

Irrigation

8.45 Three-fourths of the rainfall is received in just four months of the year (June-September) and it brings forth, over the summer parched land, a profusion of greenery, flowing of streams in catchment areas, resulting in filling up of reservoirs and tanks and, above all, raising the level of the water table that provides a vital source for pumping water for rabi crops. To increase cropping intensity, and to produce more foodgrains per hectare of land, the role of irrigation is most crucial.

8.46 Creation of irrigation potential and its optimum utilisation continues to receive a high priority in Government planning. From 22.6 million hectares of irrigation potential in 1950, the country's created irrigation potential was 89.6 million hectares by 1996-97 comprising 33 million hectares under major and medium projects and 56.6 million hectares under minor irrigation potential. The capacity and utilization of irrigation potential is listed in Table 8.21.

TABLE 8.21				
Development of Irrigation Potential and its Utilisation				
<i>(Million Hectares)</i>				
Irrigation Schemes	At the end of Seventh Plan (1985-90)	At the end of Eighth Plan* (1992-97)	Ninth plan Target (1997-2002)	At the end of (1998-99)@
Major & Medium Irrigation				
Potential	29.9	32.96	9.81	34.68
Utilisation	25.5	28.44	8.71	30.12
Minor Irrigation				
Potential	46.6	56.60	7.24	58.11
Utilisation	43.1	52.32	4.93	53.54
Total				
Potential	76.5	89.56	17.05	92.79
Utilisation	68.6	80.76	13.64	83.66
* Provisional				
@ Figures are provisional and subject to change as information from some of the States has not been received by planning Commission.				
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 2000 hectares and up to 10,000 hectares as medium projects. Minor projects have CCA less than 2,000 hectares.				

8.47 With a view to ensuring early completion of irrigation projects, 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 for early completion of selected large irrigation and multi-purpose projects. Amounts of Rs. 500 crore, Rs.952.19 crore and Rs.1119.18 crore were released under AIBP as Central Loan Assistance (CLA) to the States during 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99. CLA of Rs. 976.66 crore has been released by end of December 1999. With effect from 1999-2000, CLA under AIBP is also being provided for Minor irrigation projects of N.E. region, hill states and drought prone districts of Orissa. The revised funding pattern for general category States is in the ratio of 2 : 1 (Centre : State) whereas that for the Special Category States of N-E Region, hill states of J&K, H.P and Sikkim and for selected districts of Orissa is in the ratio of 3 : 1 (Centre : State).

8.48 The other steps taken 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 1998-99, Rs. 175.8 crore were released to States as Central assistance under the programme.

Irrigation Charges

8.49 National Water Policy (1987) states that the 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 not revised water rates for the last two or three decades. A few states had revised rates during the period 1981-86 but the revised rates in some cases had been withheld by the State Governments. Recovery of annual operational costs for various irrigation projects is the minimum that was suggested for implementation.