farmers;
- assisting states in the management of drought and to undertake scarcity relief measures;
- endeavouring to bring about the integrated development of marketing of agricultural produce to safeguard the economic interests of the farming community;
- assisting the state governments to improve agricultural extension services by adopting new institutional arrangements through the involvement of NGOs, farmers' organisations and agricultural universities;
- promoting plant protection measures through the dissemination of appropriate information and technology;
- working towards promoting measures for production of quality seeds and distribution of improved plant varieties;
- developing suitable strategies for rain-fed farming through, inter alia, people's participation for holistic and integrated development of potential watershed and the promotion of a farming system approach for augmenting income and the nutritional level of farming communities; and
- strengthening the cooperative movement through appropriate policy measures and also through organisations like the National Cooperative Development Cooperation (NCDC), NAFED and the National Cooperative Union of India (NCUI).

3.3 The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority has been set up with the objective to stimulate investment for research and development of new plant varieties and also to facilitate the growth of the seed industry in India to ensure the availability of high quality seeds and planting material to Indian farms. The Department is also working actively to protect our national interests in forums like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and participate in activities of other international organisations for fostering bilateral cooperation in agricultural and allied sectors to promote the export of agricultural commodities. The National Seed Research and Training Centre (NSRTC) at Varanasi will impart training to personnel working in various seed development organizations. This centre will also act as the Central Seed Testing Laboratory.

3.4 **Structure:** The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation is one of the three constituent departments of the Ministry of Agriculture. The other two Departments of the Ministry are the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries and the Department of Agricultural Research and Education. The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation is headed by the Agriculture Minister assisted by a Minister of State. The Secretary (Agriculture and Cooperation) is the administrative head of the Department and Principal Adviser to the Minister on all matters of policy and administration within the Department. The Secretary (Agriculture and Cooperation) is assisted by a Principal Advisor, four Additional Secretaries, one Financial Adviser, the Agriculture Commissioner, nine Joint Secretaries, one Horticulture Commissioner, one Agricultural Marketing Adviser and one Economic Adviser.

3.5 The Department is organized into 24 divisions and a Technology Mission on Oilseeds, Pulses and Maize (**Annexure – 3.1**). In addition, it has 4 attached offices and 21 subordinate offices spread all over India for coordination with state-level agencies and implementation of central sector schemes in their respective fields (**Annexure – 3.2**). There are in all 2 PSUs, 7 autonomous bodies and 11 national-level cooperative organisations under the administrative control of the Department (**Annexure – 3.3**). In addition, two authorities, namely, the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority and the National Rain-fed Area Authority (NRAA) have been set up.

3.6 **Administrative Improvements:** Concerted efforts have been made to improve the functioning of the Department. An administrative vigilance unit functions under a joint secretary designated as chief vigilance officer to ensure a clean and corruption-free work environment through surveillance, preventive and punitive measures. The Joint Secretary in charge of Vigilance has been nominated as the Nodal Officer to coordinate and monitor action on complaints and allegations of corruption. In pursuance to the instructions of the Central Vigilance Commission, a Vigilance Awareness Week was observed in the Department from 6 –10 November 2006.

3.7 In pursuance to the implementation of The Right to Information Act 2005, the Department has established a dedicated cell for providing information to citizens. The mandated information under the Act has been posted on the website of the Department. In the year 2006-07 (up to 31 December 2006), 239 applications seeking information

under the Act were received, of which 217 applications were disposed off in the same period.

3.8 The public grievances cells set up in the Department, as well as in its attached and subordinate offices continue to ensure the speedy redressal of grievances received from the public or employees directly or through the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances. The Joint Secretary (Administration) in the Department has been designated as Director of Grievances and assigned the responsibility to ensure the expeditious disposal of grievances. Any aggrieved person/party who has a grievance can meet him on Wednesdays between 10:00 am to 1:00 pm.

