

AIM AT 4 PER CENT AGRICULTURAL GROWTH PER YEAR: PM

New Delhi, October 27 2005

The Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh today emphasized the need to aim at an agricultural growth of 4 per cent per year, if we have to achieve our ambitions of over-all economic growth rate of over 8 per cent per annum. Inaugurating the National conference on Krishi Vigyan Kendras here today, the Prime Minister stressed the need to gear up agriculture extension services for fulfilling the demands of farmers for credible information at a much faster rate.

Asserting that KVKs should be able to function as knowledge banks in each district, Dr. Singh said, "there is a need to make all out efforts to broaden the knowledge base of our farmers to enable them to make the optimum use of new technologies". "Our farmers' needs for information are multifaceted and these are not limited to technology alone. They need information about agriculture as a business, about farming practices, about policy initiatives, about best practices of other farmers and on market intelligence." Therefore, timely availability of information is a critical component in the development of agriculture, he added.

Outlining challenges for our agriculture scientists, technologists and managers, the Prime Minister said: "How do we raise agricultural growth to over 4 per cent? What are the technological breakthroughs required for this purpose? What are the changes that need to be made in our research and extension efforts so that we address the needs of farmers in rainfed areas? Is there a need to move from a crop based approach to a farm management based approach? How do we restructure and energise our agricultural extension system so that newer technologies and farm management practices get transferred to our farming community? What modifications are required in our agricultural markets so that productivity enhancements in agriculture result in increased farmgate prices?"

Calling for second green revolution, the Prime Minister pointed out that the agricultural sciences would have to work towards providing the technological basis for new breakthroughs. "They will have to look at providing crop specific, region specific, resource specific and farm specific solutions", Dr. Singh stressed. He also emphasized the need to enhance productivity and output in the agriculture sector while simultaneously making efforts to move people to employment outside agriculture, either in manufacturing or in services.

The Union Agriculture Minister, Shri Sharad Pawar and Minister of State for Agriculture, Shri Kantilal Bhuria participated in the Conference.

The following is the text of the Prime Minister's address on the occasion.

"Long ago, Jawaharlal Nehru once said "Everything else can wait but agriculture cannot wait." And I should begin by stating that our Government attaches the highest importance to achieve a 4 per cent average growth rate in agricultural production and the fact that one of our senior most political leaders in the country Shri Sharad Pawar is looking after this very very important Ministry is an indication of the importance that our Government attaches to sustained increase in agricultural productivity and agricultural growth.

I am very happy that Pawarji has decided to hold this first National Conference of Krishi Vigyan Kendra. Those, who have been to Baramati will testify to Shri Sharad Pawar's abiding commitment to rejuvenation of our agricultural economy and improve welfare of the farming masses in our country. I sincerely hope that Krishi Vigyan Kendras will take inspiration on what Shri Pawar has achieved in his native soil of Maharashtra and carry forward that message of progress through the use of modern science and technology and indeed, modern science and technology have made it possible as never before in human history that chronic poverty, ignorance and disease do not have to be the inevitable lot of the majority of human beings. Poverty eradication is a feasible goal. But this requires utmost use of modern science and technology. Jawaharlal Nehru used to talk in terms of imparting his scientific temper to all our production processes and on this occasion of the National Conference of Krishi Vigyan Kendras, I sincerely hope that progress of agriculture through use of modern science and technology will spread to every nook and corner of the country.

I, therefore, consider this conference to be a very important event in India's quest of food security, enhanced agricultural growth and I really hope that at the end of your deliberations, you would have identified new viable strategies for upgrading the technological capabilities of our agriculture, thus leading to a significant acceleration in our agricultural produce.

Agriculture continues to play a vital role in our economy, although its

share in our GDP has been declining over the years. Today, the contribution of agriculture to our GDP is only about 22 per cent but the proportion of our population dependent on agriculture has not declined in a similar manner and even now, almost 65 per cent of our population relies on agriculture for its sustenance. In fact, the proportion of national income generated in agriculture has gone down drastically while the proportion of population dependent on agriculture has declined marginally over the last 40 or 50 years, is an indication of growing gap between rural India and urban areas. We have to find credible strategies to reduce and eliminate this gap, if we have to succeed in making a success of social and economic progress in the framework of an open society and the rural economy. The fact that agriculture today accounts for no more than 22 per cent of our national income while it continues to provide livelihood to 65 per cent of our population is a matter of challenge that we need to address in the coming years. We need to enhance productivity and output in agriculture while simultaneously making rigorous efforts to move people to employment outside agriculture either in manufacturing or in services. In increasing agricultural productivity, special emphasis has to be laid on improving the productivity of land and the productivity and efficiency of water use in our agricultural practices.

If one looks at the overall macro-economic scenario in the country today, I see that the environment is quite favourable for accelerating our growth rate to beyond 8 per cent. In the National Common Minimum Programme, we have set a target of achieving a growth rate of 7-8 per cent per annum. This is not impossible. We grew at almost 7 per cent last year and this year too, we expect growth to be in excess of 7 per cent. However, this is based on a growth in agriculture of less than 2 per cent. If we have to achieve our ambitions of growing at a rapid pace of over 8 per cent per annum, then we must aim at an agricultural growth rate of over 4 per cent per annum on a sustained basis. Unfortunately, this has not been so in the recent past with average agricultural growth rates of just 1.5 per cent in the first three years of the Tenth Five Year Plan. We have made determined efforts to reverse this dismal trend.

