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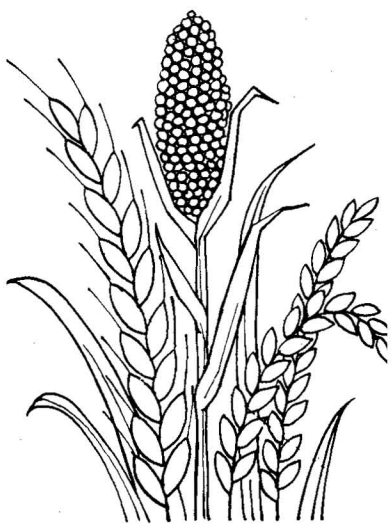

INDIAN SOCIETY OF
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS,
BOMBAY

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

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It is with thanks that I arise to say a few words on the occasion of the 29th Annual Conference of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics. I am not capable of expressing a view on the subject being a non-technical person. However, I may be excused for any mistakes I may make when saying things.

I feel that as an ordinary citizen I have a right to expect the very best. The majority of the population is rural and is unfortunately mostly illiterate and therefore the term scientific agriculture is esoteric both in content and reality. I therefore feel that if Agriculture has to convey anything to the common man, it should be through example rather than precept. As things are, the term Agricultural Department connotes bureaucracy and inactivity with no relationship to the individual. I request your permission to substantiate this view with my own working example.

Some time back it was suggested by a friend from Kerala to grow 'nutmeg' as it is imported annually to India. He said that we require a cool climate and therefore I felt it may be grown at Ananthagiri, where I have some farming land or at Araku, an area in Visakhapatnam district, which are in elevated places. I therefore wrote to the district agricultural department for instruction and help. After an indefinite period I was sent an answer which stated that it was possible to grow 'nutmeg.' But as the department is unaware of the basis of cultivation, I must send the soil to Bapatla to know whether the soil is suitable or not. I would like friends to analyse the answer.

(*a*) The nutmeg is grown but as the department does not do it they cannot convey the information.

(*b*) Ananthagiri is in the district but yet it is my business to send the soil to Bapatla.

In regard to the question of sending soil how much and how it should be sent is left to me, a non-technical person.

I was forced to give it up. I then thought of papaya farming from which two drugs are extracted called Papain and Pectin and the balance of the fruit is made into slices and tinned or turned into mash and fed to farm pigs as they do in New Zealand. I therefore employed a retired district agricultural officer and asked him how much water we would require for an acre to undertake papaya farming. He did not seem to know, as it is not the usual crop; he then said that he was a retired government officer and he would like to retire. I therefore got down to

* Inaugural Address delivered on the occasion of the 29th Annual Conference of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics held under the auspices of the Andhra University, Waltair on December 29, 1969.

banana farming as there is an export market. I was informed that one can grow 1,200 Cavandish plants per acre but the water consumed was heavy. I therefore wrote to the Director of Agriculture to let me know how much water we require. He wrote back saying 90 acre-inches, which works out at 53,17,200 cubic inches of water. So assuming we get a rainfall of 45 inches, we would require to supplement 26,58,600 cubic inches of water. I may confess, I do not know to this day how much a cubic inch of water would mean in terms of litres of water in an area where there would be standing water without seepage.

I was informed that in Israel and also in Japan water is transported and the basis is commercial farming. I therefore worked out the figures. I find that it costs 80 Paise per mile to transport 10,000 litres of water from source to the agricultural centre. I would like to know how much water we require with sprinkler irrigation to cultivate vegetable and fruit. I require this information on a non-technical basis, say on a commonsense basis.

I feel that animal husbandry and agriculture should go together and they should be in a combined department. I went to the National Dairy Farm at Visakhapatnam and I was informed that we can grow 50,000 lbs. of grass per acre with irrigation and this can be converted into silage. I asked them if they have a silo and asked for information as to how much silage is fed to cattle and to sheep as in Australia. To this they said that the Agriculture Department only grows the grass and how much was fed to the animals was dealt with by the Animal Husbandry Department and that the putting up of a silo was dealt by the Industries Department and therefore they did not know the answers to my questions. I am therefore attending this meeting and I would request you to let me know how I should proceed with the problem.

I am glad that a number of fertilizer factories are coming up. However, I have been informed that in the follow-up we are rather backward. It seems that in the soil-testing laboratories in the U.S.A. and Japan they have one in an area as large as our Panchayat. This is necessary because fertilizer is of such a nature that after a little use the fertility of the soil is reduced and the fertility can only be obtained by a period of non-use of the area, or if the basis of the chemical fertilizer is changed. We in Visakhapatnam district have some experience of the crops consuming an excess of fertility. The best example is sugarcane. After growing it for three years the crops grown are changed or the field is left fallow. However, if the basis of the chemical content of the fertilizer is changed, there is no need to stop cultivation.

Some time back I was interested in fish farming, because I read that in Japan and Indonesia a method of cultivation of fish has been developed in boxes which are made of wood so that they resemble a wire mesh cage and that these are let down into a fresh water tank or placed in a river by laying a pole along the bank. The boxes are filled with fingerling fish and fed with groundnut cake, deoiled cotton seed cake, deoiled rice bran cake, etc., and meshes of various kinds and the fish are harvested about four times a year. I did not however undertake this, because I was informed that fish farming is not agriculture, but is treated on par with industry. I wrote to Shri Morarji Desai, the then Finance Minister, expressing the view that I could understand mechanized deep sea fishing being treated on a

par with industry, but to equate this with fresh water fish farming was not equatable, as fresh water fish farming is agriculture. However, Shri Morarji Desai informed me that fresh water fish farming cannot be treated the same as farming. I am informed that in fresh water fish farming, fertilizers for growing grasses and grass seeds are broadcast. If fresh water fish farming is scientifically undertaken, a yield of up to 4,000 lbs. of fresh fish per acre can be obtained. Please consider this matter and if I am correct then the matter can again be taken up with the Central Government.

I wish all your deliberations success.