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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STATE DEVELOPMENT REFORMS
COMMISSION ON 13TH FEBRUARY 2001

The Chairman, State Development Reforms Commission, Shri B.B. Lyngdoh welcomed the members and officials present in the meeting. In his opening remarks, the Chairman briefly informed the gathering that the State Development Reforms Commission had been constituted by the State Government with the objective of examining the parameters of ongoing developmental programs which are being implemented by various development Departments, with a view to determining whether such programs have been achieving the desired results or not. The Chairman also clarified that if the programs are not achieving the desired results fully, the Commission is expected to recommend any modifications as considered necessary. The Commission was also free to suggest any new programs for accelerated development of the rural areas and to suggest working parameters thereof.

The Chairman mentioned that it was in this context that the Commission has considered it necessary to discuss the schemes and programs of the Agriculture Department in the present meeting. He stated that about 80% of the State's population was based in the rural areas, and the prominent role of agriculture and related activities cannot be over emphasized. He said that it was a common perception that the comparatively low productivity of agriculture in the upland areas, which form the major portion of the land in the State, leads to uneconomical operations in the field, and this, in many cases, has resulted in agriculture being only a subsistence farming. The youth are consequently leaving their villages and are coming to the cities in search of jobs. This has brought consequential problems of urbanization, which stretches the facilities in the urban areas to the limits. This has also resulted in growing urban unemployment which has brought about problems of law and order in our cities and towns. The Chairman reiterated that it is thus necessary that agriculture be given a renewed thrust, so that its productivity can be increased, and so that the level of economic activity in the villages and rural areas can be given the desired momentum. The Chairman also indicated that he was happy that a number of new activities have been taken up by the Agriculture Department especially in introducing horticultural crops like Tea, Cashew and various other fruits and horticultural produce. He then requested the officers of the Agriculture Department to indicate the ongoing activities of the Department, its programs and schemes, the shortcomings and difficulties faced by it in the implementation of programs, and also the strategy proposed by the Department in the future.

The Commissioner and Secretary Agriculture, assisted by the Director Horticulture and the Joint Director Agriculture / Horticulture briefed the members of the State Development Reforms Commission. It was indicated that the State was basically agrarian and rural based, and that at present, Agriculture contributes about 30% of the State's GDP. Agriculture thus plays a prominent role in the State's economy. However, this sector was still handicapped by slow changing old methods of technology and by large scale jhumming which was prevalent in many parts of the State. It was indicated that at present, the cultivated area was about 2.30 Lakh hectares, amounting to approximately only 10% of the total geographical area of the State, with the gross cropped area being assessed at 2.90 lakh hectares. It was also mentioned that there was a shortage of foodgrain requirement in the State by about 1.65 Lakh Tonnes annually. However, a positive feature is that there is a marketable surplus in Horticultural crops, and that a significant increase in both the production and the productivity is possible, over and above the present annual production of 2.15 Lakh Tonnes.

The Department indicated that the approved Outlay for the 9th Plan was Rs 13420 lakhs. For the Financial year 2000-2001, the approved Plan outlay was Rs 1630 Lakhs both for Agriculture and Horticulture, but this allocation has been subsequently reduced to Rs 1483 Lakhs only,

It was pointed out by the Department that in spite of various constraints being faced, there has been a substantial improvement in the production of various items. Giving the reference years of 1995 and 1999, it was stated that the production of Rice,

