

Title : *Watershed Development Approach in Fragile Resource Region : An Analytical Study of Maharashtra by R.S. Deshpande and V. Ratna Reddy, Mimeograph Series No. 33, December 1991, pp. xii + 168, Rs. 120/-.*

Experience of agricultural development in the country suggests wide regional differentials in the growth performance, along with a serious neglect of the balance of ecosystem. Large portions of Maharashtra situated on the Deccan Plateau are the fragile eco-regions by passed by technology. These areas contribute a sizable share to the food grain economy of the state. Poor irrigation, improper water harvesting, largely degraded soils and ecosystem, predominance of low value crops coupled with lower precipitation make these regions vulnerable to droughts and famines. Major portion of the Central Maharashtra has always been categories as drought - prone by various Irrigation Commissions and under many other agro-climatic classifications. Rain-fed farming technology seemed to be the only answer for the problems of these areas.

A review of the constraints of dry-farming technology suggested five main issues viz., (i) lack of holistic planning, (ii) absence of precision plans and very low yield gaps, (iii) weak technological options which are unsustainable under risky environment, (iv) heterogeneity of environment, and (v) Languid societal responses. This led to a thinking of an integrated resource region approach, which was translated in to a watershed development programme during VII Plan. The working group on dry land farming constituted by the planning commission and the Approach paper to Eighth Plan-reiterated further the need for watershed development approach as resource region.

Many sporadic experiments were already in progress in the country mainly through the initiative of Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Central Soil and Water Conservation Research and Training Institute, World Bank, Various Voluntary Organisa-