I believe, given our growth ambitions, the challenges for our agriculture scientists, technologists and managers are quite clear. How do we raise agricultural growth to over 4 per cent? What are the technological breakthroughs required for this purpose? What are the changes that need to be made in our research and extension efforts so that we address effectively to the needs of farmers particularly in rainfed areas? Is there a need to move from a crop based approach to

a farm management based approach? How do we restructure and energise our agricultural extension system so that newer technologies and farm management practices get transferred to our farming community? What modifications are required in our agricultural markets so that productivity enhancements in agriculture result in increased farmgate prices?

The agricultural research and extension system has played a pivotal role in ushering in the Green revolution. On behalf of our nation, I salute our agricultural scientists who have made this miracle take place. The production of food grains has increased more than fourfold from 50 million tonnes at the time of Independence to more than 200 million tonnes today. We are now among the leading producers of jute and allied fibres, milk, wheat, rice, fruits and vegetables, eggs and fish. Research was not just limited to development of high-yielding varieties and improved production practices alone. Notable successes were also there in the development of improved livestock management, aquaculture and marine-culture, sustainable use of natural resources management and the development of improved agricultural implements and machinery. It is estimated that nearly half of the registered growth in agricultural production has been on account of innovation and development of technologies.

As I have said on so many occasions, we need to usher in a second green revolution. The agricultural sciences would have therefore to work towards providing the technological basis for new breakthroughs. They will have to look at providing crop specific, region specific, resource specific and farm specific solutions to our problems. I am told that there are estimates that indicate that even with the current available technologies, it is possible to double the present food production by the end of the 11th Five Year Plan. The extension system therefore will have to ensure that these solutions which are available do in fact reach our farmers so that they can implement them in a short time frame. Our agricultural policy planners will have to ensure that the policy framework is appropriate and that all technological efforts at productivity enhancement result in higher incomes to our farmers. I am certain that they have the capabilities required for this purpose and will rise to meet the challenge.

The institution of Krishi Vigyan Kendra, since its very beginning in 1974, has proved to be an important mechanism in the process of technology dissemination from research laboratories to the farmers and end users. The KVK can be an effective mechanism for technology assessment, technology refinement and technology demonstration

keeping in mind its relevance to the needs and resource endowments of the farming community. In my Independence Day speech, I announced that by 2007 there would be a Krishi Vigyan Kendra in every district so that the benefits of advanced research and training can reach, as they must, all our farmers. I am happy to note that the Indian Council of Agricultural Research has already established 492 KVKs.

I am happy that this event here today, brings together all the heads of Krishi Vigyan Kendras located across the country, Vice Chancellors and Directors of Extension Education of Agricultural Universities, Directors of ICAR Institutes, representatives of State Governments, agricultural scientists, extension specialists, development professionals and representatives of farmers organizations on a common platform to discuss the ways and means of improving the efficiency, effectiveness and relevance of Krishi Vigyan Kendras.

All advanced agricultural economies are knowledge-based economies. Hence, there is a need to make all out efforts to broaden the knowledge base of our farmers to enable them to make the optimum use of new technologies. Our farmers' needs for information are multi-faceted and these are not limited to technology alone. They need information about agriculture as a business, about farming practices, about policy initiatives, about best practices of other farmers and on market intelligence. Therefore, timely availability of information is a critical component in the development of our agriculture.

Our extension services need to gear up for fulfilling the demands of credible information at a much faster rate. This is possible through new IT and communication tools which not only cut across physical barriers between farmers and researchers but also provide need-based information to our farmers. I am very happy to learn that the ICAR has decided to provide electronic connectivity to about 200 KVKs to make them hubs for accessing information by our farmers. I believe that KVKs should be able to function as 'knowledge banks' in each district where they are located. They should be able to provide information on all issues required by our farmers. This is a feasible and realizable goal.

In a dynamic, evolving economy, the Krishi Vigyan Kendras must be the focal point in each district from where information, knowledge and technology can flow to various end-users through effective partnerships. They must become effective conduits for providing feedback from farmers to the research process to make the research

agenda more demand driven. They must ensure that research emerges from ivory towers and fulfils the felt needs of India's farmers.

I am sure that this conference will be helpful in identifying new viable strategies for upgrading the technological capabilities of our agricultural sector and in enhancing the effectiveness of KVKs. I can assure you that the KVKs will receive all possible support from the Central Government. I wish you all success in your deliberations."

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Jaipal Reddy urges media to rise to the challenge of HIV/AIDS

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The Union Minister of Information & Broadcasting and Culture, Shri S. Jaipal Reddy has urged the media to rise to the challenge of HIV and AIDS. Delivering the keynote address at 'Indian Media Leaders HIV/AIDS Initiative', Shri Reddy said that HIV/AIDS must be portrayed as an issue of intense social relevance and media is in a position to correct the damage by changing the stereotyped reporting on the issue. Media leadership is critical in tackling the pandemic of HIV/AIDS, he said.

The Minister said, in helping people understand what is best for them, media can play a catalytic role to foster social change. Only knowledge and awareness about the disease can check its spread since this epidemic breeds on ignorance, silence and inaction. Reporting about what is happening at the regional level would help formulate an informed national policy response and co-coordinated national action, he added.

Shri Reddy said that our dynamic media environment offers new avenues for information flow. Community radio, new media tools, web, SMS etc., need to be fully tapped to reach out young people. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting including Prasar Bharati, is at the forefront of the national fight against AIDS, he added. Shri Reddy said that media's role as agents of social change has never been more important than now.

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