

2.1. Crop Husbandry

Introduction

Fostering rapid and sustained agricultural and rural development remains the key priority of the Government of Tamil Nadu. Although agriculture contributes only 13% of the total State Gross Domestic Product, its importance in the economic, social and political fabric of Tamil Nadu goes well beyond what is indicated by its contribution to the economy. The large number of poor agricultural households and their income vulnerability are major concerns. These concerns in turn have driven the exchequer to allocate more funds to agriculture and allied sector. The Central Government schemes like National Agricultural Development Programme/ Rashtria Krishi Vikas Yojana, National Food Security Mission, National Horticulture Mission and Macro Management Mode schemes and State schemes like Distribution of Wasteland to landless agricultural labourers family and Precision Farming aim to safeguard agriculture and the farming community.

The performance of Tamil Nadu agriculture sector has been recovering from the setback faced during the Tenth Plan period. Tamil Nadu has done extremely well in irrigated agriculture particularly in rice, sugarcane and groundnut which are the major crops of the state. Agricultural research, education and extension activities along with supply of critical inputs such as seed, water, fertilizers, implements, machinery and pesticides have been given adequate importance by the Government so as to ensure steady growth in agriculture

Agricultural Performance during 2007-08

Because of the favourable situation which prevailed during the entire season in 2007-08, the foodgrain production is expected to cross the all time high level of 100 LMT by surpassing the previous record production of 96 LMT during 2006-07. The rice, millet and pulses production is expected to reach 78 LMT, 19 LMT and 4.25 LMT respectively during 2007-08. The sugarcane and oilseeds production

is expected to reach 41 LMT and 17 LMT respectively. The production of horticulture crops is expected to be 167.84 LMT (2007-08) as against 155 LMT achieved during 2006-07.

The area coverage under paddy is expected to reach an all time high of 21.5 lakh ha. The area coverage under millets and pulses, which are mostly grown as dry crop is expected to increase from 11.50 L.ha to 8.50 L.ha during 2007-08. The area under horticulture crop is expected to be 10.52 L.ha during 2007-08 as against the 9.75 L.ha during 2006-07.

During 2007-08, 10 LMT of chemical fertilizer and 250 MT of green manures are expected to be utilized.

As against the outlay of Rs. 161.10 crore for Crop Husbandry sector, it is expected that an amount of Rs. 175.94 crore would be spent during 2007-08.

Target set for 2008-09

For year 2008-09, the state aims at producing 105 LMT of food grains which includes 80 LMT of rice, 20 LMT of millets and 5 LMT of pulses. The target set for oilseeds and sugarcane are 17 LMT and 42 LMT and 165 LMT for horticulture crops. To achieve these, the following objectives and strategies are proposed during 2008-09.

Objectives for Annual Plan 2008-09

The main objectives are as follows:

- To achieve food security through higher food grain production by stabilising area under production and bridging the yield gap.
- To move from input driven agriculture to technology driven agriculture.
- To attain sustenance in agriculture, aiming to increase the farm family income and attempting to make the quality of agriculture produce globally competitive.
- To focus on rainfed crops in a mission mode so as to increase production as well as farmer income.

- To achieve soil health security through Soil Health Care and Organic Farming.

Strategies and Thrust areas

- Bringing every piece of cultivable land under cropping and taking sustained efforts to bring the fallow lands under cultivation.
- Intensifying crop diversification to increase cropping intensity.
- Ensuring standardization of quality norms for seeds and pedigree planting material especially in horticulture crops.
- Encouraging judicious use of water through water saving devices and latest technologies such as drip fertigation, pit method of planting in sugarcane, SRI techniques in paddy etc.
- Paying adequate care to the soil health care to attain potential yield, suggesting the right crops to conserve natural resources and carry out sustainable agriculture and issue of soil health card to the farmers.
- Revamping the agricultural extension so as to deliver agriculture technology to the door steps of the farmers.
- Emphasizing promotion of Hi-tech Precision Farming, strengthening the post harvest handling practices, concentrating on processing and value addition, building linkages with the private sector at input and marketing end to improve farmer's income
- Providing alternate livelihood option to the farmers especially dryland agriculture through farming systems approach.
- Providing a social security net for the farmers through crop insurance.

Schemes proposed for 2008-09

The State is implementing several schemes for the development of agriculture including horticulture.

The following schemes viz., Integrated Cereal Development Programme (ICDP) in rice (Rs. 1.15 crore), Procurement and distribution of paddy and millet seeds (Rs.25.84 crore), Crop and plant protection (Rs.1.08 crore), Increasing Oil Seed Production (Rs.7.24 crore), Intensive Cotton Development Programme (ICDP) (Rs.1.25 crore), Crop insurance schemes (Rs. 45.25 crore), Development of Pulses (Rs. 1.78 crore), will be continued during 2008-09 in addition to the major schemes which are described below.

