

GROWTH BEHAVIOUR OF STATES IN AGRICULTURE AND CONVERGENT TRENDS

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Introduction

Indian agriculture began to shake off decades of stagnation with the advent of economic planning. An analysis of the data for the Indian Union for the 30-year period (1936-37 to 1965-66) shows that during the first fifteen years food grains production declined at the rate of 0.68 per cent p.a., while in the next fifteen years it increased at the rate of 2.75¹ per cent p.a. The Index of agricultural production went up from 96 in 1950-51, (with base 1949-50=100) to 158 in 1964-65, an increase of about 65 per cent in 14 years. Agricultural progress achieved during the period under study, though impressive, was, however, unevenly distributed over the various states of the Country. The object of this paper is to measure and to explain the differential growth behaviour of 14 States² in the agricultural sector during the first fifteen years of planning and to bring out, in the light of the goal of balanced regional development,³ the nature of convergent trends observed in the agricultural development of States.

Regional Imbalance on the Eve of Economic Planning

The agricultural sector, like other sectors of the Indian economy, was characterised by much regional imbalance on the eve of economic planning. As can be observed from Table 1, per capita income originating in this sector, gross value of agricultural produce per hectare, net output per worker, proportion of workers engaged and income originating in the primary sector, net irrigated area as a percentage of the net area sown, etc. showed great variations as between the states. Per capita income derived from the primary sector was below the all-India average in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madras and Bihar in 1950-51.

¹ *Commerce*, 'Annual Number', 1967, p. 43.

² The state of Jammu and Kashmir and the Centrally Administered territories (some of which were recently made full-fledged States of the Indian Union) are excluded owing to non-availability of data. They cover 2.6 per cent of the population and 9.6 per cent of the area of the Indian Union. Panjab includes Haryana.

³ Because of the 'compelling considerations of equity and national cohesion', the Planning Commission has been, since the beginning of economic planning, conscious of the need to reduce regional disparities. Refer to: *First Five-Year Plan — A Draft Outline*, pp. 42-43.