



सत्यमेव जयते

R E P O R T
ON
LOCATION AND UTILISATION
OF
WASTELANDS IN INDIA

PART I—PUNJAB

**WASTELANDS SURVEY AND RECLAMATION
COMMITTEE**

**(MINISTRY OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE)
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

SEPTEMBER, 1960



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INTRODUCTION

Appointment of the Committee and the terms of reference

The uncultivated lands in the country may be broadly classified into the following two categories :—

- (a) Lands which are really adjuncts of village *abadis* and are meant to serve as pastures and fuel forests or sites for the extension of *abadis*, and
- (b) Lands in large-sized blocks which have either gone out of cultivation or have never been brought under cultivation.

2. With a view to utilising the latter category of lands which afford the greatest promise for increased agricultural production, the Government of India constituted a Committee, *vide* their letter No. F/1024/Spl/59, dated the 11th June, 1959, (Appendix A) with the following terms of reference :—

- (i) to make a survey of land classified as “other uncultivated land excluding fallow lands” and “fallow lands other than current fallows” and locate areas where large blocks of land are available for reclamation and resettlement,
- (ii) to suggest suitable measures for reclamation according to conditions in different areas and estimate the cost of reclamation and colonisation and the financial assistance and agricultural extension and training necessary for the settlers (the settlements being made on a co-operative basis),
- (iii) to suggest the terms and conditions upon which settlement should be made, the areas to be allotted and the payments to be made by settlers’ co-operative, and
- (iv) to estimate the economic aspects of such reclamation in terms of the expenditure involved, the likely addition to food production and the employment and income that would become available to settlers and their families and to lay down the priorities *inter se* between different categories of reclaimable lands.

3. In order to ensure effective co-ordination and speedy completion of the work, each State Government/Union Territory was asked by the Government of India to appoint a fairly senior officer who would be able to devote sufficient time to the work of the Committee, help it in collecting the necessary information and carry on correspondence with it. This procedure facilitated the work of the Committee to a great extent in obtaining relevant data from the State Governments and in arranging the tours.

(ii)

Programme of work

4. The Committee held its first meeting on the 7th July, 1959, when it discussed the plan of work and the staff requirements. In the second meeting held on 4th August, 1959, a draft questionnaire was discussed and finalised. The questionnaire (Appendix B) was issued to all the State Governments and Union Territories, with a request that their replies should be forwarded to the Committee by the 25th September, 1959. This questionnaire sought information mainly on the availability of wastelands in blocks of 1,000 acres or more and the prospects or resettlement in each State. Subsequently, as a result of the Committee's discussions with the Liaison Officers of the Punjab and Madhya Pradesh, it was felt that the availability of wastelands in blocks of 1,000 acres or more might be limited and it was decided to obtain detailed information in respect of all blocks of wastelands measuring 250 acres or more. Accordingly, a letter was issued to all the State Governments (Appendix C) asking for this information.

5. It was laid down in the terms of reference that the Committee should complete its work and submit its proposals in respect of one State in about a month and then proceed to take up investigation in another State. The Committee, however, felt that such a procedure was neither feasible nor advisable as the different State Governments did not have the information required by the Committee readily available and the process of collection took some time. In some cases, special surveys had to be organised. The Committee, therefore, decided that it might take up investigations in respect of the following eight States together in the first phase, viz., Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Kerala, West Bengal, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Mysore, and submit reports for each State one after another and then take up the remaining States. But for this procedure, the work of the Committee would have been very much delayed.

6. Accordingly, the report for the Punjab is being submitted first. This will be followed by reports in respect of the other States. A general report covering the entire country will then be presented which, *inter alia*, will deal with priorities between the different categories of reclaimable lands in the different States.

