

Emerging Opportunities for Goa in the field of Agriculture

Prof. V L Chopra

Prof. V L Chopra, Member, Planning Commission of India and an eminent agricultural scientist gave a major talk on the State of Indian Agriculture and more specifically about opportunities for Goa. He stated that Goa had immense potential in the field of Agriculture mainly due to its location, weather conditions, local market for high value crops, and its advanced human capital. Prof. Chopra's talk on "*The State and Potential of Indian Agriculture and Opportunities for Goa*" at The International Centre, Goa (ICG) on 17th April, 2009 covered large ground. The lecture was organized by the ICG as a part of its programme activities with special reference to Goa. The lecture was also the first of the lecture series on Goa's Agriculture- 2nd Green Revolution. It was attended by academicians, the scientists from ICAR, Goa, officials from the Agriculture Department, Govt. of Goa, and progressive farmers of Goa.

Prof. Chopra urged the people of Goa in general and farmers in particular to think creatively to break away from traditional agriculture and focus on niche advantage. To move from commodity farming to creative diversification to secondary and tertiary high value added agriculture and adopt the latest technology to make quantum leaps. According to Prof. Chopra, high value added fruits and vegetables especially graft cashew, mango, other fruit crops and vegetables, cut flowers are some of produce which already have very high demand locally as well as in India and in global markets. The demand for food commodities, especially the high-value commodities, will see a very high growth in the years to come. Goa must take full advantage of the enormous opportunities with advanced technology in fruit and vegetable farming even with small holdings through "Federated Farming" – collective of contiguous farms, big and small.

The main source of agricultural growth will be possible by the growing demand for high value products with attractive prices. This makes crop substitution possible, even desirable. Emergence of innovative institutions such as contract farming and more importantly "Federated Farming" in small holdings as well as private initiative also offers many opportunities for growth of Goan agriculture. Prof. Chopra provided several examples of successes achieved by adopting innovative approaches in agriculture, food processing and investment in India and abroad.

Prof. Chopra made Goa specific recommended action with a presentation of the macro Indian agricultural scenario and the uncertain policy regime which has failed to create enough room for the growth of agriculture in India. Prof. Chopra also spoke about the challenges in the field of agriculture. According to him, it is not the

small holdings of agricultural land and the uneven ownership of land which constitute the major hindrance but the old policy frameworks and strategies. Not attracting sufficient public investment, excessive focus on subsidies, deterioration of natural resources especially water, climate change, and global shocks are other major challenges facing the growth of agriculture in India.

The function was chaired by Shri. Pratapsingh Rane, President – ICG. Shri Rane, a progressive agriculturist himself, in his opening remarks observed that there are serious threats to the agricultural sector as it is plagued with several factors. He mentioned that agriculture is no longer an attractive profession to the youngsters for variety of reasons. One of the primary reasons is lack of innovations in agriculture to make it financially attractive. Other reasons he cited were lack of agriculture promoting policies and support systems. Shri Rane, delving on his rich experience, gave several examples of innovative measures that he had himself introduced to protect the crop and ensure better yields on his farm.

Dr. V A Pai Panandiker, Vice-President - ICG, in his concluding remarks thanked Prof. Chopra for an outstanding and provocative presentation on both Indian agriculture and opportunities for Goa. Dr. Pai Panandikar emphasized that the International Centre, Goa is primarily designed to be an “Ideational Tank” for evolving new thinking on every facet of Goan and Indian life. That agriculture, food and water were the three most important sustainers of life. He emphasized that Goa has not yet properly comprehended the gravity of both the water problem, and implication of climate change for Goa. He also referred to lack of adequate Knowledge in Goa about dramatic recent technologies in crops like hybrid mangoes, grafted cashews, spices and even food crops. He urged the participants to meet soon to discuss in greater detail the Goa specific opportunities and use the ICG as their fora for such purposes.