

‘Rajasthan needs a state specific Agriculture Policy’

Recommendations from the conference on” Towards Sustainable Agriculture: The Way Forward in Rajasthan” organised by Budget Analysis Rajasthan Centre (BARC), Jaipur

BARC, Jaipur, a budget and policy analysis group, held a two day conference on **“Towards Sustainable Agriculture: The Way Forward in Rajasthan” on August 30-31, 2010** at Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur. The conference was attended by scientists and researchers from all over the state (and also some from outside). More than 25 research papers were presented at the conference and sessions were chaired by the leading academics and policy analysts.

There was a general agreement among the participants that the state should have its own Agriculture Policy. Some of the key recommendations emerging from the conference are summarized below.

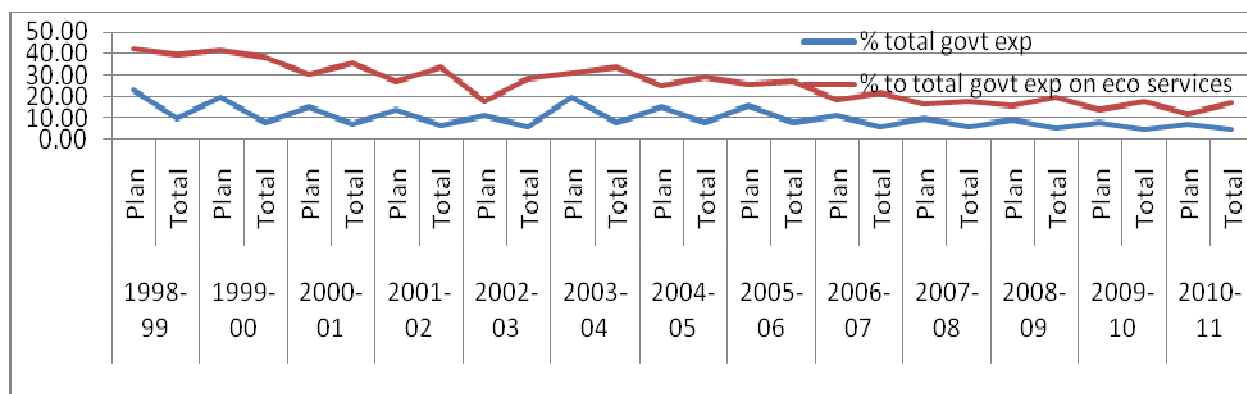
Agriculture in Rajasthan: Some important features

- Though the contribution of agriculture in the State GDP is declining (it has come down from about 30% in the beginning of this century to about 20% currently), a large percentage (about two thirds) of the total population is still dependent on agriculture,
- With just one percent share in country’s surface water resources Rajasthan’s agriculture dependent on rains. As only 35-38% of total agriculture is irrigated and irrigation – largely well based (well is source for about 70% irrigated land)
- Unequal land distribution –small percentage of land holders own large amount of land, while majority of the farmers are marginal and small farmers
- Women’s ownership in all sections hovers around 3.5 %
- **Declining expenditure in agriculture and allied services and irrigation (Irrigation and Flood Control)** by the state government in terms of its share in total state government expenditure as well as total expenditure by the government on Economic Services. Though the share of spending on irrigation and flood control is showing some increase year 2008-9 onwards, the major expenditure in irrigation is being made on major irrigation; medium and small irrigation getting less than one third of total expenditure on irrigation.
- Decreasing per capita availability of water in Rajasthan, which is anyway below the national average

Some Positives features of Agriculture in Rajasthan

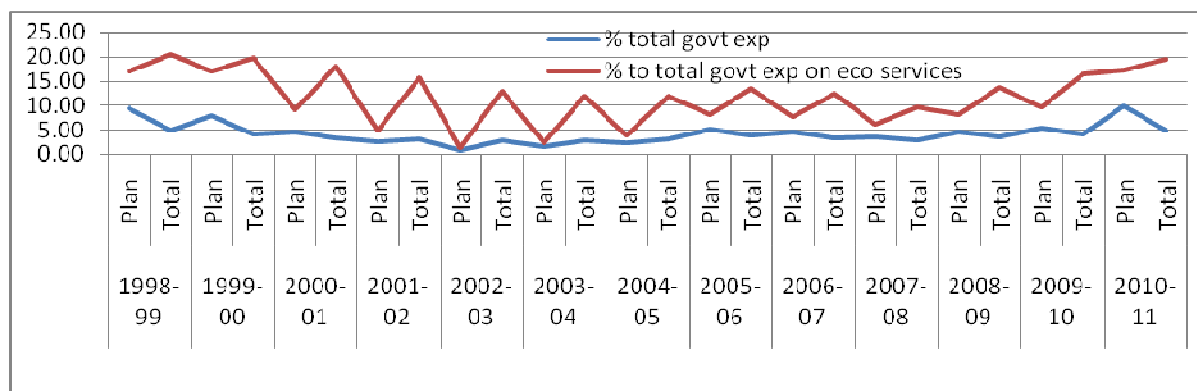
- Growth rate in Rajasthan has been higher – contribution of yield in increase in production, not of increased area under cultivation
- Cost of production for many crops is the lowest in the nation.
- Contribution in spices and medicinal plants to Indian production is higher

