

Foodgrain Production in India: A Drive Towards Self-Sufficiency

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India has witnessed an upward trend in the foodgrain output due to introduction of seed-fertiliser - water technology in the post-green revolution period. However, this technology revolution could gain momentum only in some select regions of the country and that too in terms of some cereal crops like rice and wheat. By and large, the impact of new technology, popularly known as HYV, was tardy and dismal in the case of pulses and coarse cereals. This gives a reflection that the growth in the production of superior cereals has been achieved at the cost of coarse cereals and pulses through reallocation of land. Consequently, the acreage as well as production of pulses and coarse cereals which are considered as important sources of proteins to the poor people have decreased considerably over time. Viewed against this background, the present paper reviews the past performance of India's foodgrain production over time taking into account the studies of earlier research workers coupled with the results of present investigation in terms of growth associated with instability of foodgrain output with the extension to component analysis and, thus, traces the reasons for slower growth performance of some important foodgrain crops in the country.

Introduction

Agricultural development in India, as in other developing countries, can serve as a catalyst for rapid growth of the whole economy. As John Mellor has demonstrated in his book 'The New Economics of Growth: A Strategy for India and the Developing World', adoption of a growth strategy based on agricultural development in the lead in a developing country like India could not only promote development of other sectors of the economy but also, and more importantly, give the poor the opportunity to become active participants and beneficiaries of economic growth which means providing food security to them by making the needed food supply available on the one hand and providing them with purchasing power to buy it, on the other.

Before the mid-sixties increase in foodgrain output in the country came mostly from the growth of the cultivated area and extension of irrigation. Since the mid-sixties, the new farm technology symbolised by HYV seeds and use of chemical fertilisers, has been relied upon to get the desired increase in production. The new farm technology had a powerful impact on the food sector of the country. In the first place, there was impressive increase in grain production at least in its first few years and after a setback for four years which period coincided with the world food crisis of the early 1970's, again for the next four years (Bhatia, 1983).

The first phase of the green revolution made India practically self-sufficient in food supply by 1970-71 when apart from meeting fully the domestic demand there was a surplus of production available to permit building of stocks from the internal