

09. The National Agricultural Technology Project (NATP)

The National Agricultural Technology Project (NATP) is a dynamic instrument of introducing major changes in the Agricultural Research and Extension systems of the country, besides developing their capabilities to meet future challenges. The project was initiated by Ministry of Agriculture, Govt. of India with the financial assistance of World Bank and would be implemented with the assistance of MANAGE in 28 districts covering 7 states, viz. Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Punjab over a period of 5 years (1998-2003).

The World Bank assisted National Agricultural Technology Project (NATP) aims at improving research and extension services.

The Research component of NATP is being implemented by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and the Extension component by the Department of Agriculture and Co-operation. The different Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) involved in implementation of the ITD component of NATP are:

- (i) Directorate of Extension (DOE)
- (ii) National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE)
- (iii) NATP cell at State Head Quarters
- (iv) State Agricultural Management and Extension Training Institute (SAMETI)
- (v) District Level Agricultural Technology Management Agencies (ATMAs)

The Extension component termed as "Innovations in Technology Dissemination"(ITD) envisages an integrated extension delivery at district level and is being pilot tested in seven participating states, viz. Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab.

The purpose of this component is to test new approaches to technology transfer, new organizational arrangements, and operational procedures. One of the goal is to decentralize decision making to the district level through the creation of Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) as a registered society. The second goal is to increase farmer

input into programme planning and resource allocation especially at the block level and increase accountability to stakeholders. The third goal is to increase programme coordination and integration. Funds would be provided to 28 pilot districts in seven states to create Agricultural Technology Management Agency which will bring together researchers, extensionists, farmers and other stakeholders (including NGOs and the corporate sector) to make, on the basis of joint diagnostic studies, district Extension Plans and recommendations for expanded adaptive research to introduce innovations in technology dissemination matched to local needs and characteristics.

Four districts in each of the seven participating states are identified for pilot testing as detailed below.

Andhra Pradesh : Kurnool, Prakasam, Adilabad and Chittoor

Bihar : Muzaffarpur, Madhubani, Munger, Patna Rural

Jharkhand : Dumka, Jamtara, Palamau, Chaibara

Himachal Pradesh : Shimla, Hamirpur, Kangra, Bilaspur

Maharashtra : Ahmednagar, Amaravati, Aurangabad, and Ratnagiri

Orissa : Khurda, Koraput, Ganjam, Sambhalpur

Punjab : Gurdaspur, Jalandhar, Sangrur and Faridkot

In each of the pilot districts, an Agricultural Technology Management Agency(ATMA) would be established as a registered society for integrating research and extension activities.

National Watershed Development Programme

The Department of Land Resources in the Ministry of Rural Development is administering three area-based watershed programmes for development of wastelands/degraded lands namely Drought Prone Areas Programmes (DPAP), Desert Development Programme (DDP) and Integrated Wastelands Development Programme (IWDP) to check the diminishing productivity of wasteland and loss of natural resources.

The DPAP was launched in 1973-74 to tackle the special problems faced by those areas that are constantly afflicted by drought conditions. Presently, 972 blocks of 195 districts in 16 States are covered under the Programme. DDP was launched in 1977-78 to mitigate the adverse effects of desertification. Presently, 235 blocks of 40 districts in 7 States are covered under the

Programme. IWDP has been under implementation since 1989-90. The projects under the IWDP are generally sanctioned in areas that are not covered under DDP or DPAP.

Since 1 April 1995, these three programmes are being implemented on the basis of Common Guidelines for Watershed Development. Details of projects sanctioned and funds released from 1995-96 to 2007-2008 are as under:

The projects under DPAP and DDP are sanctioned for 500 ha. each while the IWDP projects cover an area of 5000-6000 ha. The cost norms for all the three schemes have been revised to Rs. 6000 per ha. Under DPAP and DDP, it is shared between the Centre and the States in ratio of 75:25. In case of IWDP, the cost sharing between the Centre and State Governments is in the ratio of 11:1.

Details of projects sanctioned and funds released from 1995-96 to 2007-2008

Name of Scheme	No. of project sanctioned	Area covered (in lakh ha.)	Total funds released by Centre (Rs. in crores)
DPAP	27439	130.20	2837.81
DDP	15746	78.73	2103.23
IWDP	1877	107.0	2797.56
Grand Total	45062	322.93	7738.60

Funds are released in seven installments, six installments at the rate of 15 per cent and the last installment at the rate of 10 per cent. The first installment is released along with the initial sanction-order and subsequent installments on receipt of utilization for 50 per cent of the available funds as well as the following documents:

- Quarterly Progress Reports

- Utilisation Certificates
- The Audited Statement of Accounts for the previous years and
- Evidence of satisfactory completion of institutional arrangements
- Projects are implemented by District Rural Development Agencies/Zilla Parishads (DRDAs/ZPs) through Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs). PIAs could be a Line Department (of the State Government), Panchayati Raj Institutions or a reputed NGO.

