

AN APPRAISAL OF THE PILOT PROJECT BLOCKS SCHEME IMPLEMENTED IN MAHARASHTRA DURING RABI SEASON 1975-76

B. K. CHOUGULE AND V. G. SHARMA

Agriculture in Maharashtra

1. Wide fluctuations in the production of foodgrain crops in the State of Maharashtra have been causing concern and Government decided to take steps to stabilise the production of foodgrains in the State. Foodgrain production was 77.44 lakh tonnes during 1960-61 and thereafter upto the year 1972-73 it never crossed the level of 70 lakh tonnes. It was as low as 30.36 lakh tonnes during the year 1972-73 which was the worst scarcity year. It was only during the year 1973-74 that it registered an upward trend with a production of 71.20 lakh tonnes, followed by 1974-75 when the estimated production of foodgrains was 77.95 lakh tonnes and during 1975-76 it rose to 91.19 lakh tonnes. During fifteen years, foodgrain production showed a number of ups and downs, the reasons being vagaries of monsoon, severe droughts, shortage of inputs etc.

2. During the last few years, individual cultivators in different parts of Maharashtra have achieved record production and have bagged a number of distinctions and prizes in crop competitions at all-India and State levels. At the same time, it is not possible to ignore the reality that, in respect of the per acre average yields of different crops, Maharashtra does not occupy a pride of place. Hence it was realised that there is need not only of maintaining high levels of production by individual cultivators but also to achieve an increase in the average yields of cultivators over contiguous areas and over the State as a whole. This needed an area approach.

Concept of Pilot Projects

3. The Pilot Projects for paddy and wheat, numbering about 86, taken up for the first time in the rabi season 1975-76, was a novel experiment. In short, it meant concentrated attention on contiguous areas of 500 to 1,000 acres where all assured inputs were made available to the farmer at his doorstep and agricultural operations, including package of practices, were carried out under the supervision of agricultural officers and various other agencies. Thus, with supervised implementation of agricultural operations and assured avai-