

Abstract of the Ph.D. Thesis

Abstract of the Thesis submitted by the Research Scholar who carried out Studies at the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, to the University of Pune for the Degree of Ph.D.

Title: "Economics of Agricultural Diversification with Special Reference to Recent Horticultural Development in Western Maharashtra"

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1 Approach

The principal objective of this study is to examine the impact, spread and the benefits of horticultural crops as a means of agricultural diversification. In overpopulated and underdeveloped countries like India characterized by dominant subsistence agriculture, land holdings are not only small but also of variable quality. A major problem for subsistence landholders is to earn a sufficient and stable income flow. Given the constraints of (a) the size of their landholdings, (b) the availability of water and (c) the quality distribution of landholdings, the only means by which farmers can achieve a sufficient and stable income is by means of a change in technology of farming, suitable to meet the constraints. Horticulture represents one of the several alternative technologies that farmers can adopt.

Of the several options available to farmers, horticulture presents a viable technology on three grounds, (a) the technological process being agricultural in nature it is easy for farmers to adopt it, (b) some horticultural technologies do not require intensive use of water and/or costly fertilizers, and (c) the horticultural technologies result in the creation of the capital assets that yield a durable stream of returns which help to augment and also stabilize the flow of aggregate farm incomes.

The question is, whether, given the peasant farmers' constraints and endowments, there are methods that he can adopt to earn a larger income and /or a more regular and stable income? What promise does the strategy of agricultural diversification in general and horticultural technology in particular hold for the farmer to meet these ends? This is the principal enquiry of this study.

2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

(a) To briefly outline the structure of the Indian agriculture as it exists presently and highlight the major developments in agricultural policy in the past and present; (b) To study the broad features of changing cropping pattern over the years and to examine also the trends in income, demand and consumption patterns of various agricultural products in general and horticultural products in particular in India; (c) To enquire into the spread and benefits of the adoption of horticultural technology by medium, small and marginal farmers. The benefits of the horticultural crops are examined in terms of (i) its potential for increasing incomes, (ii) as a means of stabilizing incomes, (iii) as a means of utilizing the unutilized land and labour, and (iv) its potential to utilize the wasteland; (d) To present detailed case studies (from western Maharashtra) of the impact of agricultural