Share of Agriculture and Allied Activities in Total State Govt. Expenditure and Total Expenditure on Economic Services



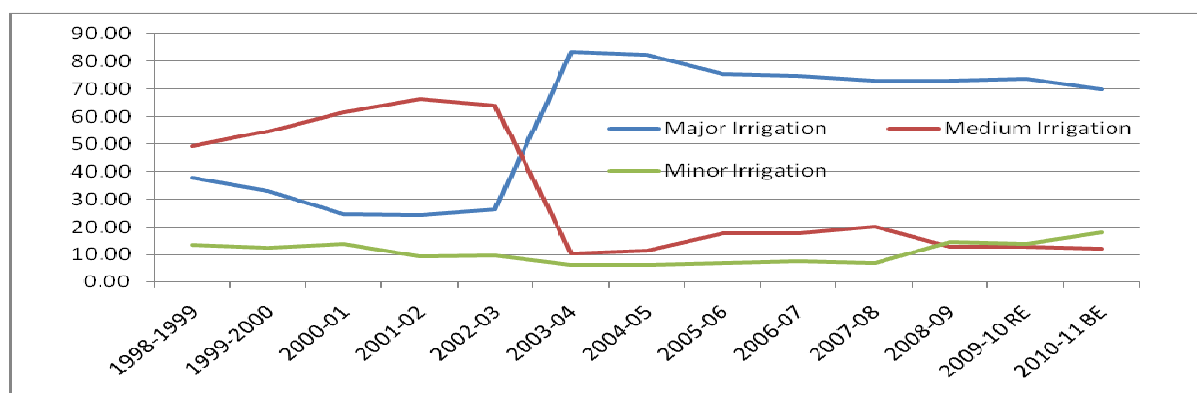
Note: Figures for year 2009-10 are revised estimates and for 2010-11 are budget estimates

Share of Irrigation and Flood Control in Total Govt. Expenditure and Total Expenditure on Economic Services



Note: Figures for year 2009-10 are revised estimates and for 2010-11 are budget estimates

Share of Major, Medium and Minor irrigation in total expenditure on Irrigation in Rajasthan



Source: Budget Documents, Govt. of Rajasthan, various years, compiled by BARC, Jaipur

Recommendations from the Conference based on papers presented and discussions held

Some general recommendations

The current model is geared at pushing out farmers. Some of the recommendations from the conference are as follow.

- **Agriculture should be treated as a priority sector**
- Systemic changes in agriculture research and education in the country and state
- Direct income Support for farmers – the need to build up this demand from farmer’s groups and civil society
- Trade policies – for sustainable agriculture the need is for protected markets
- Resistance to genetically modified seeds till unbiased research is done, especially into effects in the future
- Convergence of various departments and sections for working out a balanced agricultural policy
- PRIs should be given control and powers to plan and implement
- PDS and MSP are supports to farmers – but systems are ridden with corruption, effective implementation depends on Civil Society and community based organisations.
- Take into account social aspects like child labour, education, food security, house hold dynamics, societal hierarchies while planning for increased productivity
- **Recognize small and marginal farmers as a special group**
- Enhancing value of their produce produces
- Focus back on land reforms
- Increasing non- farm rural employment
- Plan based on the agro-climatic zones
- Bottom up planning – participatory and must involve PRIs
- **Land use policy – stop misuse and diversion of land for non-agriculture activities**
- Review current water policy and make it farmer friendly
- All the relevant policies like Water Policy, Food Processing Industry Policy, Live Stock Policy, Land Use Policy should be supportive to each other

Increase the investment in Agriculture

- Need to increase the level of expenditure on agriculture
- Need to increase the expenditure on minor irrigation
- Present subsidy is not subsidy to the farmer, the need for direct subsidy support to agriculture or for value addition

At national level

1 % of agricultural GDP should be on Agriculture Research and Development
(as recommended by the Planning Commission)

Institutional Support to farmers

- Crop insurance – better crop insurance practices are needed in Rajasthan as agriculture is rain fed and drought is regular phenomenon.
- Comprehensive policies for insuring not just crops but a package policy as is being made available in other states
- Credit availability for agriculture – major expansion has been in urban and semi urban areas for support to agriculture or for value addition not to the cultivators

