

Agricultural Targets in the Second Plan

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Measures adopted during the First Plan are not likely to have contributed an increase of more than 5 per cent in the production of foodgrains. Considering the measures proposed during the Second Plan, therefore, it appears unlikely that the estimated 15.4 per cent increase in output of foodgrains will be achieved. In fact the last two years of the Plan have already shown a declining trend in foodgrain production, while output of major commercial crops has actually fallen below the 1950-51 output.

Thus our agricultural targets are in danger of remaining unrealised in the absence of adequate economic measures and effective changes in the agrarian social structure.

AGRICULTURE was in a pitiable state when the First Five Year Plan was launched. There was an acute shortage of food grains and to meet the chronic food deficit, the major portion of our valuable foreign exchange was regularly being drained out. Naturally, the primary objective of the First Plan was to stabilise agriculture and to achieve self-sufficiency in food. Accordingly, the major part of our First Plan outlay went to agriculture, the target; of additional production set being as shown in Table I below.

According to official statistics, the foodgrains target was over-fulfilled two years ahead of schedule and the oilseeds production exceeded the target by nearly 3 per cent by 1954-55. A detailed analysis of foodgrains production shows that during 1954-55 cereal production was up by 20 per cent and pulses recorded an increase of 31 per cent. In some crops like jowar, maize, etc, the increase was as much as 75 per cent whereas the output of gram increased by nearly 50 per cent. It is not yet clear as to what were the factors that led to such a large rise in production. Official quarters attribute it to developmental measures like the Grow More Food campaign, increased irrigation, supply of fertilisers, manures and improved seeds, land reclamation, National Extension Service and Community Development Projects etc, besides favourable monsoons. The actual achievements of these factors in their respective fields do not appear adequate to account for the increase in food production as claimed.

Irrigation and Agricultural Production

It can be seen from Table II below that the rise in agricultural production and the increase in the area under irrigation have during this period behaved more or less independently. If, for example, we take two pre-Plan years we find that while the net irrigated area during 1947-48 and 1948-49 remained more or

less unchanged the production of cereals during the same period fell by 3.5 million tons or 8.7 per cent. On the other hand, output in 1952-53 increased by 0.4 million tons, an increase of 14.9 per cent over the previous year, without any substantial increase in the area under irrigation. No doubt during 1953-54 the net irrigated area rose by 12 per cent and the production also went up by 8.7 million tons or 17.5 per cent over the previous year. But that this was no more than a coincidence would be confirmed by the fact that while in 1954-55, the production fell by 2.6 million tons or 4.7 per cent the net irrigated area actually went up by 4.5 million acres or 7.7 per cent.

Similar absence of correlation or correspondence between the two are also seen in the case of other crops, such as cotton, sugar and jute, pulses etc. The production of jute fell from

4.6 million bales in 1951-52 to 3.1 million bales in 1954-55, a fall of 4.6 per cent as against the Plan target of 5.37 million bales by 1955-56. Similarly, the output of sugarcane in terms of raw sugar fell from 6.0 million tons in 1951-52 to 5.0 million tons in 1954-55 with the Plan target being 6.32 million tons.

It is well known that rainfall has been particularly favourable during the last few years and we can unhesitatingly attribute a part of the large increase in agricultural output to this natural factor. It may not be too far off the mark to attribute up to 10 per cent of the increase in foodgrains to the good monsoons. But the remaining 16 per cent in 1953-54 and 12 per cent in 1954-55 still remains to be accounted for. The increase according to the official version is over 5 per cent per year, which to say the least, appears rather surprising. When

TABLE I
Agricultural Targets in the First Plan

| Commodity | Targeted Production | Additional production | Percentage increase |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Foodgrains (mn tons) | 61.6 | 7.6 | 14 |
| Sugarcane (Gur) (mn tons) | 6.3 | 0.7 | 12 |
| Major oilseeds (mn tons) | 5.5 | 0.4 | 8 |
| Cotton (mn bales) | 4.2 | 1.3 | 42 |
| Jute (mn bales) | 5.4 | 2.1 | 63 |

TABLE II
Significant Agricultural Statistics

| | 1947-48 | 48-49 | 49-50 | 50-51 | 51-52 | 52-53 | 53-54 | 54-55 | 55-56 |
|--|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Net irrigated area (mn acres) | 46.6 | 46.8 | 49.9 | 51.3 | 51.4 | 51.7 | 58.0 | 62.5 | 67* |
| Cereal (mn tons) | 39.8 | 43.3 | 46.0 | 41.7 | 42.8 | 49.2 | 57.9 | 55.3 | — |
| Pulses (mn tons) | — | — | 8.0 | 8.2 | 8.2 | 9.0 | 10.2 | 10.4 | — |
| Sugarcane (mn tons) | 5.8 | 4.8 | 4.9 | 5.6 | 6.0 | 5.0 | 4.4 | 5.5 | — |
| Cotton (mn bales) | 2.1 | 1.7 | 2.6 | 2.9 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 3.9 | 4.2 | — |
| Jute (mn bales) | 1.6 | 2.0 | 3.0 | 3.2 | 4.6 | 4.5 | 3.1 | 3.1 | — |
| Groundnut (mn tons) | 3.4 | 2.9 | 3.3 | 3.4 | 3.1 | 2.8 | 3.5 | 3.8 | — |
| Consumption of Ammonium Sulphate (mn tons) | — | — | .276 | .295 | .276 | .427 | .500 | .60 | — |
| Superphosphate (mn tons) | — | — | NA | .043 | .029 | .034 | .080 | .10 | — |

