

PRESS NOTE

Dated the 4th April 2007

The two day Kharif Campaign Conference 2007-08 was concluded on 4th April 2007. Within the Conference, the Ministry of Agriculture proposed its strategy to achieve 4% agricultural growth in the Eleventh Plan period for consideration and deliberation by states and other participants.

2. The conference was chaired by Dr. P.K.Mishra, Secretary (Agriculture & Cooperation). The Conference was also addressed by Dr. J.S. Sarma, Secretary, Department of Fertilizers and Ms. Charusheela Sohoni, Secretary, Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairy and Fisheries. It was attended by the policy makers, scientists, administrators and researchers. The participants in the two days Conference included State Agriculture Production Commissioners/Agriculture Secretaries, Vice-Chancellors of State Agriculture Universities, Officers of various departments/organizations of Central Government such as DAC, Department of Space, India Meteorological Department, National Horticulture Board, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Department of Fertilizers, Planning Commission and others.

3. Dr. S.M. Jharwal, Principal Adviser, DAC, welcomed the participants to the two days Conference. He referred to the Approach Paper for the 11th Plan, approved by the National Development Council and Draft National Policy for Farmers based on the recommendations of National Commission for Farmers, and highlighted the need to translate their recommendations into an action plan.

4. In his inaugural address, Secretary (DAC) stated that agriculture is at a cross road but there are immense opportunities. He stressed on the need for achieving 4% growth in agriculture and allied sectors. He referred to the constraints which the agriculture sector is facing like agrarian distress, agricultural risks, spatial and temporal climatic aberrations and vulnerability for food security. He also referred to the problems of land degradation, soil nutrient deficiency, imbalanced use of fertilizers, depleting water resources which need urgent attention. He highlighted the need for concerted efforts to revamp the seed management system, agriculture extension system and development of horticulture sector.

5. He stressed that there is need now for preparing an action plan which could be implemented in medium term for identified areas such as food security, production of pulses and oilseeds, availability of quality seeds, extension system, horticulture sector and the present Conference should come up with a road-map for revitalizing the agriculture sector and enhancing income of farmers.

6. The states have to finalize their strategy for the 11th Plan to achieve 4% agricultural growth by making it area specific and crops specific. The thrust areas identified were:

- extension of area and productivity of major food crops of the States, depending upon its agro-climatic zones, including a major thrust on the pulses and oilseeds sector.
- focused attention to the development of rainfed and dry-land areas, through the introduction of better watershed management techniques coupled with appropriate farming and livelihood system approaches.
- improving farm income through implementation and monitoring of horticulture development through an area based approach and strengthening of post harvest management.
- timely availability of quality seeds in adequate quantity and, therefore, the need to undertake a Nation-wide campaign on the development of quality seeds, particularly of pulses, through the Central and State agencies and improve the seed replacement rates in a determined and sustained manner,
- immediate revamp of the extension system to improve delivery mechanism at the grass root level with special emphasis on strengthening ATMA and the use of information technology through mechanisms such as Kisan Call Centres. The existing scheme is being strengthened in this regard.
- farmers welfare especially risk mitigation, reduction of rural distress and ensuring that farmers earn a minimum net income, through a better social security system, adequate insurance coverage and reduction of agricultural indebtedness.
- a greater role for the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the agriculture sector, specifically in agriculture insurance, extension services, rainfed area development etc.

7 Keeping in view the enormity of the task at hand, the delegates to the conference felt the need for substantial increase in the Plan allocation for agriculture and the allied sectors both in the Central and State Plans for the XI Plan period.

8. The above deliberations were held during the National Conference on Agriculture for Kharif Campaign 2007-08 held on 3-4th April, 2007, at New Delhi. On 4th April 2007, Honourable Union Agriculture Minister, Sh. Sharad Pawar, also addressed the Conference. Secretary (DAC) welcomed the Agriculture Minister and gave a brief account of the discussions held in the Conference so far. He also invited senior officers from Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan to briefly intimate the efforts made by their State Governments in increasing the wheat production and likely production estimates this year. The State Government officers informed that despite few losses due to rains during February/March this year, the wheat production prospects are very bright and it will be quite high as compared to last year. The Agriculture Minister also highlighted measures taken by the Union Government this year for increasing wheat production like increase in MSP and bonus. He expected that with

high availability of wheat this year, procurement would be adequate to meet PDS requirements and prices will be relatively comfortable. As desired by him a presentation was made by National Centre for Agriculture Economics and Policy Research of ICAR on demand and supply projections for the years 2011-12 and 2020-21. It was highlighted that the rate of growth of foodgrains at present is 0.7% and there is a need to increase it to 2.21% for meeting increasing requirements of foodgrains of the country for food and other uses. He added that requirement of foodgrains for feed, processed food and industrial uses has reached about 28% of the production. It was pointed out that over the years, rates of power supply, investment in agriculture, terms of trade, fertilizers consumption etc have not grown as per the requirements which have made the supply position of foodgrains very critical. He indicated that if the Terms of Trade are made favourable to the farmers and other input constraints are taken care of, the foodgrains production will rise positively.

9. The Agriculture Minister stressed upon the need to adopt focused approach to give new direction to 11th Five Year Plan in the areas of irrigation, power supply, seed replacement rate, extension system, remunerative prices to farmers, crop diversification including horticulture sector and credit. He emphasized on the need for associating Panchayat Raj Institutions as well as research institutes in the Kharif and Rabi campaigns for boosting foodgrains production.

10. The Secretary, Department of Fertilizers, assured the State Governments that his Department will ensure adequate supply of fertilizers. He referred to the innovative steps being taken in this regard such as maintaining buffer stock of fertilizers in the major States, arranging availability of 75% of the requirement of fertilizers by 1st of the month, and 100% of the demand by 15th of the month and online monitoring of the arrangements at the district and State levels. He urged the States to ensure equitable distribution of fertilizers within the districts.

11. The Secretary, Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, referred to the alarming gap in the demand and supply of both dry and green fodder and informed that a Livestock Food Production Corporation is being set up for promoting production and consumption of nutritious fodder and feed by the animals. She also referred to the shortage of maize being felt by the poultry industry and rising prices of maize in the market which need urgent attention. She added that a National Fisheries Development Board has been set up to realize the untapped potential of the fisheries sector which can contribute towards growth of agriculture and allied sectors. She stressed the need for maintaining symbiotic and complementary relationship between agriculture and livestock.

12. Agriculture Commissioner in his presentation referred to increasing demand for foodgrains and the problems being faced in increasing their production such as untapped yield potential, imbalanced use of nutrients. He also referred to the interventions required such as targeting potential areas, increased use of hybrids, increasing seed replacement rates, use of modern agricultural practices, development of improved varieties, bringing

fallow land under cultivation, promoting inter-cropping in case of pulses, improving quality seed production and encouraging seed treatment with fungicides.

13. Presentations were also made relating to area based approach for horticulture development, improvement of agricultural statistics, revamping of extension system at the grass root level, promotion of seed treatment, quality control of pesticides, adequate and timely availability of fertilizers and on indigenous innovations in agriculture. An interactive session on emerging issues also took place.

14. The State Governments in their presentations highlighted area coverage and likely production estimates during 2006-07 and the state of their preparedness for upcoming Kharif 2007. The States expressed their optimism about agricultural production during 2007. They also put forward their road-map for achieving 4% growth in agriculture and allied sectors. Based on the assessments given by the State Governments, the third advance estimates of crop production for 2006-07 were also finalized which are given in Annexure-I. After detailed deliberations, the Conference also arrived at a number of conclusions and recommendations which are given in Annexure-II*