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Book Review

S.L. Bapna, S.P. Seetharaman and K.R. Pichholiya, *Soybean System in India*, Oxford and IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1992, PP XII + 99, Rs. 135/-.

Soybean contains 45 per cent protein and 18 per cent oil. It can be used in several forms, as food feed and raw material for industrial products. Considering these rich uses and suitable for growing even on less fertile lands, soybean was promoted as *Kalpataru* in the sixties. However, it is *kalpataru* status which has hampered the growth of soybean in India, conclude the authors of the book.

The book begins with highlighting demand-supply gap in pulses and oilseeds in India. It convincingly builds the case for looking into the reasons for poor growth and hence failure of soybean in augmenting the supply of plant protein and edible oil in the country. Subsequently, the book examines various sub-systems of soybean, viz., research, production, marketing and processing, and consumption. The study on production, marketing and processing was confined to Madhya Pradesh—the largest soybean producing state of the country. The consumption pattern of soya products was examined for rural Madhya Pradesh as well as for two metropolitan cities, viz., Delhi and Nagpur. The research sub-system has covered the All India Coordinated Research Project on Soybean sponsored by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. The book attempts to cover all the relevant issues with adequate data support.

Soybean contains some toxic substances and therefore, processing is essential for making soya products suitable for consumption. This means that production and processing of soybean should be developed simultaneously. The authors observed that in the beginning soybean suffered due to inadequate processing facilities. In the later period, although processing capacity was twice of production, inadequate research and extension support in development and promotion of new soya products was main constraint to the growth of soybean. In addition, untapped yield potential (66 per cent) and the cultivation of black soybean on account of low investment and pod shattering, and a maturity period coinciding with adequate availability of labour were considered to be

undesirable for the growth of soybean. The oilseeds growers' federation popularly known as the *Tilhan Sangh* has also undertaken activities such as extension, supply of subsidised inputs and processing of soybean. The authors noted that the progress of the *Sangh* was impressive in terms of activities and farmers covered but was less effective in creating awareness about soybean cultivation. This is rather paradoxical. The reasons for poor effectiveness should have been analysed in detail.

The authors observed some serious problems in processing of soybean particularly of black variety and acceptability of soya products. These includes inadequate research support, expensive processing technology and odour of soya products. The use of unprocessed soybean in rural areas was low mainly as mixed animal feed and roasted soybean for human consumption. In the metropolitan cities, the repeat consumption of soya products except soya milk and nutrela was absent. The efforts by government and private industry were found to be inadequate to popularise soya products.

The book is well organised and written. However, certain issues lack rigorous analysis. For instance, the analysis of yield gap, investment in research and market integration and efficiency should have been analysed under proper analytical frame work. As such, the observations on these aspects seem to be subjective. Also the book lacks precise discussion on the linkages between various sub-systems and their implications, although they are well spelt out in the introduction (Charts 1.1, p.7). Nevertheless, the authors have made valuable suggestions which merit attention. These include positioning of soybean as protein crop by concentrating efforts on development and promotion of soya products rather than on oil extraction. The oil content would be used in any case. Accordingly, research and extension efforts should be reoriented to develop and promote soya products which are cheaper and acceptable to consumers. However, the suggestion on establishing national pulses development board to take up all aspects of soybean promotion and incentives in the form of subsidy to promote soya products seem to be out of context, especially under new market friendly policies. To sum up, the book is a timely and valuable contribution on soybean. It would be beneficial to researchers, planners and private industry for giving much needed thrust to the crop.

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