One PIA normally handles 10-12 watershed projects covering an area of about 5000-6000 hectares. The PIA is required to maintain a technical team of 4 experts called Watershed Development Team (WDT) and individual projects (500 hectares) are planned and executed by the local people living in the watershed area called the Watershed Association (WA) through an elected body called Watershed Committee (WC).

The Department of Land Resources has brought out a new initiative called Hariyali with an objective of empowering PRIs both financially and administratively in implementation of Watershed Development Programmes. Under this initiative, all ongoing area development programmes namely, Integrated Wastelands Development Programme (IWDP), Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP) and Desert Development Programme (DDP) are to be implemented through the PRIs. New projects under the aforesaid area development programmes are being implemented in accordance with the guidelines for Hariyali from 1 April 2003. Projects sanctioned prior to this date shall continue to be implemented as per the Watershed Development Guidelines of 2001.

In the new arrangement, Gram Panchayats shall implement projects under overall supervision and guidance of Project Implementation Agencies (PIAs). An intermediate panchayat may be the PIA for all the projects sanctioned to a particular Block/Taluka. In case, these Panchayats are not adequately empowered, then the Zilla Panchayat can either act as PIA itself or may appoint a suitable Line Department like Agriculture, Forestry /Social Forestry, Soil Conservation, etc., or an Agency of the State Government/ University/Institute as PIA. Failing these options, the ZP/DRDA may consider appointing a reputed Non-Government Organization (NGO) in the district with adequate experience and expertise in the implementation of watershed

projects or related area development works as the PIA after thoroughly examining their credentials.

The Project Implementing Agency (PIA) will provide necessary technical guidance to the Gram Panchayat for preparation of development plans for the watershed through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercise, undertake community organisation and training for the village communities, supervise watershed development activities, inspect and authenticate project accounts.

Small Farmers' Development Agency (SFDA) and Marginal Farmers' and Agricultural Labourers' Agency (MFALA)

Several official committees from the closing years of the decade of the sixties onwards began to draw the attention of the Government to the inadequacy of existing development process to enable very small and small cultivators, owning less than two hectares of land who constitute the majority of farmers, to improve their income and quality of life. The Rural Credit Inquiry Committee in 1969 highlighted the depressed condition of these farmers and recommended the setting up of SFDA in selected districts. The fourth plan endorsed this view point and recommended the formation of this agency. The Government accepted the recommendation made in the fourth plan and set up two separate agencies of SFDA and MFALA in selected districts. The farmers were those owning less than two hectares each. Marginal farmers were those owning less than two hectare each. The agricultural labourers were those having only a homestead and getting more than 50 per cent of income from wages.

These agencies started functioning from 1971-72 onwards in a number of selected districts. Some years later MFALA was amalgamated with SFDA to form one unified corporate body and continued to be known as SFDA.

Objectives

The basic objective of this agency was to enable selected target groups of marginal and small farmers and agricultural labourers to improve their income through productive activities and improving their existing ones. The concrete steps for the above objectives were:

- (i) identification of target groups in selected districts;

- (ii) formulation of viable agricultural and non-agricultural schemes for the target groups;
- (iii) provision of subsidy at the rate of 25 per cent and 33 per cent of the total cost of an approved scheme to the selected beneficiaries and also helping them to get institutionalised credit from cooperatives and nationalised banks.
- (iv) Coordinate the various public sector agencies located in the area to promote inputs and requisite support to the selected target groups; and
- (v) Promotion of common facilities of providing storage, marketing as well as strengthening co-operative institutions for providing credit.

Each sanctioned agency was expected to identify and help 50,000 small farmers to become economically viable by adopting improved technology and making use of the credit and inputs required. About 15,000 marginal farmers and 5,000 agricultural labourers were to be identified and helped to start or expand self-employment activities.

The total number of beneficiaries identified did not cover all the target group households. Secondly, even among the identified beneficiary households only half of those were given some assistance. Thirdly, the assistance in the form of subsidy and institutional credits was too small in many cases to enable the very poor households to improve their economic conditions.