

# RAINFED FARMING & WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT

Among other things, the below mentioned observations and recommendations were made in the National Conference relating to Rainfed Farming and Watershed Development for further action by all concerned.

- a. In the opening remarks of the conference by the Secy.(A&C), it was observed that the Rainfed Farming and Watershed Development is one of the thrust areas for increasing production of Rabi crop. Looking into the scarcity of water availability and declining in soil health, she stressed the need for diversification in agriculture with special focus towards cultivation of pulses, oil seeds, cotton etc., She emphasized the involvement of Private Sector in Rainfed Agriculture. She highlighted the structure and role of the National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA) which has been approved by the Cabinet Committee. The Authority will look into the holistic development of Rainfed Areas and the concerns of many State Governments in Rainfed Agriculture will be addressed appropriately by the establishment of the same. She requested the State Representatives to strengthen the functioning of the Authority so that many fold development in Rainfed Areas can be achieved in a desired time frame.
- b. The Director General, ICAR made his observations that for the mitigation of drought that occurs in the country periodically, micro irrigation, rain water harvesting, in-situ moisture conservation, diversification of agriculture towards less water consuming crops and efficient water management are the important areas that need immediate attention in the country. Therefore, he suggested that rain water management, effective land use planning should be given priority for rainfed agriculture development. He stressed the need for soil health assessment and application of nutrients based on location specific requirements for sustainable increase in agriculture production. He requested the Scientists to work for development of high yielding /hybrid seed varieties suitable for dry land, high temperature stress condition and specific problem soils for increasing the crop productivity in rainfed conditions.
- c. A close observation on the thrust areas identified by several states in their presentation indicates that micro irrigation, soil and moisture conservation, rain water management, are the thrust areas suggested for promotion to efficient water use and water management for mitigating drought effect and improving crop production.
- d. Rajasthan Govt. mentioned that they have organized Jal Chetana Yatra, and Kisan Mohatav, primarily to create awareness among the farmers about water conservation and water management. The State Govt. has issued 2.11 lakh Soil Health Cards. The State Govt. is in the process of launching a new programme 'Krishi Yojana- apke-dwar' to provide the necessary technical advise and basic inputs to the farmers at farm level.
- e. Andhra Pradesh Government requested for expanding the NWDPRRA Programme to the larger part of the state. The state Govt. requested for the specific programme for the development of 8.13 lakh ha. area affected by salinity/ alkalinity/ water logging.

- f. The presentation of Jharkhand highlighted the success of NWDPRRA programme in the State. The State Government emphasized that more focus should be given in the area of watershed development.
- g. In the Goa State more importance has been given for watershed management and NWDPRRA scheme is being implemented as per the desired target. It is observed that the scheme is making visible impact in the State.
- h. The discussion in the conference was more focused on how to achieve 4% growth rate in the Agriculture sector through better agricultural practices, better seed varieties, crop diversification and better land management practices etc., It was observed that due to climatic variation and stagnation in agricultural productivity it has been difficult to remove the poverty at the present production level. The production level should not go below the thresh hold level and special focus is required to increase the productivity of wheat and pulses in particular which is being imported in a large scale. Looking into the declining soil health and non-availability of assured irrigation or timely rainfall, watershed management has an important role in improving the productivity in rainfed areas. It is expected that after the functioning of National Rainfed Authority adequate attention in this sector will be given by the Central and State Governments in future.

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