

Minutes of the National Conference on “Convergence in Agricultural Development – Special focus on Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY)” held on 06.12.2008 (Saturday) at the NASC Complex, Pusa, New Delhi

List of participants in the Conference is annexed.

2. Secretary (A&C), in the opening presentation, laid emphasis on convergence in planning, management and implementation in agricultural development for making optimum use of resources in the context of the quantum jump in the outlays in agriculture and allied sectors, water resources and rural development through Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), National Food Security Mission (NFSM), National Horticulture Mission (NHM), National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), Bharat Nirman, Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF) etc. The District Agriculture Plans (DAPs) and State Agriculture Plans (SAPs) prepared by States needed to factor in the opportunities created by other interventions in the rural sector.

3. Member (Agriculture), Planning Commission, referring to paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4 of the agenda, observed that the access to resources under RKVY *inter alia* depended on formulation of DAPs/SAP by the State Government, a condition which would be insisted upon from 2009-10. The projects approved by SLSC were required to be consistent with the priorities identified in DAPs/SAP. Selected Technical Support Institutions (TSIs) and Agro-Economic Research Centres (AERCs) would be entrusted to review DAPs to assess their comprehensiveness, quality and also success in achieving convergence. He also observed that the investment needs of the Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries sector should be adequately addressed in the DAPs/SAP. Expertise available with the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) and other institutions could be utilized for this purpose.

4. Member (RD), Planning Commission, observed that agriculture sector continued to be critically important for the growth of the Indian economy. Agriculture and allied sectors occupied a predominant position in the District Development Plans (DDPs). However, there had been fragmentation/segmentation in the sector with verticalized decision making. Since the State Governments tended to replicate the policies/strategies followed by the Central Ministries/Departments, it was imperative that the convergence starts from the Central Government level. Instead of setting up separate committees at the State level for overseeing the implementation of each scheme/programme, it was desirable to have one committee for approval of all projects/schemes in the rural sector. The C-DAP had to be integrated with the DDP. The farmers had to be involved and empowered by associating them through the bottom up approach in the planning process.

5. Secretary (DAHD&F) asked the State Governments to ensure adequate flow of resources to animal husbandry, dairying & fisheries activities under RKVY and actively associate Secretaries of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries Departments in the States in the planning process.

6. Chief Executive Officer, National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA), highlighted the feasibility of convergence among various programmes through the example of Hiware Bazar village (Ahmednagar district, Maharashtra) and underlined the need for streamlining procedures and planning processes.

7. The representatives of States gave a brief account of steps taken for (a) convergence under RKVY by their respective States; (b) role of PRIs/TSI/community based organization in preparation of DAP, etc.

Uttar Pradesh: The Agriculture Production Commissioner, welcoming the suggestion of a single committee at the State level, suggested that the work of such a committee could be facilitated by having different member-secretaries for specific scheme/programme. He highlighted the role of food/meat processing industry as an alternative source of employment and income in rural areas.

Tamil Nadu: The Agriculture Production Commissioner requested that DAHD&F could guide the States to prepare suitable projects in animal husbandry, dairying and fisheries sector under RKVY.

Uttarakhand: It was imperative to build institutional structures to enable convergence which needed to be taken up in mission mode.

Himachal Pradesh: The Principal Secretary said that restoring the institution of the Agriculture Production Commissioner would promote convergence. Certain percentage of RKVY allocation (say, 5%) could be earmarked as an incentive for the States to create institutions to promote convergence at State/District/Block level.

Orissa: The Commissioner-cum-Secretary (Agriculture) stated that for better convergence in planning and implementation, it was relevant to know in advance the resources the Agriculture Department could access from other Departments as well as the action plan of other Departments impinging on agricultural growth in the State. The community based organization could be enlisted to promote convergence.

Kerala: The Agriculture Production Commissioner stated that the Panchayats had been duly consulted for projects taken up under RKVY during 2008-09. From next year, full fledged DAPs would be prepared and RKVY would be contextualized in DAPs. It was desirable to apportion funds among DAPs and SAP as all activities from State level perspective may not find a place in DAPs. Achieving convergence among schemes/programmes was difficult due to mind-set, differing norms and procedures. Training and hand holding through TSGs was needed.

Bihar: The Principal Secretary (Agriculture) stated that in Bihar agriculture and allied Departments had been brought under one Secretary. Convergence required cooperation from all Departments in the rural sector.

Madhya Pradesh: The Principal Secretary (Agriculture) observed that convergence does not happen because of lack of clarity. The schematic architecture of most CSS and State level schemes is not convergence friendly as the schemes are output, not outcome, oriented. The reward/punishment and accountability structures discourage attempts to collaborate which is seen as risky and problematic. In the short term, we should try to set up convergent mechanisms and not worry too much about convergent outcomes which would follow. A beginning should be made in the Department of Agriculture & Cooperation itself, which has different sanctioning mechanisms and procedures for different CSSs. An

umbrella body should look at all the CSSs and sanction annual work plans in one body. States should also be mandated to set up similar mechanisms.

Meghalaya: The Principal Secretary (Agriculture) highlighted the need for providing incentives to States under RKVY to promote convergence.

Haryana: The Principal Secretary (Agriculture) stressed the need for capacity building at block/district levels. She said that Deputy Commissioner did not have the time or the experience required for overseeing convergent planning at the district level.

