



M. P. Institute of Social Science Research

(Autonomous Institute of ICSSR, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India)

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National Seminar on Food Security and Rainfed Agriculture in India: Issues, Challenges and Prospects (February 28 and March 1, 2018)

Background of the Seminar

The question of adequate food security has always remained a focussed area of priority in India over decades. India being an agricultural country and that too on subsistence agriculture has posed serious questions on the sustainability of their peasants. The average land holding size at less than one and half hectare in India is still way below than the average of developed countries. With such miniscule piece of land at stake, the sustenance of peasants completely depends on the agriculture produce for their food secured life. Another dimension which is crucially significant is the availability of water for irrigation. Being a monsoon dependent country, it becomes inevitable for the farmers to wait for good rainfall despite having the availability of other agricultural inputs like fertilizers, seeds, etc. The absence of proper irrigation network along with a weak monsoon results in crucial crisis for food security. It forces them primarily for migration to nearby cities for employment and in other cases taking up non-farm activities. The whole phenomenon completely paralyzes the ethos of agriculture and simultaneously results in shrinking of agriculture activities, unavailability of labour and mounting pressure on the nearby satellite towns.

Less investment on research and development in the field of agriculture poses enormous challenges in its growth. Lack of new technologies and major breakthroughs in agriculture is one of the major barriers to boost farm productivity. While the National Agriculture Research System played a major role in the green revolution, in recent years there has not been any major breakthrough in research. One of the main reasons for this is the lack of financial resources. If we compare the data of the percentage of agricultural GDP spending on research and development in Asia, then the figures are revealing. While India spent 31% of its agricultural GDP on research and development in 2010, in the same year China spent almost double of that amount. Even our neighbour Bangladesh spent 38% of its agricultural GDP on research and development in that year. As a result of this resource crunch there has not been diffusion of new agricultural innovations and practices that is critical for enhancing farm productivity.

Another factor which hampers the growth of agriculture is its overdependence on rainfed areas. Rainfed area currently constitutes 55-60 per cent of the net sown area of the country. Among the cultivated area about 45-50 per cent will continue to remain under rainfed farming. The productivity of rainfed is low and unstable with year to year wide fluctuations depending on rainfall behaviour. The percentage of irrigated area under principal crops (2011-12) in India was 35 whereas in case of total food grains it was 50.5 per cent. Under principal crops its percentage is 46.90 and under food grains category it is 49.8. It clearly shows that the area of principal crops is less than half of its total area. Similarly, the national average of net area in irrigation is 40 per cent. The percentage of Net Irrigated Area (NIA) to Net Sown Area (NSA) is 40.53. The difference among various states under NIA to NSA is also wider. In Madhya Pradesh it is 33.87 whereas in the states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh it is well above at 94.48, 81.31 and 72.17 per cent respectively. The states of Andhra Pradesh and Bihar have also higher averages at 54.39 and 48.74 respectively. Such inter-state differences pose a huge challenge in meeting the ever rising demands of voluminous agricultural productivity.

The constraints to the growth of agriculture in the states were mainly large turn off and soil erosion in most parts of the state resulting into water congestion due to impeded drainage in early parts of the monsoon season and inadequate moisture in the later part when needed the most. Nearly 75 per cent of the cultivated area is subject to rainfed agriculture. Low cropping intensity due to practice of keeping land fallow in *kharij* and taking only one crop on residual/conserved moisture in *rabi* season. Rainfed agriculture has also resulted in large production of cultivable waste land and fallow land. The large tribal population, small and marginal farmers were having low investment capacity for adoption of high technology.

In India, more than 65-70 per cent of peasants are small farmers. 41 per cent of the agricultural production comes from these small farmers. It is ironical that despite such phenomenal agricultural growth these farmers own only one third of cultivable land which comes to around 33 per cent. Their agricultural production can easily compete with large farmers. Their efforts in producing agricultural crops are very crucial in the development of agriculture. The enormous per cent of small farmers along with their family constitutes the bulk of states hungry and poor population. It is the duty of government to create not only favourable policies for these small farmers but should also increase substantial investment in agricultural research, technology and infrastructure. It would be challenging to determine the status of food security among these small farmers in various pockets of the country.

Similarly, landless labourers also constitute most significant part of food insecure population. These labourer are totally dependent on the work done in agricultural fields. At present the wages of these labourer have increased to a respectable level. Villages having easy access to urban areas face shortage of agriculture labourer as they migrate to cities for getting employment. Increase in labour wages has been more pronounced in urban areas and particularly in construction activities. The importance of public distribution system for these landless labourers is very significant. During non-agricultural season, supply of food grains through PDS assures their food security.

Against this backdrop, M.P. Institute of Social Science Research, Ujjain is organizing a National Seminar on **'Food Security and Rainfed Areas in India: Issues, Challenges and Prospects'** to look into the various facets of food security and rainfed agriculture in detail.

Themes of the Seminar

- **Situational Analysis of Food Security in India and Governmental Initiatives.**
- **Assessment of PDS in terms of access, availability and distribution of foodgrains.**
- **Impact of irrigation facilities and Watershed Management on Agricultural Productivity.**
- **Change in occupational structure from agriculture to other means of livelihood for ensuring food security.**
- **Overall growth of agriculture in India in terms of infrastructure, diversification, crop change and other developments.**
- **Relationship between welfare schemes with employment and livelihood and its impact on ensuring food security**
- **Dependence of marginalized population for food security on agriculture and other activities**

MPISSR invites you to participate in the National Seminar. We propose to bring out an edited volume of the selected papers presented in the Seminar. MPISSR will reimburse travel cost and will arrange local hospitality for the invited delegates.

Submission of ABSTRACT along with Full Paper: **February 05, 2018**

All communications may please be sent to:

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