

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“Better manuring than Plough: then weed:
Than Irrigating, better guard”

- Ayyan Thiruvalluvar.

Manuring is important than ploughing;
Weeding and irrigation are more important,
Crop protection is most important.

- Thirukural Kalaingar Urai

In Tamil Nadu, 56% of population is depending on Agriculture and allied activities for their livelihood. The standard of living of the rural people depends on the agricultural development. The standard of living of the people depending on agriculture needs upliftment on par with people depending on industrial sector whose life standard is being improved because of dynamic industrial growth in Tamil Nadu. The Government is taking efforts to attain sustainable agricultural development by bringing agriculture as a commercial venture by switching over from the present method of cultivation through adoption of new scientific method of cultivation to increase the productivity to manifold, value addition, processing and utilization of marketing opportunities.

Decline in area under cultivation & water resources, depletion of soil health and scarcity of agricultural labourers hinder speedy growth in agriculture development. The Government is implementing various programmes to tide over the situation and to achieve greater development in agriculture.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister is persistently emphasizing the Central Government to implement a massive programme for linking rivers at National Level. By this, the surplus water which flows in the sea unutilized could be utilized for bringing larger areas of dryland under cultivation. So that, the farmers in these areas will prosper. The Hon'ble Chief Minister is also emphasizing the linkage of southern rivers as a first step, if there is delay in linkage of rivers at national level.

The Government is endeavoring to help the farmers to overcome the challenges faced by them by extending various assistance and relief measures. Waiver of crop loan to the tune of Rs.7000 crores, reduction of interest rate for crop loan from 9% to 7% and further to 5% for prompt repayment, continuance of free electricity to farm pumpsets, distribution of developed waste land to poor agricultural labourers, various assistance for education, marriage, maternity, pension and for funeral expenses extended through Tamil Nadu Agricultural Labourers and Farmers Social Security and Welfare Scheme and 50% assistance on premium for loanee and non loanee farmers under Crop Insurance Scheme are extended to the farmers. The Government is procuring Fine variety paddy at Rs.825/- per quintal by extending incentive of Rs.50/- per Quintal over Rs.775/- fixed by the Central Government and Common variety at Rs.795/- per quintal by extending incentive of Rs.50/- per quintal over of Rs.745/- fixed by Central Government through Civil Supplies Corporation. The Government is also extending various assistance to protect the farming community.

As a vital input, the supply of seeds with quality standards to the farmers is ensured through Seed Certification to increase the productivity of the crops.

The new varieties, agricultural implements and new technologies are evolved by Tamil Nadu Agricultural University through various research activities and made available to the farmers.

The Government is taking strenuous efforts to achieve significant increase in agricultural productivity through adoption of System Rice Intensification (SRI) and Precision Farming Technology suitable for Cotton, Sugarcane, Coconut, Maize, Vegetables, Flowers and Fruit Crops by farmers.

Out of total water requirement, 70% to 80% is required for irrigation. Hence focus is also given to conserve the ground water by water harvesting methods through effective use of water resources. More attention is given for formation of rain water harvest methods such as formation of farm ponds, check dams and diversion of rain water into abandoned wells to conserve the ground water.

Improving and protecting the soil health is essential to increase the productivity of the crops. The programmes for selection of crops based on soil type, soil test based fertilizer application, formation of slope based contour-bunding to conserve soil, development of fallow lands into cultivable lands, land development activities in drought prone areas, watershed development in drylands have been given special attention.

Mechanization in agriculture is essential to overcome the labour demand emerged due to industrialization and urbanization and to carry out agricultural activities in time more scientifically. The Government is taking speedy action to promote rice transplanting and harvesting machine, sugarcane harvester, pulses and Millets seed drill, weeding implements, cotton seed drill, kapas harvester, cotton plant remover and hiring of machines at nominal cost to the farmers by procuring them locally and through imports.

The Department of Agriculture has been restructured by bringing three tier system to two-tier system by positioning more technical staff at block and village level for effective transfer of technologies. Through positioning of officers from all departments at block level, farmers will have greater avenue to get integrated advice and scheme benefits in a single place. Government has initiated action for speedy delivery of IT enabled extension services by linking Agriculture and allied departments at state, district and block levels with Tamil Nadu Agricultural University through network connectivity. Efforts will be taken to establish more Agri Clinics with an objective of providing technical service and input supplies through promotion of public private partnership in agricultural extension.

Due to the reasons that the climatic condition and soil in Tamil Nadu is highly suited for the cultivation of Horticultural Crops, and farmers can earn additional income and nutritional security is made possible through the cultivation of vegetables, fruits and medicinal crops, the cultivation of horticultural crops are highly promoted through National Horticulture Mission.

To improve the marketing opportunities for agricultural produce, the Uzhavar Santhai, post harvest management, cold storage facilities for perishables, food processing, establishment of export zones, terminal markets have been taken up. To reduce the loss of the food products which are upto 30%, necessary provisions are made in the Agricultural Industrial Policy to ensure remunerative price to the produce, encourage food processing sector and export to earn foreign exchange by increasing the food processing from the present level of 1% to 10%, out of the total production, increasing value addition from 7% to 30%. Under this policy, all assistance which are provided to other industries will be extended to agro based industries, agricultural machineries and industries manufacturing micro irrigation equipments.