post-war Japan increased her agricultural output at the rate of 2 per cent per year, this was considered very high. This became possible due to special and stringent measures taken by the State. In our case the nature and working' of Stale drives during the First Plan period were not very different from the pre-Plan years. What is more, most of the schemes have hardly crossed the experimental stage. Therefore it may be that what is assumed to be an increase in agricultural production is really something else altogether.

Food Statistics

It is accepted all over that food statistics in India in the past suffered from a considerable degree of underestimation. This was further aggravated by incomplete reporting and coverage which was set right only very recently. Further, estimates of food production in many of the States till recently were based on the old out-dated method, viz the "condition factor". It is only after-decontrol that the food estimates all over the country began to be based on the results of crop cutting surveys. This may well explain the surprisingly high rate of increase in the agricultural sector.'

It is a striking feature of the situation that the important commercial crops like jute and sugarcane failed to make any progress. As against the target of increase by 63 per cent for jute and 12 per cent for sugar, the actual output during 1954-55 was lower even than 1950-51 by 4 per cent and 1.2 per cent respectively.

Taking all these factors into consideration it would be nearer the truth to say that besides the increase that took place on account of the two successive good monsoons, measures adopted during the Plan period could be estimated to have contributed an increase of only about 5 per cent in the case of foodgrains output.

However, even with this improvement in production, India is still short of food grains to feed the people at a reasonable standard of balanced nutrition. Table III shows the foodgrain requirements of the

This is, of course, flatly denied by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, which asserts that the "statistical increase" resulting from expansion of reporting areas and crop-cutting surveys, largely antedates the First Five Year Plan.

country at the end of the Second Five Year Plan,

Table III
Cereals and Pulses Required at the end of the Second Plan

| | (million tons) |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| Cereals at 16 oz. per diem per capita | 57.4 |
| Pulses at 3 oz per diem per capita | 10.8 |
| Total | 78.2 |

The target of production of foodgrains for 1960-61 is as shown below, (million tons)

| | |
|------------------------|------|
| Increase in Production | 10.0 |
| Total Production | 75.0 |
| Percentage Increase | 15.4 |

Thus the food targets of the Second Plan present us with a paradoxical situation. As shown above the total requirements of foodgrains (cereals and pulses) by the end of the Second Plan on the basis of 16 OH and 3 oz respectively will be 78.2 million tons as against the envisaged Plan production of 75, million tons. And yet, it appears doubtful whether even the planned target is capable of being fulfilled, in view of the poor results shown by the schemes and programmes during the First Five Year Plan period and equally inadequate measures proposed in the Second.

It may not be out of place to mention here the fact that during the last year of the First Plan period itself, we found a reversal of the trend in agricultural production. After the record production of 68 million tons of food grains in 1953-54, the production declined by 2.3 million tons to (35.8 million tons in 1954-55 and estimated production in 1955-56 shows a further decline of 0.8 million tons. This, further confirms our doubts regarding the effectiveness of the measures adopted in the held of agricultural production.

Contributions of Different Schemes

Table IV gives a breakdown of the contribution expected by the Planning Commission to be made by investment in different developmental schemes to the increase in production. The planners seem to have ignored the experience of the First Plan that it is not the investment allocations but appropriate and effective measures conducive to real development which are likely to yield actual increases in production. The table shows that minor and major irrigation projects and schemes are ex-

pected to yield 4 *l* million tons. As has already been shown, the actual achievements of irrigation projects and schemes have not been substantial during the First Plan period and there is, certainly nothing to warrant any greater level of effectiveness for irrigation during the Second Plan period.

The estimated consumption of fertilisers during 1955-56 was 0.7 million tons and the additional consumption target envisaged during the Second Plan is 1.5 million tons. For the planned target of 2.5 million tons of additional foodgrains from fertilisers we would require 1.25 million tons of fertilisers, leaving a mere 0.25 million tons of fertilisers for the commercial crops. But the planned targets for commercial crops would require, in view of the higher targets planned, much larger quantities of fertiliser. It should be remembered, that the commercial crops like tea, coffee, sugarcane etc. require higher per acre dosage of fertilisers than food crops. In any case the residue of 0.25 million tons of fertilisers would be altogether inadequate to meet their requirements. Either the commercial crop producers like tea and coffee plantations will, with their better financial position, secure their requirements of fertilisers while foodgrains production would have to go short, or if the food crops are assured requisite quantities of fertilisers and manures at reasonable prices through rational distribution, the targets of commercial crops would suffer, causing loss of foreign exchange.

