



“Reclaiming Policy and Budgetary Priorities for Rain fed Agriculture in India” Strategy and Vision!!

With the introduction of Green Revolution during 1960s, Indian agriculture sees a clear shift towards irrigated agriculture with an extensive use of chemical fertilizers, hybrid seeds and rampant modern tools and techniques. With such a shift in agricultural practices, rainfed agriculture somewhere has lost its priority and glory. The state of rainfed agriculture today remains precarious even though it constitutes more than half of the Gross cropped area (55%), contributing to 50 % of the total food grains production in the country. Not only in farming practices, the policy orientation, budgetary allocations and spending (both at the Union and states) approach and conditions of agricultural practices heavily focused towards irrigated agriculture.

How important is Rainfed Agriculture???

- According to the Agricultural Census 2011 the gross cropped area was 193.76 million hectares, out of which 87.77 million hectares (45.3%) were irrigated which means more than half of the gross cropped area is rainfed.
- Around 77% of pulses, 66% of oilseeds and 45% of cereals are grown under rainfed conditions in the country.
- Nearly 55 % of rice, 91 % of coarse grains and 65 % of cotton are grown under rainfed conditions in the country.
- Besides food grain, rainfed (regions) is home to 78% of cattle population in the country and hence importance of animal husbandry and dairy development can be better understood in promoting sustainable livelihood in these areas.

Key Issues in Rainfed Agriculture in India:

- Close link in the agrarian crisis and rain fed agriculture with high costs of cultivation, low cropping intensity, uncertainty in output levels, increased numbers of farmer suicides and prevalence of mass poverty in the rain fed areas.
- Neglected public investment towards rain fed agriculture- The agricultural policies of the government has focused more on irrigated areas and input subsidies like fertilizers, pesticides, seeds, power, water etc. Data from the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperation, Government of India)- 2003-



2013 reveals that INR 540,000 crores is spent on the procurement of rice and wheat while only INR 3,200 crores was spent on the procurement of coarse cereals such as millets which are mostly grown in the rain fed areas of the nation.

Rationale for Reclaiming policy priority for Rain fed Agriculture in India

- Minimizing the risk and improving the livelihoods of the millions of people who are dependent on rainfed agriculture in the country due to the ravaging impact of the climate change issues.
- A need for policy prioritization, both at the Union and States, towards implementing programmes and schemes to promote rainfed agriculture as well as rain fed crops. However, as of now, there is no such clear policy guidelines (both at the planning and designing as well as implementation of schemes) found both at the Union and state governments.
- Addressing issues and concerns of fund flow and utilization in rainfed agriculture related programmes across States and identify both better practices and gaps in implementation of the programmes. An in depth understanding of the implementation challenges would be useful in suggesting policy measures for effective utilization of budgets for rainfed agriculture in the country.

Objectives

1. Developing a comprehensive budgetary framework for rainfed agriculture (which programmes / schemes / interventions that constitute the basket of public provisioning for rainfed agriculture);
2. To map the public policies (through planning process in the country) and quantifying the provisioning of schemes / programmes catering to the needs of rainfed agriculture in India, of the Union and selected state governments- by identifying the prevailing issues and challenges during last couple of years.
3. To document the major priority loss areas of rainfed agriculture and suggest appropriate policy design and strategies for implementation;
4. To increase public awareness through informed debate in favour of prioritising public spending for rainfed agriculture in the country and select state.