

Vidarbha Intensive Irrigation Development Programme (VIIDP)

Vidarbha region of Maharashtra remained backward industrially as well as agriculturally. 65% of the rural population of the region comprising of eleven districts namely Akola, Amravati, Bhandara, Buldhana, Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Gondia, Nagpur, Wardha, Washim, Yavatmal is dependent on agriculture and allied activities. Agriculture in this region is less productive in comparison to the State and National averages. Cotton is the most important cash crop and is the backbone of the farmers of Yavatmal, Akola, Amravati, Wardha, Buldhana and Washim districts of western Vidarbha. Out of an estimated 12 lakh ha under cotton production in Vidarbha about 400-600 mm of annual rainfall and very limited irrigation facilities at disposal, cotton farmers are often exposed to higher risks that many a times result in loss of income. Low rainfall condition and scarcity of irrigation, lack of micronutrients in soil, frequent pest attacks and other physical characteristics of this region result in lower productivity (about 25% lower than State average) of cotton farming. Dependency on rain and greater adoption of Bt cotton which is more sensitive to shortage of water, has made cotton cultivation a high risk–high cost cultivation system in the region. Considering the low rainfall and geological conditions of the region, it was thought that instead of creating additional major and medium structures to sustained large scale efforts for water harvesting and popularizing participatory water harvesting and management measures may be useful, which will become a pre-requisite for ensuring that at least one supplementary irrigation facility is available to the farmers.

Vidarbha Intensive Irrigation Development Programme (VIIDP) was conceived with the following objectives:

- a) To increase productivity of rainfed cotton farming in Vidarbha region through rainwater harvesting, intensive irrigation and better crop management;
- b) To bring maximum cotton growing area under protective irrigation and better soil moisture regime through in-situ and ex-situ conservation measures;
- c) To augment/ restore/renovate existing minor/small scale irrigation resources through provision of water lifting devices for filling of storage; and
- d) To enhance water use efficiency through application of drip/sprinkle irrigations.

It is envisaged to achieve the targets through (a) In situ conservation measures through Broad Bed and Furrows (BBF) and Graded bunding; (b) Construction of Farm Ponds including optional provision for plastic lining/plastic cover; (c) Construction of Series of Check Dams/Cement Bandhara; (d) De-siltation and Deepening of Nala bed in

completed Check Dam including optional provision for cement lining/cement bund; (e) Expansion of Micro Irrigation System and Supply of Water lifting Devices; (f) Minor Irrigation Projects; (g) Restoration of Minor Irrigation Potential; (h) Lift Irrigation System; (i) Impounding of streams of existing Kolhapur Type (KT) Weirs; (j) Formation of Water Users Associations and Farmer Groups.

VIIDP will be implemented as a sub-scheme of Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY). Accordingly, the procedure for Planning and Approval will generally follow RKVY pattern. At the National Level, Dept. of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare will oversee the activities of the programme and accord approval to the State's Proposal. Dept. of Agriculture will be the nodal agency at the State Level to implement the programme in collaboration with other State Departments of Rural Development and Water Conservation, Irrigation, and Panchayati Raj Institutions, etc.

An outlay under RKVY for Rs. 3250 crores have been made for a period of five years from 2012-13 to 2016-17, which will be shared for Agriculture Rs, 1791 crore and Rs. 1459 for Minor Irrigation. The allocation for 2012-13 is to the tune of Rs. 300 crore out of which Rs. 135 crore for agricultural Department and Rs. 165 crore for Minor Irrigation Department. The remaining four financial years will have allocation of Rs. 500 crores, Rs. 700 crores, Rs. 800 crores and Rs. 950 crores.

VIIDP is expected to bring more areas under protective irrigation besides extending various water harvesting measures to remaining areas for ensuring at least some moisture to the cotton and other crops throughout the crop cycle. Farmers will also have choices for a second crop due to availability of additional water. VIIDP will also help in augmenting benefits of ongoing efforts of all existing government schemes like RKVY, MNREGS, IWMP, ISOPOM, NHM, MMA, Programmes of AHD&F etc. through convergence at farm level to maximize the returns from the rainfed cotton growing areas of Vidarbha region.

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