

Fertiliser Use in Andhra Pradesh: An Analysis of Factors Affecting Consumption

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Owing to the limited possibilities of extending the net cultivated area, the official strategy has been to raise per hectare yields through promoting, inter alia, fertiliser use. The VII five year plan of India has aimed at raising fertiliser consumption to 14 million metric tonnes (mmt) by 1989-90. This would imply an annual growth of 1.12 mmt between 1984-85 and 1989-90. Such high annual increments in consumption were not experienced in the earlier years except for 1984-85. Thus, the question is how to accelerate the fertiliser consumption trend to such high levels of use.

The problem is more acute when studied at a disaggregated level where the pace and pattern of fertiliser consumption in India has continued to remain skewed.(1) Not only are there differences in fertiliser use between and within the states (2) but these differences also persist across crops and classes of farmers. Our cross-sectional analysis of the size holdings in Andhra Pradesh (based on the 26th round of the NSS and the Input Survey of 1976-77) has revealed that between 1970-71 and 1976-77, despite reduction in the disparities in fertiliser use between large and small holdings, the diffusion across small holdings has been limited. This raises the question as to what factors hinder fertiliser use by small farmers - are they economic, social or technological in nature - an understanding of which necessitates an analysis of the factors affecting fertiliser use at the farm level.

While a number of studies have recognised the importance of physical, technological and economic factors affecting fertiliser use, their relationships have not been well formulated. Moreover, institutional factors which have a strong influence on fertiliser use have almost been neglected. As we shall see below, the factors affecting fertiliser consumption are more social than technical or economic in nature. Thus, even while recognising the importance of a framework which considers technological, physical and economic factors affecting fertiliser use, a better perspective of the whole process of agricultural development can be developed if fertiliser use is studied in the context of the actual conditions faced by different sections of the peasantry.