

Irrigation

25. Since much of the rainfall is received in just four months of the year (June-September), irrigation water becomes the most vital source for sustaining country's varied and vast crop cultivation.

26. Creation of irrigation infrastructure and its optimum utilisation continues to receive a high priority in Government planning. Due to shorter gestation period and relatively lower investment levels, preference is given for undertaking and completion of minor irrigation schemes covering both surface and ground water. The progress of development of irrigation potential and its utilisation is listed in Table 8.11.

27. Strengthening of irrigation infrastructure is one of the main objectives in irrigation supply management. With a view to ensuring early completion of projects for providing irrigation benefits to the farmers, the Government of India launched Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP) in 1996-97, under which the Centre provides additional central assistance by way of loans to the States on matching basis for early completion of selected large irrigation and multi-purpose projects. An amount of Rs. 500 crore and Rs. 952.19 crore was released under AIBP as Central Loan Assistance to the States during 1996-97 and 1997-98. An allocation of Rs.1500 crore has also been made in the 1998-99 Budget for AIBP. The other major elements of the strategy to extend irrigation benefits to more areas include promotion of better water management practices, installation of sprinkler and drip irrigation systems in water scarce and drought prone areas, conjunctive use of surface and ground water and farmers' participation in irrigation water management. Under-utilisation of irrigation potential, particularly under major and medium irrigation projects continues to persist. To reduce the gap between the irrigation potential created and utilised and, to increase crop productivity under the command areas, Command Area Development Programme (CADP) has been under implementation since 1974-75. During 1997-98, Rs. 129.68 crore were released to States as Central assistance under the programme.

Irrigation charges

28. According to the National Water Policy (1987), water rate should be such as to convey its scarcity value to the users and motivate them in favour of efficient water use, besides, at the same time, being adequate to cover annual maintenance and operation charges and a part of the fixed cost. Most of the States have at present very low water rates at substantively varying levels and have not revised these for the last two-three decades. A few states had revised rates in 1981-86 but the revised rates in some cases had been withheld by the State Governments. Recovery of annual operation costs for various irrigation projects is the minimum that was suggested for implementation.

Sustainable Rainfed Agriculture Through Watershed Management.

29. Aiming at holistic and sustainable development of vast rainfed areas and ensuring long-term food security, bridging regional disparity and providing employment opportunities for the rural poor, a National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas (NWDPR) was implemented during the Eighth Plan (1992-97). The major components under the project include: treatment of arable and non-arable lands and drainage lines. Production support to on-farm activities, such as crop demonstrations, organic farming, dryland horticulture, agro-forestry/farm forestry, fuel-wood plantation, silvi-pasture development, household production system etc. For the Ninth Plan (1997-2002), NWDPR has been restructured to include community oriented and participatory approach, higher degree of flexibility in choice of technology and resource allocation, decentralised and suitable institutional arrangements for ensuring long-term sustainability. The project also allows broadbasing of financial resources by linking bankable programmes of NWDPR with various financial institutions. During Ninth Plan, it is targeted to treat 5 million hectares rainfed area as against 4.3 million hectares covered during Eighth Plan.

TABLE 8.11

Development of Irrigation Potential and its Utilisation

(Million Hectares)

| Irrigation Schemes | At the end of Seventh Plan | 8th Plan 1992-97 | | End of* 8th Plan Potential | Anticipated addition in 1997-98 |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | | Target | Anticipated* addition | | |
| Major & Medium Irrigation | | | | | |
| Potential | 29.9 | 5.09 | 2.09 | 32.83 | 1.0 |
| Utilisation | 25.5 | 4.25 | 2.06 | 28.37 | 0.9 |
| Minor Irrigation | | | | | |
| Potential | 46.6 | 10.71 | 6.26 | 56.61 | 0.8 |
| Utilisation | 43.1 | 9.36 | 5.78 | 52.32 | 1.4 |
| Total | | | | | |
| Potential | 76.5 | 15.80 | 8.35 | 89.44 | 1.8 |
| Utilisation | 68.6 | 13.61 | 7.84 | 80.69 | 2.3 |

* Anticipated achievement

Note : Irrigation projects with a Culturable Command Area (CCA) of more than 10,000 hectares are classified as major projects and projects with CCA of more than 2,000 hectares and up to 10,000 hectares as medium projects. Minor projects have CCA less than 2,000 hectares.