



Impact of Bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh on Agriculture Sector

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ABSTRACT

Andhra Pradesh State is "the bejewelled rice bowl of India". Agriculture plays an important role in the livelihoods of people as 70% of the population in Andhra Pradesh live in rural areas and depend on agriculture and related livelihood opportunities. The agriculture plays an important role not only in the economy but also for achieving the food security for the state and also for the country. Our main challenges are, growing water scarcity, degrading natural resources like land and decreasing per capita availability of land and water resources. Further, rain fed agriculture in the whole state and irrigated agriculture in the coastal region is very much vulnerable to the impacts of natural calamities.

1. Introduction

"Everything else can wait but not Agriculture" Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

Andhra Pradesh in its present form has been formed after bifurcation of the united Andhra Pradesh on June 2nd 2014. The residuary Andhra Pradesh has inherited several resources but also has got several issues as fallout of bifurcation. The state is politically and geographically divided into two regions – Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema. The former has nine districts while the latter has four districts. The State consists of six agro climatic zones and five different soil types to grow wide range of crops throughout the year.

2. Impact of bifurcation on agriculture sector

- Agricultural education, research and extension: In united Andhra Pradesh there is one Agricultural University, located in Hyderabad and presently it is in Telangana state. So the important laboratories like DNA Finger Printing, Tissue culture, NMR Oil analysis are in Telangana state. Colleges and Research Stations, based on the location, are allotted to respective States.
- Department of Agriculture: The DNA finger printing & transgenic crops monitoring laboratory, Bio-pesticides quality control laboratory and pesticide residue testing laboratory are located in Hyderabad and are allotted to Telangana State. No such facilities are available in A.P. and they are high level technology labs. The apex agriculture training institute SAMETI is also allotted to Telangana state. It takes considerable time and expenditure to develop such facilities in A.P.
- Seed industry: Major portion of paddy seed production is taken up in Telangana region, whereas pulses and groundnut major seed production is in Andhra Pradesh. Regarding other crops the seed production is taken up in both the States. There are 969 private seed processing units in Telangana as against 309 in Andhra Pradesh. As a result the capacity or facility of seed processing or supply are affected adversely in the state of Andhra Pradesh
- Natural calamities: Due to natural calamities, in last six years (2008-09 to 2013) an area of 20.18 lakh ha was affected in united Andhra Pradesh and out of that, 15.16 lakh ha falls in 13 districts of residuary Andhra Pradesh. So, seventy five percent of the area prone to natural calamities is in residuary Andhra Pradesh.

The goal of the achieving food and nutritional security, with growing water scarcity, degrading land resources, depleting per capita availability of water and land and the impacts of climate change, has become a big challenge to the state. There is need to evaluate the results of different initiatives taken during the previous years and to reorient the strategies as the productivity of major crops has stagnated. There is need for a very comprehensive long term planning encompassing all the Government and Non Government agencies in agriculture sector

3. Strategies for enhancing Agricultural Productivity

The government is taking up extension activities in a big way and utilizing the campaign modes to educate farmers in all possible forms. The issue of food security as well as nutritional security and improved livelihoods for rural people need urgent attention and following steps are proposed for sustainable intensification of agriculture.

3.1 Organic farming

To ensure healthy agricultural produce and to save the soil, extensive program will be taken up for encouraging the organic farming program by coordinating programmes of both agriculture department and SERP.

3.2 Farm mechanization:

Farm mechanisation accelerates the pace of the growth in agriculture sector. Focus will be to make available the best machinery for farming operations like land preparation, sowing, inter cultivation, harvesting and post harvesting. Establishing Custom Hiring Centres (CHC) and Implement Hiring Stations (IHS) which facilitates the availability of high cost machinery to small and marginal farmers on hire basis will be a priority item.

3.3 Developing Andhra Pradesh state as seed industry hub

The farmers of the state will be encouraged to produce their own seed through Seed Village Programme (SVP) to make quality seed available at the door step of the farmers at affordable price. The programme will be streamlined to ensure transfer of seed from seed growing farmers to other farmers. Andhra Pradesh will be developed as seed industry hub by increasing the seed production in districts like Prakasam, Chittoor, Anantapur, Kurnool and Kadapa.