which was 111777 MT in 1995 had increased to 149734 MT in 1999, with the productivity increasing from 1074 kg per Hectare to 1421 Kg per hectare in the same period. Similarly, wheat production rose from 4710 MT to 6998 MT with the productivity rising from 1117 Kg per Hectare to 1632 Kg per hectare. The production of Maize increased from 21745 MT to 25272 MT between 1995 and 1999, and the productivity increased from 1282 Kg per hectare to 1468 Kg per hectare. The figures in respect of total pulses showed an increase in the area under cultivation from 3178 Hectares to 3262 Hectares, with the production increasing from 2421 MT to 2488 MT. Under Horticulture items, it was indicated that area under Pineapple rose from 8390 Hectares to 9291 Hectares, and production from 75661 MT to 80116 MT. In respect of Bananas, the area coverage rose from 4814 Hectares to 5194 Hectares and the production from 60522 MT to 62888MT. The area under Arecanut went up from 9466 Hectares to 10200 Hectares, and the production from 10318 MT to 13260 MT with an increase in productivity also increasing from 1091 Kg per Hectare to 1300 kg per Hectare. Another positive feature was the increase of area under High Yielding Varieties of Rice from 40000 Hectares to 48000 Hectares and High Yielding Varieties of Wheat from 4220 Hectares to 5500 Hectares. The area under High Yielding Varieties of Maize also rose from 14000 Hectares to 23000 Hectares.

The Department then indicated the strategies and priorities which were being adopted by the Department. These are briefly indicated below:-

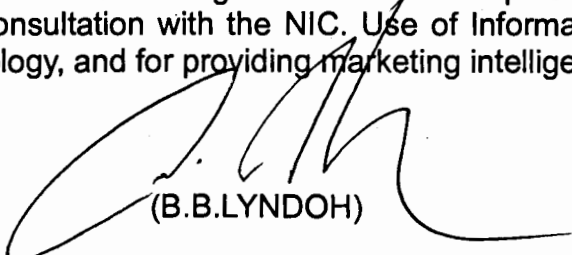
- Given the topography and climatic conditions, priority is being given to Horticulture and foodgrains.
- For foodgrain production, main strategies are to increase the gross cropped area with irrigation for double/ multiple cropping, and raising productivity through HYV, adequate and need base plant protection measures, and introduction of improved crop production technology.
- Attempts to popularize HYV Maize, wheat and pulses through demonstration and minikit programs.
- Other strategic interventions proposed through timely delivery of agriculture inputs.
- Encouraging the farmers to go in for timely sowing and transplanting of seedlings.
- ensuring availability of irrigation facilities from MI projects,
- increasing the availability of agricultural machinery,
- encouraging Rabi (winter crop)cultivation,
- thrust to land development.
- frequent and widespread publicity campaigns
- Improvement and provision of marketing facilities
- It was noted that Horticulture has tremendous potential and opportunities for growth. Also, apart from yielding higher revenue returns, it also encourages permanent cultivation, thus having a very positive impact on the areas which hitherto had been under the traditional practice of jhum, while also providing food security. Hence prioritisation to Horticultural and plantation crops like Tea, cashew, coconut, bananas etc. However need for marketing linkages and also processing facilities.

The officers of the Department indicated that some of the major constraints which were affecting the potential of this sector were as follows :-

- Non availability of HYV/Improved Varieties for upland paddy and also short duration paddy for flood prone areas.
- Marketing problems, with the total lack of agro-based village industries, which could give the benefit of value addition to agricultural produce.
- The full package of practices is seldom followed.
- Limited low lying areas for paddy
- Lack of market for maize, because of its high price of production.
- Citrus viral diseases, which are affecting the State
- Quality planting material for Horticulture are not readily available.
- Subsistence farming for most items, like maize etc.

After a detailed discussion in which all the members of the Commission participated, the following points emerged :-