3.9 To ensure effective and responsive administration, a NICNET-based information and facilitation counter has been set up. In addition, a computerised self-operating information kiosk has been established for facilitating free and independent access to the general public. It provides information on all the departments under the Ministry of Agriculture. During the year 2006-07 (up to 31 December 2006), 2,335 persons (from NGOs and the general public) visited the counter to obtain information on various agriculture-related subjects.

3.10 A citizen's charter has been prepared and made public through the print and electronic media. The Joint Secretary (Administration) has been nominated as Nodal Officer and contact officer with a view to ensuring the proper formulation and effective implementation of the Citizen's Charter. The Charter (**Annexure – 3.4**) is available on the website of the Department www.agricoop.nic.in.

3.11 **Progressive Use of Hindi:** The Department has an Official Language Implementation Committee (OLIC) chaired by the joint secretary (administration) in the Department to monitor the implementation of the official language policy of the centre and the progressive use of Hindi in the official work of the Department. During the year under report, quarterly meetings of OLIC were held regularly. Divisional committees have also been constituted under the respective heads of divisions to promote the use of Hindi in official work.

3.12 The Hindi division continues to review the position of the progressive use of Hindi in the Department and its attached/subordinate offices regularly through quarterly progress reports. The officers of the Hindi division also participated in OLIC meetings and extended necessary guidance to them in the implementation of the Official Languages Act and Rules framed thereunder. During the year, officers of the Hindi division inspected various offices under the control of the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation to review the progressive use of Hindi in their official work. In addition, 68 offices of the Department, wherein 80 per cent of the officers/employees have acquired a working knowledge of Hindi, were notified in the Gazette of India under Rule10(4) of the Official Language Rules, 1976.

3.13 During the year, three officers/employees of the Department were nominated for training in Hindi in Prabodh, Praveen and Pragma courses under the Hindi Teaching

Scheme of the Department of Official Language. Similarly, nine Lower Division Clerks and 20 Stenographers were nominated for training in Hindi typewriting and Hindi stenography respectively.

3.14 Three employees were given cash awards during the year 2006-07 for doing original noting and drafting in Hindi under the incentive scheme for promoting the use of Hindi in the official work of the Department.

3.15 With a view to creating awareness in the use of Hindi in official work of the Department, a 'Hindi Fortnight' was organised from 14-27 September 2006. On this occasion, the union minister for agriculture issued an appeal to all the officers and staff of the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation for increasing their output of work in Hindi. During the Fortnight, a Hindi workshop was organised on 22 September 2006, for the benefit of officials working in the Department. Also, various Hindi competitions, such as essay writing, noting and drafting, translation and vocabulary, poetry recitation and debates, were organised. A dictation competition was organised separately for Group 'D' employees. Cash awards and certificates of appreciation were given to the winners of these competitions.

3.16 The second sub-committee of the Committee of Parliament on Official Language conducted inspection of 13 offices of the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation to review the position regarding the progressive use of Hindi in official work during the year.

3.17 Employees possessing a working knowledge or proficiency in Hindi were deputed to undergo training in Hindi workshops organised by the Hindi division from time to time during the year under report.

3.18 **Reservation for Scheduled Castes (SCs)/Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Castes (OBCs) :** The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation continued its endeavour for strict compliance and implementation of the orders issued by the Government of India from time to time regarding reservation in services for SCs, STs, OBCs, ex-servicemen and physically challenged persons.

3.19 A special recruitment drive was launched to fill the backlog reserved vacancies of SCs and STs under the direct recruitment, as well as promotion quota, in a time-bound manner. An officer of the level of Joint Secretary had been nominated as the nodal officer for this special recruitment drive and to monitor and coordinate the special efforts in the Department and its attached/subordinate offices, PSUs and autonomous bodies.

3.20 **Grievance Redressal of Women Employees:** A high-power committee headed by a lady joint secretary is functioning in the Department to look into complaint(s) of sexual harassment to women employees. During the year, no complaint has been received from any woman employee in the Department proper.