3.4 Waiver of agriculture loans

Andhra Pradesh state is much vulnerable to natural calamities like floods and cyclones in coastal districts and frequent droughts in Rayalaseema region. Every year the occurrence of natural calamities made agriculture unmanageable and uneconomical even in high productive regions like Konaseema in Godavari and central delta of the state at times, forcing farmers to declare crop holiday. The cost of farm inputs and thereby cost of production has increased substantially over the years, while the sale price of farm produce has not increased commensurately and crop productivity remained stagnant. The low productivity coupled with increased cost of cultivation led to indebtedness of the farmers forcing them in some cases to commit suicides. During the last few years the farmers suffered heavy losses due to crop failures and are in dire need of assistance to sustain the agriculture.

So, the waiver of the agriculture loans is declared to rescue the farmers from deep indebtedness and to revive the crisis hit agriculture and to create confidence among the farmers.

3.5 Marketing

The farmers are not getting fair price due to lack of proper linkages between buyers and farmers in many cases. Price fluctuations also affect the farmers adversely. So market interventions will be initiated in every season at appropriate time. Agro processing policy will be formulated to give support to the processing of agriculture produce for achieving value addition.

3.6 Strengthening the extension system to reach seven million farmers

There is need to strengthen the existing departmental extension system to improve the reach to the farmers in the state. It is proposed to use ICT-based technologies. Multi Purpose Extension officers will be appointed for every 1000 ha to strengthen the Extension reach to the farmers. Rythu Mithra Groups (RMGs) of 1.21 lakh formed during 2003-04 are now reduced to 8,917 by 2012-13. Steps will be taken to reorient this programme. Strengthening of these groups will be helpful to facilitate crop loans to tenant farmers and for channelizing different programmes of the department.

3.7 Soil health mapping and balanced fertilizer use for increasing profitability and minimising land degradation.

There is imbalanced use of fertilizers. It has been observed by soil mapping exercise undertaken by Department of Agriculture with ICRISAT / APSRAC that there is large scale deficiency of multiple nutrients such as micro and secondary nutrients like zinc, boron, sulphur, iron. Due to lack of exposure about the soil health farmers keep on increasing the doses of nitrogen and phosphorus which do not result in increased crop yields. It is proposed to undertake soil health mapping through stratified sampling and by using GIS to devise soil test based nutrient recommendations through soil health cards to the farmers in a phased and mission mode.

3.8 Use of satellite imagery and use of other technologies

Satellite imagery and remote sensing data will be used for soil mapping and crop coverage area estimation at village level, progress of restoration of waste and degraded lands, area covered by canal irrigation in each season, monitoring of farm pond and water conservation / watershed development activities and condition of the crop during the season at fixed intervals. This data in GIS environment with the expertise of APSRAC and Agriculture University will be used for making recommendations to the farmers for selection of crops, for changing the cropping pattern, for monitoring crop condition and for taking the corrective actions wherever needed.

3.9 Supply of Soil health cards

A comprehensive soil health card will be issued to every farmer. This will contain the details of soil test analysis, the crops that can be grown in the land, ideal doses of the fertilizers, amendments' requirement and green manures etc.

3.10 Drought proofing of rain fed areas

Rain fed agriculture areas are facing acute water scarcity and are prone to severe land degradation and more vulnerable to impacts of climate change. It is necessary to work towards making these areas climate resilient and profitable for the small farm holders for improving their productivity, profitability along with sustainability. Comprehensive and viable package of water and moisture conservation, farm pond development, integrated farming system approach backed by micro irrigation for crops will be taken up to improve the productivity and economic returns in rain fed areas.

Government decided to cover all the well irrigated areas in Anantapur and upland mandals of West Godavari districts with micro irrigation in the coming 2 years. The drip and sprinkler units will be supplied to, SC&ST farmers on 100%, Small, marginal farmers on 90% and other farmers on 50% subsidy. Drip and sprinkler systems shall be adopted for agricultural crops like cotton, sugarcane and ground nut crops. Funds from Rain fed area development scheme of GOI shall be used for this purpose throughout the state.

3.11 Research

Intensive programme will be taken up to strengthen the existing system of research development in the University. Focus will be for the development of suitable high yielding varieties in paddy, ground nut, pulses and other crops which are resistant to pests and diseases with tolerance to floods and drought and suitable for different agro climatic zones.

4. Conclusion

The primary focus is on cost reduction and increasing productivity by strengthening the extension system introducing new seed varieties and adopting appropriate farm mechanisation and focusing on optimum use of fertilizers to maintain sustainable soil health. The Government accords the highest priority to the agriculture sector and the welfare of farmers. The constraints and problems which have been troubling the farmers over the years will be addressed through a systematic approach. Every effort will be to make agriculture in the state productive, profitable, and sustainable and climate resilient through building the partnerships with research organizations and transform agriculture from "a way of life" into an "enterprise".

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