- 1 The thrust areas as indicated by the Department were generally agreed to. It was noted that the Watershed Development scheme, Multiple Cropping scheme, Seed saturation scheme, Manure and Fertiliser scheme , Plant protection scheme and the schemes for development of Arecanut, Cotton, Ginger and Turmeric, Potato etc provide ample scope for involving unemployed youth and enable them to earn their livelihood. It was advised that the Department may formulate more schemes for employment generation, so that employment potential is tapped more fully. Schemes for Tea cultivation, which are presently limited only to three Districts of the State may also be extended so that the entire State can be covered.
- 2 The Department may formulate schemes for encouraging Horticultural plantations in the State, with inputs being given by the Department , even on private land. After the Department takes steps to provide the necessary inputs, the same may be handed over to the cultivators at the appropriate time . The Department may start such activities initially as a pilot project , so as to assess its acceptability.
- 3 The matter relating to declaration of Broomstick, Tezpatta etc as agricultural produce may be examined by the Department expeditiously. At present , these items have been categorized as Minor Forest Produce, with the result that the farmers are at a disadvantage .
- 4 The issue regarding declaration of support price for various agricultural produce like potatoes, ginger, etc was discussed. It was decided that the mater would be examined in detail. With financial implications etc also requiring to be worked out.
- 5 The Department needs to enter into new activities like floriculture, organic cultivation etc . Popularization of low-volume, high value items would also need to be consciously attempted. Specific mention was made of the potential of cultivating Orchids which can even be exported.
- 6 Marketing continues to be a problem requiring focused attention. The Department may explore the possibility of encouraging small scale processing units for undertaking intermediate and preliminary processing, especially of horticultural products .
- 7 The Extension wing of the Department needs to be strengthened and modernized for the purposes of information and publicity . Farmers need to be informed of the package of practices, new techniques and improved technology, so that the production and productivity can be increased.
- 8 Interaction with research organizations such as the ICAR, which can provide technical guidance in various areas , needs to be systematized.
- 9 Schemes for mechanization of agriculture, and popularization of power tillers, tractors, diesel pump sets etc needs to be given a higher priority, with higher allocations etc.
- 10 The Food Processing Units at Shillong and Dainadubi need to be operated to a commercial basis. The Department should expedite steps for a Revolving Fund , so that the units can operate in a proper manner , and the viability of the units can be properly assessed.
- 11 More attention and focus may be made on encouraging the cultivation of spices, turmeric, ginger etc.
- 12 The Department is extending help to the vegetable and flower growers by providing Poly-houses through a Centrally Sponsored Scheme. The scheme has been found to be very popular and has resulted in a substantial increase in the availability of off-season vegetables and flowers. The same scheme also provides for sprinkler irrigation, Drip irrigation and mulching. The scheme needs to be implemented in a much larger scale in future.
- 13 It was noted that some computer facilities are being installed in the Department and als I the Marketing Board, in consultation with the NIC. Use of Information Technology for imparting new technology, and for providing marketing intelligence etc needs to be done.



(B.B.LYNDOH)

**List of Officers/ Members present in the meeting of the
State Development Reforms Commission (SDRC) held on 13th February, 2001**

Sl.No.	Name	Designation
1.	Shri B.B. Lyngdoh	Chairman, SDRC
2.	Shri R.S. Rani	Deputy Chairman, SDRC
3.	Shri F.B. Lyngdoh	Member
4.	Shri A. Momin	Member
5.	Smti Ethelwitly Marak	Member
6.	Shri B.B. Chetri	Member
7.	Shri W.M.S. Pariat	Member-Secretary, SDRC
8.	Shri J.P. Singh	Chief Secretary, Meghalaya
9.	Shri P.J. Bazeley	Principal Secretary, Planning
10.	Shri A.K. Bhalla	Commissioner & Secretary, Planning
11.	Shri D. Das	Director, Horticulture
12.	Shri S.N. Das	Joint Director, Agriculture

Memo No. PIA/SDRC/5/2000/9-A

Dated Shillong the 9th May, 2001

Copy forwarded to :-

1. Private Secretary to the Chairman, SDRC for information of the Chairman.
2. Private Secretary to the Deputy Chairman, SDRC for information of the Deputy Chairman.
3. Private Secretary to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Meghalaya for information of the Chief Secretary.
4. Private Secretary to the Principal Secretary to the Govt. of Meghalaya, Planning/Finance Department.
5. The Commissioner & Secretary, Planning Department
6. The Director, Horticulture Department
7. The Joint Director, Agriculture Department
8. The Member Secretary, SDRC.
9. All members concerned.

By Order/etc.,

(A. Langstich)

Deputy Secretary to the Govt. of Meghalaya,
Programme Implementation Department.