Extension and dissemination activities –

- Recognize heterogeneity amongst farmers
- Increasing community involvement and ownership for success
- Bigger scale for demonstrations is essential
- **Mainstream gender concerns in training, content development and overall outlook**
- Greater investment in back home support for adoption of new technologies
- Involving the actual cultivator – women and small and marginal farmers

Research and development institutions

- Need of systemic changes in outlook and curricula
- Looking inwards – valuing and promoting indigenous knowledge and technology. For example, ICAR's volume on indigenous methods and technology
- Responding to the farmers needs in the local context
- Analysis and disaggregation of the farming household
- Lab to land issues – relevancy to the need of the farmer and applicability to her context

Farmers' Institutions

- Cooperatives, despite the bad name can work
- New institutions like producer's groups are an option for promoting and marketing farm produces

Agricultural Inputs

- Water resources are important – upscale the work that is being done with reference to local context
- Increased investment in small and medium irrigation
- Government investment in pucca works for watershed activities
- Maintaining and upgrading the traditional community irrigation systems
- Providing technical knowledge to PRIs

Agriculture and allied activities

Collection of Forest Produces

- Implementation of PESA to ensure the community right to NTFPs
- In non-TSP areas effective control of the Panchayats on NTFPs
- Compulsion to sell to RTADCF is a problem, as market rates are higher in many cases
- Promoting the packaging and processing of NTFP at the local level
- Linking collection rates to minimum wages

Livestock

Importance of Livestock in Rajasthan

- Livestock is very important in the context of Rajasthan
- 50% contribution in output is from agriculture and allied activities
- Livestock contributes up to 60% to household income in western Rajasthan.
- It works as an insurance against drought
- Livestock is mainly reared by small and marginal farmers

- Common property resources such as grazing lands have to be protected as loss of it is creating shortage of feed (40 – 50 % deficit)

- Upgrading and increasing the livestock support service – **there is a lack of veterinary hospitals in the state**
- R and D is essential and currently not adequate- more investment in infrastructure development and research is required
- Very little scientific intervention at the moment, therefore focus on education and training is required
- Better management and more support to animal rearers
- Need for MSP for livestock and related products
- **Need to involve community participation in developing grazing lands** : Need to involve PRIs
- Carrying capacity of the grazing lands to be taken into account for allowing animals for grazing
- English babul – is a problem from livestock point of view despite its commercial value
- Lack of credit availability for livestock rearing, promoting cooperatives

Agriculture, Drought and Climate Change

Organic Farming

- Promotion of direct marketing by the department of agriculture of organic products
- preparation of a list of crops, herbs and livestock that can be sourced from rain-fed regions in view of the international trade in organic food and allied products
- carry out country wide survey of areas in arid, semiarid and dry sub humid regions about the use of synthetic inputs, select crops to fetch a premium price in international markets
- to create awareness and capacity building of farmers on cultivation, marketing, certification and harvesting
- develop preferential policy instruments for rain fed farmers – subsidized inputs, market information and certification,

Drought

- Revival of the water harvesting and water conservation structures through government intervention taking into account local knowledge and needs
- Drought Monitoring – and land use planning with emphasis on less water requiring crops

- Decision support system for drought prone regions to help in cropping decisions
- Exploring protected cultivation – green house and shade – requires high investment but use of less water
- Promoting rain water harvesting
- Promoting water recycling
- Climate risk management – at the PRI level and by the PRIs
- Role of community institutions and PRIs in watershed management – needs to be up scaled and solutions for sustainability
- Specialized knowledge on various related subjects has to be made locally available.
- Social capital development – flow of information and collective strength

Climate Change

- Revival of traditional knowledge
- Communities have ability to deal with emergency situations – there is a need to build on this
- Dissemination of research on climate change to the farming community
- Considering micro level needs and bringing farmers on board for climate change policy making
- Looking at modification of existing practices instead of introducing foreign practices
- Use of existing infrastructure to share climate change information with farmers
- Long term management and sustainability built in to local planning
- Looking at pest management taking climate change into account
- Linking cropping patterns to local needs and also to market
- Need to reduce dependency on agriculture for livelihood – scope of allied activities
- Reduce dependency on external resources for agricultural production

Women and Agriculture

Women and Agriculture

- 70% of the agricultural work is done by women; women play major role in food production
- It seems there is trend of Feminization of Agriculture
- 86% of women workers are in agriculture and 20% households are women headed

- State has to take a proactive role – perspective building of policy makers and implementers
- Recognition of women as farmers
- Women's role in maintaining biodiversity and preserving traditional knowledge should be recognised and encouraged
- Gender disaggregated data should be available at all levels
- Access, control and ownership of land to/for women must be ensured
- Link resource development schemes to women's and joint land ownership
- Differential incentives to women farmers
- In the schemes with limited outreach, prioritize women land owners and farmers
- Lease land to women's collectives/groups
- Recognize the complexity of the household in policy making
- Vulnerable sections amongst women that need to be taken into account