

## **Proceeding of the preparatory meeting held on 18.6.2006 at CCSHAU, Hisar to discuss the National Policy Draft for Farmers entitled “Serving farmers and saving farming”**

A meeting to discuss the policy draft on “Serving farmers and saving farming” was held under the Chairmanship of Dr. J.C. Katyal, Vice-Chancellor and attended by Prof. J. George, Prof. & Head, Faculty of Economics, HIPA, Gurgaon, Dr. B.S. Chillar, Director of Research, Dr. R.K. Malik, Director Extension Education, Dr. R.S. Dalal, Director, HRM, All Deans, Dr. O.P. Dhankar, Project Director and a select team of 25 scientists identified across different disciplines of the University.

At the outset, the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. J.C. Katyal, introduced the objectives of the meeting and informed that “Agriculture” being a State subject, any policy changes in the 11<sup>th</sup> plan are to be carried out in consultation with the states and after several rounds of discussions at various levels, the policy framework shall be finalized. Dr. Katyal welcomed the participants and introduced the Guest, Prof. J. George, to the participants.

Initiating the discussion, Prof. George emphasized that our perceptions in the field of agriculture should be very clear and the scientists have a greater role in the decision framework. The proposed meetings at several levels have the basic objective to come out with an appropriate policy that protects certain basic non-negotiable interests of the Haryana farmer community while preparing them to meet the future challenges for growth. Hence policy instruments must suit our farmers in general and Haryana in particular. Dr. George lamented that responses of the states to many legislative measures and earlier Bills have been either lukewarm or completely absent. Three issues, Prof. George emphasised, need our immediate consideration:

- i) Exploring the matrix of environment, agriculture and livestock in Haryana;
- ii) Engage with the changing economic environment for a proper appreciation of the livelihood options;
- iii) Identification of various segments of farmers in Haryana with respect to quality and quantum of land and water endowments.

With the above comments, Dr. George set the ball rolling for a wide range of discussion on agriculture policy of the past, present and the document in question took place. The following major points emerged:

1. Our policy focus should be enhancing employment generation in rural sector and should add to the income as rate of return is low as compared to other sectors.
2. Generating accurate market information as on today it is either traders’ eccentric or has minimum public support.
3. Skewed Agriculture Credit Policy as it is not as per requirement/need based on repaying capacity leading to increase indebtedness.
4. Need to reorient our rural employment schemes to target younger generation and enhancing their skills through capacity building/trainings.
5. Private entrepreneurs are entering the farm sector in a big way and they should plough back a good part of their value-addition in natural resource conservation, e.g., ground water recharge
6. Easy access to credit at soft rates for promoting shift in production and high value crops should have an insurance cover.
7. To encourage cautious contract farming and protecting farmers from the exploitative procedures of the multinationals, government interventions are imminent. Perhaps, some margin money should be there.
8. Prime agriculture land must not be acquired for non-farm developmental work. This is bound to convert ‘a farmer’ into ‘a farm labourer’.
9. Before advocating any diversification on a major scale, assured market infrastructure, i.e., cold chain, packaging and grading, etc., should be developed. This may also necessitate promoting processing industries in the close vicinity of the production zones. Moreover, for all agricultural produce there must be a MSP to safeguard the farmers from distress sale. Decision on quality of produce must not rest with traders but with an independent/autonomous body.
10. Custom hiring of farm machinery needs to be encouraged as it will ensure not only machinery availability at nominal costs but may also enlarge scope of income generation for rural youth. But a rule based and quality audited service protocol has to be developed *ab initio*.
11. New initiatives in livestock production are required as the old approach lacked farsightedness. Milk should have a MSP and provision of contract farming need to include livestock and poultry to augment the rural income.

12. All developmental agencies have unidirectional approach with rural men as target. Rural farm women need more focus through empowerment and entrepreneurial skill development towards establishing rural cottage units with direct link with marketing agencies.
13. Need to identify the gaps in technology adoption and funding to plug these gaps through region-specific requirements. Similarly, breeding programmes should be reoriented to mitigate environmental stress and organic farming should include component of dairy and livestock as well.
14. Urgent need for location specific conservations of natural resources like the Elite genetic materials. There should be a nodal agency for this. IT Kendra's should find a place in Package of Practices after providing a scientific base. Polluters of natural resources must fund the reclamation and water harvesting should be given top priority.
15. As everything cannot be grown everywhere, so there is need for identification of crop/livestock production zones with associated industrial units that may enjoy special economic package as tax free zone, etc.
16. IPR should be relevant to protect the interests of small and marginal farmers.
17. Agriculture at school level should be a component of course curricula. A rural trained youth should be given opportunity in the sale of agricultural inputs and products.
18. Water should be a national property for its national distribution among the partner states. Water use efficiency must be rewarded.

Summing up the discussions, the Vice-Chancellor remarked that:

1. Existing system is not sufficient as policy statement has been made towards framing a new policy.
2. There are low returns on agri-investment and farm income is dwindling regularly
3. There is high rate of undisguised employment in rural sector.
4. Natural resources are degrading and must be conserved at all costs.
5. Be prepared for changes in climate, market demands and international competition.

The document under discussion lacks the way the policy should be implemented. The establishment of many new national level committees/commissions have been proposed as a policy prescription in the national draft. The utility of this prescription may not be the most effective as we have learnt from our past experience. Our gaps should be:

- a) Assess and categorize the resources of farmers in social, physical and economic terms and this basis should be taken to arrive at constraints.
- b) Farm Advisory Centres, e.g., KVKs' should act as databanks and catalyst for change.
- c) Credit availability with a stipulated time frame should be ensured and all bottlenecks be removed.
- d) To encounter rural employment, all the resource, e.g., technology and credit must work in unison.
- e) Strong legal support towards contract farming protection of farmers' interests.
- f) Farmers should be encouraged as traders of their produce by farming cooperatives or SHGs.
- g) Incentives of quality inputs in agriculture must be ensured and accredited labs are required to quality analysis and accreditation.
- h) Diversification may not become a slogan only, so it must have need based support i.e. more income generation, assured marketing at reasonable prices, conserve natural resources.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

Sd/-  
Assoc. Director (REI.)

Sd/-  
Director of Research

Sd/- approved  
Vice-Chancellor

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A copy of the above proceedings is forwarded to the participants for information and further necessary action.

Sd/-Assoc. Director (REL.)