7. The report for each State will be divided into four sections. Section A will contain general observations about the State regarding its climate, soils, crops grown, irrigation facilities available, etc. Section B will deal with the areas offered for reclamation, their general characteristics, measures necessary for bringing the wastelands under cultivation, and the cost of reclamation. Section C will contain suggestions for follow-up and resettlement operations, if any, the estimated additional production from the reclaimed areas, and priorities between the different categories of reclaimable lands. In Section D, a summary of general conclusions and recommendations will be presented.

Problem

8. The main object of the Committee was to make a survey of lands classified as "other uncultivated lands excluding fallow lands" and "fallow lands other than current fallows", and locate large blocks for reclamation and resettlement.

9. In order to avoid ambiguity in the appraisal of the lands available in each of the above two categories, it is necessary to define the two terms. The classification of land-use adopted by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Union Ministry of Food and Agriculture, is nine-fold as under :—

- (i) forests,
- (ii) barren and unculturable lands,
- (iii) land put to non-agricultural uses,
- (iv) permanent pastures and meadows,
- (v) areas under miscellaneous trees and crops,
- (vi) culturable waste,
- (vii) current fallows,
- (viii) fallows other than current fallows, and
- (ix) net area sown.

The lands classified under categories (iv), (v) and (vi) are grouped together and designated as "other uncultivated lands excluding fallow lands". The category "culturable waste" is defined to include all lands available for cultivation but not taken up for cultivation or abandoned after a few years for one reason or the other. Such lands may be fallow for more than five years and may be covered with shrubs and jungle. They may be assessed or unassessed and may lie in isolated patches or blocks or within cultivated holdings. Lands reserved as pastures for grazing are not included under "culturable waste". Similarly, fallows of one year are classified as "current fallows", while those of 2-5 years are classified as "fallows other than current fallows". Lands left for growth of miscellaneous trees like bamboo, casuarina, fuel trees, etc. are not classified as "culturable waste".

10. Although the classification suggested by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture has been adopted in all the States, the Committee was informed during the course of discussions with the State officials that the concept of "other uncultivated lands excluding fallow lands" was not yet clearly understood. Lands which were classified as "culturable waste" at the time of settlement some years ago still continue to be shown as such in the revenue records even though they cannot be made culturable after incurring any reasonable expenditure. Similarly, some of the lands which are culturable continue to be classified as barren and unculturable or pasture lands. In some other cases, the pasture lands have been included in the category of culturable waste. Further, the category "other uncultivated lands excluding fallows" is

(iv)

treated as a sort of residual class in which are included all lands not accounted for under any other class.

11. In view of these considerations, we are of the view that the areas included in the two categories, viz., "other uncultivated lands excluding fallow lands" and "fallow lands other than current fallows" may not fairly represent the actual extent of culturable wastelands in the country, and accordingly much reliance cannot be placed on the statistics supplied by the different State Governments. The mere collection of statistics under the head "culturable waste" can serve but little purpose unless detailed information on the types of wastelands available in each State, the ownership of such lands, their availability in sizeable blocks and the cost of reclamation measures is available. We were glad to note that some of the States had realised the importance of collecting such statistics and had either started the necessary surveys or were preparing to do so for achieving the above object. This is a step in the right direction and any assistance that the Central Government can give in this matter will greatly facilitate the collection of vital statistics on proper land use. For the purpose of our report, we have relied on the data furnished to us by the revenue/agricultural agency of each State.

12. As regards resettlement, the terms of reference of the Committee enjoin upon it to locate areas where large blocks of land are available for reclamation and resettlement. We consider that the resettlement work is not the be-all and the end-all of our labours and that the main job is to locate lands which can be reclaimed and brought under the plough for increasing the food resources of the country. We have, therefore, suggested resettlement schemes only in cases where food production would be hindered without resettlement work.

13. We have viewed the entire problem mainly from an agricultural angle, but at the same time, we have tried to deal with matters which go beyond the purely agricultural aspects of the subject, for we do recognise that the problem of utilisation of wastelands involves not merely the adoption of agricultural techniques but an appreciation of a variety of human and social aspects.

PART I
THE PUNJAB

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