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PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL SEMINAR ON "POLICIES FOR AGRIBUSINESS DEVELOPMENT".

The national seminar, jointly organised by Agricultural Economics Research Association (India), New Delhi, Institute of Co-operative Management, Bangalore and Department of Agricultural Marketing and Cooperation, UAS, Bangalore was held at Institute of Cooperative Management, Bangalore on May 29-30, 1995. It was inaugurated by His Excellency, the Governor of Karnataka, Khursheed Alam Khan and the presidential address was delivered by Dr. G.K. Veeresh, Vice-Chancellor.

The seminar was attended by 200 experts from all over India who included bankers, agricultural experts, agri-business people, cooperators, policy makers, social scientists, students and research scholars. There were three technical sessions viz., 1) scope and opportunities for agribusiness development in India, 2) management, infrastructural and institutional arrangements for agri-business development and 3) policy issues for agri-business development. Twenty six contributed research papers covering the above topics were presented and discussed. Besides contributed papers, there was a key note paper, by Dr. R.K. Shivanappan. The discussions in each session were ably guided by eminent experts as Chairmen and discussants. The following are the main recommendations of the seminar:

1. There is a need for formulating a comprehensive programme to harmonise agriculture with local realities, enabling a co-ordinated development of food crops, plantation crops, forests, livestock and related fields in the context of increasing corporate investment in agriculture sector. The Government has a big role to play here as the investors motivated by economic gains cannot be expected to operate with a long term perspective in mind.

2. We should concentrate efforts on exploiting the export potentials of traditional agricultural commodities instead of seeking high-tech ventures to increase the production of the commodities which are already being exported by other countries.

3. There is a need to introduce courses/programmes in agri-business management in State Agricultural Universities and institutes which are deemed universities in ICAR.

4. There should be more studies on policies affecting agri-business in India.

5. The growth and development of agri-business need not always be export oriented since it may lead to rise in domestic prices.

6. For implementing agri-business policy at grassroot level, the village panchayats and other rural institutions should be considered. Training/education on agri-business are essential to local institutions especially to those who handle the products. There should be public intervention to check indiscriminate privatisation of agri-business as it will cause distress to small producers.

7. Cooperatives should be strengthened as a middle path to take care of agri-business. It is also essential to create a level playing field between domestic sector and multinationals. Cooperative companies and contract system of farming are suggested to be helpful in agribusiness development.

8. There is need for strengthening the functioning of the public sector undertakings in the seed business. Quality control measures should be enforced in both private and public sector seed undertakings. The public sector undertakings in the seed business should also give importance to advertisement and extension activities, as done by the private sector. There should be proper accountability in public sector undertakings. Public sector undertakings should be given more autonomy to function efficiently.

9. The extension activities should be undertaken by the state level corporations covering various types of agri-business activities.

10. Farmers' organisation may have a tie-up arrangement with cooperative and other organisations for effective marketing of their products. There should be facility for packaging at farm level, market information, technological improvement and financial support for small holders.

11. It is suggested that a list of agri-business activity should be provided to the concerned while developing agri-business. Special efforts should be made in providing labour intensive activity instead of capital intensive activity to provide fuller employment and achieve social justice.

12. The Government should invest more on developing hard core infrastructure since private sector is not coming forward to invest in infrastructural development. The financial institutions can provide credit support and marketing and forward/backward linkages may be left to the private sector.

13. It should be ensured that there are no sudden and ad-hoc changes in macro-economic policies including exim policies creating doubt and uncertainty in the minds of producers, processors and other functionaries. The inconsistencies in the implementation of the exim policy should be avoided.