Agriculture in Himachal Pradesh

Introduction:

Himachal Pradesh describe by the ancients as “Dev Bhoomi” (Abode of the Gods), is situated in the heart of the Himalayas in the northern part of India. It has a geographical area of 55.67 lakh hectrares by professional surveys. Most of which is under forests, pastures and grazing lands. Less than ten per cent (5.6 lakh hectares) of the state’s net area is under cultivation. The state has a large range of mountains and valleys rising from 350 meters to 7000 meters above mean sea level. Its climate ranges from sub-tropical to sub-arctic cold with an annual rainfall of 350 millimeters to 3800 millimeters. Its temperatures vary from -25 C to 42 C. The state has snow fed parts. In addition, there are some natural lakes. The topography, soil, climate, rainfall and temperature provide the state with wide opportunities and potential for agriculture and horticulture.

Due to its hilly terrain, the economy of the state is predominantly mixed farming, agro-pastoral, silvi-pastoral and agro-horticultural. Most of the group based farming systems, engaging a majority of the farmers are found in the valleys of Yamuna, Satluj, Beas, Ravi, Chandera Bhaga and their tributaries. Agriculture accounts for over 30 per cent of the state’s net domestic product and provides employment to about 71 per cent of its residents. The annual growth rate of the state during 1999-2000 was 5.8 per cent against India’s 6.4 per cent. Earlier, during the Eighth Plan the annual growth rate of the state was 6.3 per cent. The state enjoys the special category status and thus gets special funds from the centre for its development activities.

Main Crops:

Agriculture contributes over 45% to the net state domestic product. It is the main source of income and employment in Himachal. Over 93% of the population in Himachal depend directly upon agriculture which provides direct employment to 71% of its people.

The entire population of the state more or less depends directly upon the agriculture of Himachal Pradesh. The major portion of the revenue earning in the state's economy is carried out by

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the cash crops in the Himachal Pradesh agriculture. The chief food crops cultivated in Himachal Pradesh agriculture include wheat, maize, rice, barley, seed-potato, ginger, vegetables, vegetable seeds, mushrooms, chicory seeds, hops, olives, and fig. Himachal Pradesh is also known as the 'Apple State of India' for its large-scale production of fruits. Farmers have engaged themselves highly in the fruit cultivation and it is also a great blessing to the economy of the state. Some very important factors that has led to the outstanding development in the agriculture of Himachal Pradesh are an efficient irrigation system, accessibility of low-cost cargo, and marketing facilities structured in an organized form.

However agriculture in the state suffers from certain limitations, especially in the production of food grains. One of the reasons is that the area under cultivation cannot be extended to any appreciable extent. Reclamation of land on slopes of hills for cultivation of food grains is neither economical nor beneficial. The farmers can profit more by raising cash crops suited to the agro-climatic conditions. Another reason is that reclamation of land from the hills increases the menace of soil erosion. Terrace Farming

The main cereals grown are wheat, maize, rice and barley. Kangra, Mandi district and to some extent Paonta valley of Sirmur district are the major producers of the 1st three cereals, while barley is mostly grown in Shimla district. Although the state is deficit in food grains, it has gained tremendously in other spheres of agricultural production such as seed-potato, ginger, vegetables, vegetable seeds, mushrooms, chicory seeds, hops, olives and fig especially vegetables and seed potato which is disease free and good quality are providing a good source of income to the farmers. Seed-potato is mostly grown in Shimla, Kulu and Lahaul areas.

Fruit Cultivation:

Fruit cultivation is another field which has proved to be an economic boon to the farmers. There are vast tracts of land in Himachal suitable only for growing fruits. Fruit cultivation does not add to the problem of soil erosion and its employment potential is much more than that of conventional farming. The yield per acre in terms of

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money is also much higher. Apples yield the maximum income. Fruit growing in Himachal is presently fetching over Rs.300 crore annually. Special efforts are being made to promote cultivation of new crops like olives, figs, hops, mushrooms, flowers, pistachio nuts, sarda melon and saffron. Himachal has earned the name of the 'Apple State of India'.

Reforms:

The agrarian reforms undertaken in the state by the government has also helped a great deal in the advancement in agriculture. In 1954, revolutionary land reforms legislation, the Himachal Pradesh (H.P) Abolition of Big Landed Estates and Land Reforms Act was enacted. This Act took away land beyond a certain limit from big landlords and erstwhile rulers and transferred these to tenants on payment of compensation amounting to 24 times of the land revenue paid on the land. In 1972, the H.P ceiling on hand Holding Act was passed which had the land ceiling fixed on various kinds of lands and tenants could not be evicted. It also directed that every agricultural family must be given at least five bighas of land. As a result of these measures, 2500 big landed estates were abolished and as area of about one lakh acres was declared surplus and distributed to the landless. In 1974, H.P Village Common Land Vestment and Utilization Act was passed to enable the government, to give sham let lands to the landless. Under these aggression reforms, out of about 5 lakh agricultural families, about 4.5 lakh families have become land owners.

