

Recent initiatives

Action Plan on Enhancing Production and Productivity of Wheat

8.15 To enhance the productivity and output of wheat in the country, Ministry of Agriculture has formulated a three-year rolling plan, targeting about 50 per cent of the area under wheat. A new scheme - 'Enhancing Sustainability of Dryland Farming Systems' has been formulated keeping in view the commitment of Government to launch a special programme for dry land farming in the arid and semi-arid regions of the country under the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP). The proposed scheme aims at addressing issues like rainwater harvesting and its efficient utilization; in situ soil moisture conservation; use of organic manures; alternate land use; and adoption of improved dry land farming technologies.

National Rainfed Area Authority

8.16 Government has decided to set up a National Rainfed Area Authority to address the problems of rainfed areas for sustainable and holistic development of such areas including appropriate farming and livelihood system approaches.

Mini Mission-II of Jute Technology Mission

8.17 This Mission was approved in June 2006 and is being implemented from the next jute season. This will replace the on-going Scheme of Special Jute Development Programme being implemented under Macro Management.

8.18 There was considerable progress under the new schemes for the promotion of micro irrigation, National Bamboo Mission and Central Institute of Horticulture for the North Eastern region, which were mentioned as being at advanced stages of approval in the last Economic Survey.

Micro-irrigation

8.19 A Centrally Sponsored Scheme on micro-irrigation was launched in January, 2006

for covering a total area of 6.2 lakh ha. The scheme aims to achieve greater water use efficiency to result in enhanced productivity and better quality of produce. During 2006-07, Annual Action Plan of 14 States have already been approved for implementation as per the guidelines and a sum of Rs. 279.40 crore has been released to the States till November, 2006 to cover an area of 3.31 lakh hectare.

National Bamboo Mission

8.20 India possesses the world's second largest reserves of bamboo, and a vast legacy of usage and traditional skill. Department of Agriculture and Cooperation has launched the National Bamboo Mission with 100 per cent central assistance at a total cost of Rs.568.23 crore, including an outlay of Rs.90 crore during 2006-07 (Tenth Plan) and the first four years of the Eleventh Plan.

8.21 Exciting development over the past year, in the form of new and substantively industrial applications of bamboo, have reinforced the belief that value-added bamboo products can generate substantial incremental income and employment. The National Mission on Bamboo Applications of the Department of Science and Technology has developed and inducted a wide range of products and applications, including wood substitutes and composites, pre-fabricated housing and structures, gasification of bamboo to provide electricity to remote and off-grid locations, and moulded products. The development of high density corrugated roofing and durable and thermally efficient bamboo composite material has led to the growing induction of pre-fabricated structures in high altitude and other climatically adverse locations.

8.22 Formerly closed plywood units have been re-commissioned and new units are being established for the manufacture of these products. Indigenously developed bamboo processing machinery is not only finding local markets, but has been exported as well. Breakthroughs in micro-propagation have enabled the production of tissue-cultured plant

material of bamboo, paving the way for large-scale intensive cultivation. For the first time, tissue-cultured plant material has been exported as well. In the coming year, a new range of applications, including thermoplasts, hygiene products and activated carbon are expected to be placed in the market. Having witnessed unprecedented growth in the last two years and with continued efforts at technological upgradation and product diversification, the bamboo economy of the country is likely to continue to grow and contribute to employment generation, especially in the North East and other tribal areas.

Central Institute of Horticulture, Nagaland

8.23 Recognizing the importance for institutional support for development of horticulture in the North Eastern Region, Government sanctioned a Central Institute of Horticulture in Nagaland during January, 2006,

with a financial outlay of Rs. 20 crore spread over a period of five years.

National Bee Board

8.24 In June 2006, Department of Agriculture & Cooperation restructured the National Bee Board (NBB), which was formed in 2000 and registered as a society under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860, with public-private partnership including the farmers, beekeepers, processors and other stakeholders. The main objective of NBB is the overall development of beekeeping in India by popularizing state of the art technologies relating to nucleus stock production, capacity building and training of bee breeders and beekeepers, and processing and quality control of bee products. This step is expected to supplement the incomes of farmers engaged in bee keeping.