West Bengal: The Secretary (Agriculture) stated that Primary Agriculture Credit Societies and Self Help Groups could be utilized as vehicles for extension activities.

Rajasthan: The Principal Secretary (Agriculture) stated that a top down approach to convergence would not succeed. Planning for agriculture and rural development had to be initiated at village level for which capacity building at that level was required.

Assam: The Agriculture Production Commissioner highlighted the need to ensure convergence in the State Plan and the Central Sector/Centrally Sponsored Schemes. The entire plan for the sector had to be seen together. Before holding Annual Plan discussions in the Planning Commission, a meeting in advance could be held at the Government of India level to ensure convergence between the State Plan and the Central Sector/Centrally Sponsored Schemes being implemented in the State.

State Agriculture Universities/NDDB: SAU, Haryana opined that convergence would require proper interfacing of activities. SAU, Anand (Gujarat) suggested that the soil health card report should contain advice to the farmer for soil amelioration and resultant gain in productivity/income. Villages could be adopted for demonstration of technology. The NDDB stated that as feed cost constituted 70% of the cost of milk production, fodder production was a priority and the projects for production of certified seed for fodder could be taken up under RKVY. SAU, Himachal Pradesh suggested that there should be an authority for quality assurance in respect of soil testing.

8. Prof. Rajakutty, NIRD, made a brief presentation highlighting the salient observations on monitoring of implementation of RKVY in 17 States. The Seed Replacement Rate was improving and there were examples of convergence in projects taken up under RKVY. Innovative projects had also been taken up in some States. However, in some States there was delay in release of funds. Lack of interaction, fear of losing control, varying norms and accounting procedures were hampering convergence. There was need for maintenance of asset registers to properly account for assets created.

9. Member (RD), Planning Commission, in his concluding remarks said that RKVY was a new initiative and it had to be given time stabilize before taking up any serious evaluation. The effort should be to utilize the full allocation rather than getting bogged down on procedural bottlenecks. There were indications that RKVY had infused enthusiasm among the district agriculture functionaries. However, instructions on planning had to be disseminated to district level and below and a healthy dialogue was important. Creation of institutions such as Regional Agriculture Commissioners was needed for proper agro-climatic planning.

10. Member (Agriculture), Planning Commission said that the SLSCs should make it easier for convergence to take place. There were more possibilities of achieving convergence in programmes/schemes at the district and the sub-district levels. There was a need for faster flow of funds and for matching the resources under RKVY with other programmes/schemes. The provision of 5% of funds for preparation of DPRs could also be utilized for capacity building.

11. Secretary (A&C) observed that a beginning had been made and there had been instances of convergence having been attempted. The schemes/programmes and associated processes at the State level as well as the Central level needed to be revisited for furthering convergence.

12. Joint Secretary (INM) made a presentation at the conference regarding “National Project on Management of Soil Health & Fertility” asking the States to avail of the new scheme and send proposals to Department of Agriculture & Cooperation for setting up of soil testing laboratories, strengthening of existing soil testing laboratories including setting up of mobile soil testing laboratories to ensure soil test based application of chemical fertilizers in conjunction with organic manures, green manures, bio-fertilizers, etc. for better soil health and fertility and, above all, for promotion of balanced use of fertilizers.

13. The Agriculture Commissioner made a presentation on Kharif performance and Rabi prospects.

14. The Joint Secretary (Extension) in his presentation drew attention of the States which have either not submitted their State Extension Work Plans (SEWPs) for 2008-09 or had a slow/poor pace of utilization resulting in non-release of funds during 2008-09. The States of Arunachal Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand and Meghalaya were requested to expedite submission of their State Extension Work Plans (SEWPs) for 2008-09. States with huge unspent balances, viz., Andhra Pradesh (Rs. 11.45 crore), Bihar (Rs. 30.25 crore), Tamil Nadu (Rs.10.32 crore), Uttar Pradesh (Rs.16.98 crore) and West Bengal (Rs.12.94 crore) and the States where no releases could be made in the current year, viz., Chattisgarh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Kerala and Utrkhand were requested to accelerate utilization of funds. Similarly, the States were also requested to widely promote important extension activities of the cafeteria, viz., setting up of Farm Schools, formulation of Commodity Interest Groups/Farmer Interest Groups, demonstrations, etc. The attention of the State Governments was also drawn to other factors affecting release of funds to them such as release of 10% State share, timely submission of progress reports and submission of pending utilization certificates.

15. The following decisions were taken:

- (i) The States would review their DAPs/SAP for factoring in convergence with the interventions in the rural sector. The plans would adopt the methodology as per the C-DAP Manual brought out by the Planning Commission. Comprehensive and convergent DAPs/SAP would be expected from all States/UTs from 2009-10.
- (ii) Selected AERCs (Ahmedabad, Bangalore and New Delhi) would review sample DAPs in consultation with the TSI which prepared the DAP and the concerned line Departments of the State Government for ensuring convergence and

comprehensiveness. Assistance for this purpose would be provided to AERCs by DAC.

- (iii) The States would hold annual workshops for reviewing the DAPs/SAP with regard to the priorities identified convergence and progress made in implementation.
- (iv) The States may accelerate implementation of projects taken up under RKVY and send proposal for release of 2nd instalment during 2008-09 preferably within December, 2008.
- (v) The States may send proposals under the National Project on Management of Soil Health & Fertility immediately by e-mail/fax.
