

## GROWTH OF IRRIGATION IN MAHARASHTRA (1960-61 TO 1971-72)

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### *Introduction*

1.1 Maharashtra is often referred to as a 'progressive' State but its agricultural performance during the period under consideration is far from satisfactory. If one accepts the premise that a State should be able to feed its own population of which an undeniably large proportion is engaged in the pursuit of agriculture, then the fact that the foodgrains production of Maharashtra has not only failed to register an increase but has actually gone down over the period is a matter for grave concern. The foodgrains production figures show that the level reached in 1960-61, the beginning of the period under consideration (7.74 million metric tonnes), was never attained, let alone surpassed, in the next eleven years. The compound growth rate of production of foodgrains of -2.30 per cent per annum for this period leaves one wondering as to what happened to all the investment in agriculture in the form of increased irrigation facilities, development of high-yielding varieties, use of modern techniques of cultivation, application of chemical fertilizers, etc., when one has to probe not into the adequacy of growth but an actual decline in foodgrains production.

It is true that agriculture is sensitive to weather conditions and one may suspect that perhaps the relatively bad terminal years of 1970-71 and 1971-72 of this period are responsible for the negative growth rate. But if we delete these two years, the growth rate is -1.21 per cent per annum and the decline is still apparent. Then again, if the year 1965-66 being the worst of the years is also deleted, the growth rate comes to -1.00 per cent per annum. Further, if the first year (1960-61) is taken as an exceptionally good year and also deleted, the growth rate still stays negative, although smaller, at -0.14 per cent. Thus even after deleting the years that are likely to cause reduction in growth rate, the choice remains between decline and stagnancy, not a very happy situation indeed.<sup>1</sup> Between the two censuses of 1961 and 1971 the State population, on the other hand, increased from 39.55 million to 50.41 million at the compound growth

<sup>1</sup> Even if we consider total agricultural production, growth rates with similar deletions are negative (though of slightly lower order) and this is not surprising as foodgrains constitute a major component of agricultural production.