

COMMERCIALISATION OF AGRICULTURE

Dr. RM. Chidambaram

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Agriculture is the basic industry of India. Agriculture consists of farming and allied activities of agriculture viz., horticulture, floriculture, sericulture, pisciculture, dairy farming, poultry farming, piggeries and the like. Even in globalized India, majority of the population depends on agriculture. Sustaining and promoting agriculture need emphasis on the following grounds:

- a) Agriculture is the known operation in rural India. Hence its sustenance is easy.
- b) Agriculture and its allied activities generate employment opportunities for a vast majority of the population living in rural India.
- c) For the ever growing population, food security is essential. Though India is self-sufficient in food production, sustenance of such trend is possible only by promoting agricultural activities.
- d) As the land bank is inelastic in supply its value appreciation is a never ending phenomenon. As agriculturists are lured by fancy price for their land, they are desirous of selling their land to the real estate developers. Eventually the area under cultivation is diminishing. Promotion of agriculture is the only way to protect this sector from greedy people.

- e) As agriculture is not a yielding proposition, many youngsters are moving towards urban centers resulting in urban congestion and depletion of contributories from rural areas by killing the avenues meant for rural development.

The points mentioned above are responsible to make agriculture a dismal profession in the minds of younger population. Commercialisation is the only way to make agriculture a rewarding activity.

What is commercialisation of agriculture?

Commercialisation results in commercial viability. A profitable venture alone is commercially viable. Three dimensional approach is essential to make agriculture as a profitable venture. One, remunerative price for agricultural outputs. Two, easy marketability of agricultural produce. Three, risk minimization to motivate the farming community.

By understanding the significance of agriculture and the need for commercializing Indian agriculture, one may raise a question: How commercialisation of agriculture is possible and feasible?

In order to find a practicable solution, the author approached farmers, officials of the Department of agriculture, bankers and merchants dealing in



agriculture produce. Their views are interpreted to make commercialisation of agriculture a practical reality.

(1) It is visible that the area under cultivation is gradually depleting in India. There are two reasons responsible for such a unhealthy trend in a country like India where the population is ever growing.

(a) Conversion of cultivable lands into concrete jungles – It is like killing the goose for a golden egg.

(b) Unremunerative price for agricultural produce force many farmers to make their farm lands for the establishment of village industries, cottage units, small and micro enterprises.

A check on real estate developers is the need of the hour to put an end for the conversion of farm lands to erect concrete structures. Though the promotion of small scale units is helpful for the development of the economy, it should never be at the cost of agricultural development.

(2) It is an established theory that the application of qualitative inputs results in better quality outputs. Agriculture is not an exception to this theory. Though improved and scientifically proved seed varieties are available in India, but their cost is prohibitive to farmers. Agricultural research stations in association with Agricultural Universities have to develop improved seed varieties at an affordable cost to the farming community.

(3) Now the Department of Agriculture is maintaining close rapport with the farmers. Wooded farmers have certain requirements to make their avocation a remunerative one:

The Department has to assume the role of an intermediary in between the farmers longing for financial support for their operation and the institutional agencies extending the required finance.

The Department has to expand the warehousing and cold storage facilities in order to retain the agricultural produce especially perishable items to fetch a remunerative price in favorable market conditions.

No doubt, the transport and communication network is improving. Those facilities are to be

extended to the nook and corner of the country. Thereby farmers can identify potential markets and to distribute their produce for a fair price in places where the demand surpass supply.

(4) Agricultural economists use to say that Indian agriculture is dancing to the tunes of monsoon. At times, natural calamities shatter the plans and hopes of farmers. Eventually, farmers have to spend their accumulated wealth over the years to overcome such sufferings. Risks are common and agriculture in India is highly risk-prone. Mitigation of such risks are essential. For that insurance coverage is essential. It is expected that the corporate houses having forward and backward integration with agriculture have to undertake insurance coverage as a sort of corporate social responsibility.

(5) Though the market opportunities for agricultural produce are improving in India, its level is yet to reach the optimum. This effort is a joint one where the contribution of farmers, farmers' cooperatives, agencies of the state and central government is required. All these constituents are, no doubt, contributories. But when the corporate sector is supporting these constituents, there will be umpteen opportunities in marketing the agricultural produce. Export opportunities can easily be gauged by Indian multi-national companies.

(6) In India, 'agriculture' should be made a compulsory component of education at all levels viz., primary, secondary, higher-secondary and higher education. Regarding agriculture, it is not only cultivation aspects but beyond that. To be specific, they should go up to marketing. Mere knowledge orientation is of no use. All skills associated with allied activities of agriculture are to be honed. At the higher educational level, programmes on agricultural engineering, irrigation management, rural management, agricultural marketing, rural financing and the like are to be attempted with more of practical bias in order to lure the younger generation towards agriculture to contemplate a wedlock between 'young India' and 'resourceful Bharat'.

[The author is Research Advisor, PKR Arts College for Women, Gobichettipalayam, Tamil Nadu. Email id: rmchida17@gmail.com]