Apart from the above, area specific programmes like Hill Area Development Programme (HADP) (Rs.3.17 crore), Watershed and Horticulture Development under Western Ghat Development Programme (WGDP) (Rs.0.77 crore) will also be continued during the year 2008-09.

Major State Schemes

Tamil Nadu Agricultural Labourers Welfare Board

The scheme "The Tamil Nadu Agricultural Labourers - Farmers (Social Security and Welfare) Scheme 2006 came into force with effect from 22.12.2006. As on March 2007, 63.73 lakh families have been enrolled as members of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural Labourers Welfare Board. The scheme provides financial assistance to its members for marriages and maternity (including miscarriage) and the dependants are given financial assistance for education from 10th Standard upto Post Graduation, including Professional Courses. In addition, the scheme also provides relief to the legal heir in case of death or loss of limbs due to accident or natural death. Another major feature of the scheme is sanction of old age pension of Rs.400 per month for all the members on attainment of sixty years of age. About 25,187 members have been benefited under various schemes of the Board so far. An amount of Rs.79.28 crore is proposed under the scheme for 2008-09.

National Agricultural Development Programme (NADP) /Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)

Concerned by the slow growth in the Agriculture and allied sectors, the Government of India has announced a special Additional Central Assistance Scheme called the National Agricultural Development Programme (NADP) / Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) which aims to incentivise the states so as to increase public investment in agriculture and allied sectors, to provide flexibility and autonomy to the states in the process of planning and executing Agriculture and allied sector schemes and to bridge the yield gaps in important crops. NADP/ RKVY will be a State Plan scheme, fully funded by the Central Government. The Tamil Nadu Watershed Development Agency (TAWDEVA) will be the Nodal department for the implementation of the scheme in the State. Each District will formulate a District Agriculture Plan (DAP) by dovetailing the resources available from the existing schemes. The DAP would present the financial requirement and the sources of financing the agriculture development plans in a comprehensive way. An amount of Rs.79.22 crore is proposed for 2008-09 for various initiatives under this scheme.

National Food Security Mission

The Government of India has launched the National Food Security Mission (NFSM) at an investment of over Rs.5,000 crore to increase production of rice, wheat and pulses. NFSM aims at bringing an additional 4 million hectares under these crops covering 11 states and 168 districts including Tamil Nadu. In Tamil Nadu, NFSM will cover two crops- Rice and Pulses -with an objective to increase the production through area expansion and productivity enhancement besides restoring soil fertility and creation of employment opportunities and enhancing the farm level economy.

Centrally Sponsored Schemes

National Horticulture Mission (NHM) (15:85)

National Horticulture Mission is being implemented in Tamil Nadu from 2005-06 with 8 focus crops viz., Mango, Aonla, Banana, Cashew, Chillies, Turmeric, Aromatic plants and Flowers in 13 districts. This scheme aims at holistic development of Horticulture involving appropriate cultivars, good agronomical practices, post-harvest handling, processing and marketing with an end to end approach. More emphasis will be given for establishing new gardens, rejuvenation of senile gardens and all related activities to increase the productivity and farmers income. The strategies will include precision farming, protected cultivation, integrated nutrition management/integrated pest management and organic farming. Empowerment of the farmers is the other part of the Mission. Technology dissemination through front line demonstration, training, seminar, publicity and exposure visit of the farmers are some of the major activities proposed. An amount of Rs. 120 crore for 2008-09 has been allocated under this Mission.

Macro Management Mode (MMM): (90:10)

Under the Macro Management Mode, Ongoing schemes such as Integrated Cereals Development Programme, Innovative Schemes, Schemes for Balanced and Integrated use of fertilizers, Sugarcane Drip and Promotion of Micro Enterprise activities through Tamil Nadu Women in Agribusiness and Extension (TANWABE) and Farm Mechanization will be continued. An amount of Rs. 17.16 crore is proposed as state share for the year 2008-09.

Increasing the Production of Oilseeds (ISOPOM)

The objective of the scheme is to procure and distribute quality oilseeds to the required quantity as per the Seed Replacement Rate (SRR) (Groundnut 5%, Gingelly 15%, Sunflower 50%, Castor 30%, Soya 20%) and also to provide latest technologies to increase the productivity of oilseeds. The main activity is multiplication of certified

seeds of groundnut, gingelly, sunflower, castor and soyabean by enforcing the seed certification standards and distributed to oilseed growers through the AECs. During 2008-09, 4185 MT of Groundnut, 100 MT of Gingelly, 135 MT of Sunflower and 80 MT of Castor seeds have been proposed for procurement. An amount of Rs.18.35 crore is proposed under this scheme.

Outlay for 2008-09

An amount of Rs.353.83 crore is approved for Crop Husbandry sector for the year 2008-09. Of this, the outlays earmarked for Scheduled Caste Sub Plan and Tribal Sub Plan are Rs.45.10 crore and Rs.0.43 crore respectively.