

Patterns and Determinants of Agricultural Growth in Maharashtra*

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Maharashtra is economically among the most developed states in the country. But it is not counted among the advanced states in India in terms of agricultural production, though most of the state's workforce still depends on agriculture. During the last four decades, the agricultural sector has undergone many changes. Though agricultural performance improved, its progress was not sustained and showed wide fluctuations. The important characteristics of agriculture are instability in crop production and significant regional variations. Recent suicides of farmers in Vidarbha and Marathawada have once again highlighted regional disparity. An attempt has been made in this paper to analyse the differential agricultural growth pattern experienced and identify appropriate policy interventions.

I Introduction

Indian agriculture has witnessed changes during the last four decades following the adoption of Green Revolution during late 1960s. This technology was initially adopted on a large scale in regions well endowed with irrigation. This led to rapid growth in agricultural output in selected regions, while other regions suffered from stagnation or poor growth in agricultural output (Chand and Chauhan 1999). Thus, spread of new technology and then pattern of growth of agriculture has, however, brought in its wake uneven development across regions and crops (Deosthali and Nikam 2004). Besides, technological change has widened the regional as well as interpersonal disparities (Bhalla and Alagh 1979). Initially impact of Green Revolution was confined to wheat and rice and regions with good irrigation facilities. As a consequence, much of the growth was confined to the Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and coastal Andhra Pradesh (Dantwala 1986, Bhalla and Singh 2001). These regional differences in agricultural development tend to get accentuated because of varying levels of investment in rural infrastructure and of adoption of technological innovations (Bhalla and Singh 1997). In Maharashtra, which occupies a relatively better position in the country in terms of its contribution to the total production of

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