

**STUDY OF SOIL CONSERVATION PROGRAMME
FOR AGRICULTURAL LAND, 1964**

1. The Study

The evaluation study was undertaken by the Programme Evaluation Organisation at the instance of Planning Commission. The study has examined the problems and difficulties faced in the formulation, administration and extension of this programme at different levels.

2. Objectives

- i) To examine, in the context of the Third Five Year Plan, the progress achieved in soil conservation extension on agricultural lands;
- ii) To analyse at different levels, from the State to the field, the hindrances and difficulties encountered in administering the programme and making legislative, promotional and organisational arrangement for it;
- iii) To assess, in a general way, the impact of the programme and its acceptance by the cultivators; and
- iv) To suggest methods of improvement and highlight areas needing attention and issues requiring further consideration.

3. Sample Size/Criteria for Selection of Sample

In all 22 districts were selected for the study, the selection being purposive. Field data were collected from 123 randomly selected villages, 87 covered by the Soil Conservation Programme and 36 not so covered from 21 districts. The study in one district, Midnapur was confined in general observations without field investigations in any specific area.

4. Reference Period

The study was conducted in 1961-62 and record **data was** collected for the years 1960-61 and earlier to it.

5. Main Findings

1. The bulk of the achievement in conservation Programme in the First Plan was in the erstwhile Bombay State and in Madras. A total of about seven lakh acres of agricultural land was brought under soil conservation treatment in these two States. Some progress was also reported from Andhra, Gujarat, Kerala and Mysore.

2. In the Second Plan about Rs.18 crores was the total estimated expenditure on soil conservation programmes in all States and Union Territories. About 2.3 million acres of mainly agricultural land was covered by soil conservation treatment in this plan. of this more than 50 per cent was in Maharashtra.

3. As compared with the Second Plan, the Third Plan outlay for soil conservation was increased by about four times and the targets by five times. Of the total provision for all States and Union Territories 'in the Third Plan, Gujarat and Maharashtra accounted for nearly 50 per cent share. Similarly, in the total target for soil conservation on agricultural land, the target for Maharashtra was 46 per cent and that for Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh was between 10 and 13 per cent.

4. The Central Soil Conservation Board approved 40 dry farming demonstrations in 1959 for various states. **However, due** to administrative delays and organisational difficulties in the states, only 21 of these demonstrations could be put into execution by the end of the Second Plan. In most of the states, demonstrations set up under the programme of the state Governments were not pursued to obtain data on the economics of soil conservation. Method demonstration rather than result demonstration characterised the approach.

6. Major Suggestions

1. The State Govts which have not yet set up any soil conservation board should take early steps to constitute such bodies. Besides, i-n a few of the States where some State level boards have been set up, the functions of this body do not include policy formulation and administrative coordination. These bodies need to be reconstituted so that they may be effective and capable of taking decisions on matters of policy and providing expert guidance and coordination.

2. The programme should be carried out through Community Development Blocks and no separate funds should be provided for this programme. The Community Development Blocks had generally no programme of extension of dry farming measures in Second Plan.

3. The programme needed to be fully integrated in respect of its different administrative components; namely, research, training, demonstration and execution. The total outlay for the whole programme should have been allocated on these items in some optimum proportion.

4. The most urgent need is for effective coordination of the soil conservation activities of the various agencies engaged in the implementation of the programme. As far as possible, the responsibility for the soil conservation should be given to one single authority, preferably, the Department of Agriculture where an officer of the rank of Joint Director should be placed as overall incharge of the programme in each State and he should be assisted by specialists in forestry, agriculture, engineering, drainage and soil survey, backed by a high power committee of the type recommended by the Planning Commission.