Improved Seeds

On what grounds, improved seeds are expected to contribute one million tons of additional foodgrains

Table IV
Anticipated Increases in Production from Investment under Different Heads

| | (million tons) |
|--|----------------|
| Major irrigation | 2.4 |
| Minor irrigation | 1.8 |
| Manures and fertilisers | 2.5 |
| Improved seeds | 1.0 |
| Land Reclamation and land development | 0.8 |
| Increased use of improved techniques including application of soil conservation methods and more economic use of water | 1.5 |
| TOTAL | 10.0 |

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it is difficult to see I am not aware of any new scheme to produce sufficient quantities of improved seeds. It is well known that as it is, improved seeds are in short supply. In the absence of even a target or programme of organised production of improved seeds, in addition to what is being already or is likely to be produced in the existing State agricultural farms, it is unrealistic to expect an increase in foodgrain production of one million tons on account of improved seeds.

Land reclamation and land development measures are expected to realise an additional output of 0.8 million tons of foodgrains- During the First Plan period on an average 6 lakh acres per year are said to have been reclaimed or rendered fit for cultivation by the Central and State tractor organisations, thereby producing 75,000 tons of additional foodgrains. If the rate of reclamation revealed by the First Plan is any index of the capacity of the land reclamation and deep ploughing machinery in hand, one could assert without any fear of contradiction that the target of 0.8 million tons of foodgrain on this account would be very difficult to realise. Only doubling of this capacity could render the target realisable and for this there seems to be no provision in the Plan.

Further, 1.5 million tons of additional foodgrains are expected to result from increased use of improved techniques, including application of soil conservation methods and more economic use of water. It must be noted that the contribution of some of these measures like improved techniques and more economic use of water would probably have been already covered under the figures of improved seeds and additional irrigation facilities. Moreover, programmes like soil conservation methods, improved techniques and economic use of water are measures, that, are likely to yield concrete results only after a long period of persistent effort They are not likely to yield increased output to a substantial ex-

tent during the next Plan period. What the Departments of Agriculture in all the States failed to achieve in fifty years, they cannot be expected to accomplish within a bare five year period.

The output targets of commercial crops (Table V) also seem to be rather on the high side. The First Plan targets in some crops were not only unfulfilled, but the output as shown above has actually recorded a decline as compared with 1950-51 output.

One cannot help feeling that the expectations of the Plan from the National Extension Service, the Grow More Food Campaign and similar programmes are unlikely to be realised. The extent of improvement due to these schemes during the First Plan has not yet been properly assessed. In the absence of such an evaluation and in view of the continuing social and economic distress of the rural population, one may be excused the thought that such expectations are bound to end in disappointment. For, it should be noted that the Plan provides for no definite measures for radical reforms which would bring about a real change in the conditions of the tillers. The problem of fair wages for agricultural labour, reorganisation of rural credit etc are very inadequately dealt with. Hopes about co-operative programmes without necessary social and economic measures are also unlikely to be fulfilled.

Price Movements

In a market economy, foodgrains production is governed by the movement of prices. During the First Plan period, declining prices created problems in the mid-Plan years, causing untold loss and misery to millions of peasant families. This may have also been responsible, to a certain extent, for the subsequent fall in agricultural production. The absence of a stable and vigilant price policy assuring the mass of peasantry a stable income and their own requirements of industrial products at reasonable prices is bound to cause agricultural output to fluctuate wide-

ly. However we are now witnessing a rising trend in food grain prices. It needs no mention that this rise in prices in no way benefits the mass of the peasants, being in the main the result of speculation by the big grain traders and businessmen. These high prices only result in a state of insecurity and instability in the countryside where the peasant finds prices of manufactured goods rising at the same time (as is already the case) further ruining his economy and in the end adversely affecting agricultural production itself.

Thus our agricultural targets are in danger of remaining unrealised in the absence of adequate economic measures and effective changes in the agrarian social structure. There is no doubt that if such measures and reforms are undertaken and the Plan is supplemented by appropriate schemes and operational measures, not only would the Plan target be realised but even the target OF 40 per cent increase considered necessary in order to secure Rs 400 crores worth of exportable agricultural surplus would become a feasible proposition.

TABLE V
Targets for Commercial Crops

| | Target of additional production | Estimated production | Percentage increase |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Oil seeds (mn tons) | 1.5 | 7.0 | 27.3 |
| Sugar cane (gur) (mn tons) | 1.6 | 7.4 | 27.6 |
| Cotton (mn bales) | 1.3 | 5.5 | 31.0 |
| Jute (mn bales) | 1.0 | 5.0 | 25.0 |



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