The main sources of irrigation are Kuhls (small water channels) fed from perennial or seasonal springs. Well irrigation is possible in some areas near the plains. Lift irrigation is another source of irrigation. Efforts have been made to improve irrigation facilities since the beginning of the five year plans and about 1.60 lakh hectares have been provided with it so far.

Availability of cheap credit, organization of marketing facilities and provision of agricultural inputs are very important for the development of agriculture. Besides governmental agencies, co-operative societies are the only agencies which perform some of these functions. Co-operative societies numbering around 3841, cover about 93% of rural population. Some agricultural societies provide short and medium term credit facilities to their members. Other functions of

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the co-operatives, is the mobilization of deposits and the marketing of agricultural and horticultural produce. They also play a vital role in the public distribution system and are running a lot of fair piece shops in the state.

Jobs

Agriculture sector has got big boost in Himachal Pradesh during the last four years as it is the mainstay of the people. This sector alone has provided direct employment to around 71 percent population of the state. Having allocated 12 per cent of its plan resources for agriculture and allied sectors, which is highest in the country, now state government is promoting organic farming in a big way.

State governments is giving big boost to organic farming as at present 25,000 farmers are engaged in organic farming while four lakh vermi-compost units have been set up. 7200 metric tonne improved seeds, 29,500 metric tonne fertilizers, 10 metric tonne organic manure, 45 metric tonne medicines and 50,000 improved agriculture implements are being distributed to the farmers.

Agriculture sector contributes nearly 30 percent of the total state domestic product. While apple economy is confined only to upper areas of Himachal Pradesh, people in the lower areas were not having much options apart from sowing traditional crops but with the introduction of organic farming now they too have good income from their fields like apple growers of upper areas.

Animal Husbandry of Himachal Pradesh

Animal husbandry is the branch of agriculture concerned with animals that are raised for meat, fiber, milk, eggs or other products. It includes day-to-day care,selective breeding, and the raising of livestock.

Animal Husbandry has a long history, starting with the Neolithic revolution when animals were first domesticated, from around 13,000 BC onwards.

NATIONAL LIVESTOCK POLICY, 2013

Livestock is an integral part of India's agricultural economy and plays a multifaceted role in providing livelihood support to the rural population. Livestock is the main source of animal protein for the population. It is estimated that about 70 million rural households own livestock of one species or the other. Women constitute about 69% of workforce engaged in livestock sector. The resource-poor small and marginal farmers and landless labourers own majority of the livestock resources.

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Hence sustainable development of the livestock sector would lead to more inclusive development and empowerment of women

The National Livestock Policy facilitates better inter-state coordination in regulating the export and import of livestock and livestock products, feed and food safety, biosecurity and conservation of indigenous breeds, which are essential for development of livestock sector.

Status of Livestock in Himachal

Livestock is an integral to the economy of Himachal Pradesh. The contribution of major livestock products during the year 2015-16 was 12.83 lakh tonne of milk, 1,411 tonne of wool, 81.17 million eggs and 4,005 tonnes of meat which will likely to be of the order of 13.21 lakh tonne of milk, 1,475 tonnes of wool, 97.00 million eggs and 4,130 tonne of meat during 2016-17.

Livestock development programme attention is paid in the state by way of:

i) Animal Health & Disease control
ii) Cattle Development.
iii) Sheep Breeding and Development of Wool
iv) Poultry Development.
v) Feed and Fodder Development.
vi) Veterinary Education
vii) Livestock Census.

Under Animal Health and Disease Control, 1 State level Veterinary Hospital, 9 Polyclinics, 48 Sub-Divisional Veterinary Hospitals, 320 Veterinary Hospitals.

Sheep rearing

For improving the quality of sheep and wool, Government Sheep Breeding Farms at Jeori (Shimla), Sarol (Chamba), Tal (Hamirpur), and Karachham (Kinnaur) are supplying improved sheep to the breeders of the State. Shepherd Insurance Scheme has been launched which is Centrally Sponsored scheme started during 2007-08 with the premium of 330.00 per annum.

Wool Procurement and Marketing Federation has been established with the main objective to promote the growth and development of wool industry in the State of Himachal Pradesh and to free wool growers from exploitation by the middleman/traders.

Dairy

Dairy production is an integral part of the Animal Husbandry. Upgradation of indigenous cattle is being carried out by cross breeding with Jersey and Holsten. In buffalo upgradation with Murral bull is being popularized. Artificial insemination with the latest technology of Deep Frozen Semen is being practised. During 2015-16, 13.00 lakh semen straws for cows and 3.64 lakh semen straws for buffaloes were produced by sperm station. Doodh Ganga Scheme has been launched in collaboration with NABARD in the State since 25th September,2009.

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