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INAUGURAL ADDRESS*

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SHRI VASANTRAO NAIK, PROF. GADGIL, DELEGATES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

It is, indeed, an honour to be called upon to inaugurate the deliberations of the Annual Conference of an august body of distinguished scientists as that of your Society.

Back in 1952, as Minister for Civil Supplies, I became aware of the paucity of precise information regarding food production, its movement and distribution, marketable surplus, consumption, etc. As the Chief Minister, watching and directing the implementation of the agricultural development programme under the Second Five-Year Plan of the State, I am, again, keenly aware of the necessity for basic and reliable statistical data in the field of Agriculture. Therefore, when the Chairman of the Local Reception Committee, Shri S. P. Mohite, approached me, I readily accepted his invitation to inaugurate this Conference. I am grateful to the Society for affording me this opportunity.

I very much appreciate the decision of the Executive Committee to hold the Society's Annual Conference in Poona, for a second time, after ten years. During this decade, I am happy to note, that there has been commendable progress in the field of agricultural statistics in this State.

The Bureau of Economics and Statistics has collected and compiled the data on ownership holdings, consumer expenditure in rural and

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urban sectors, unemployment and partial employment and agricultural incomes. It has also made a valuable study of the effects of scarcity on the socio-economic conditions in rural areas and of the beneficial effects of irrigation.

The Department of Land Records has cadastrally surveyed almost the entire geographical area of the State. This has resulted in obtaining more reliable land utilisation statistics.

In the Department of Agriculture, precise and reliable estimates of production are available, of food and non-food crops, covering nearly 80 per cent. of the cropped area of the State.

Due to want of a simple and practical sampling technique, the production estimates of fruits and vegetables were not possible. A successful technique has now been developed by the Department, and for the first time, accurate estimates of acreage and production of oranges, bananas, grapes and onions are available. Bombay State is the first, in the Indian Union, to apply successfully, on a Statewide scale, the sampling technique developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, for estimating livestock numbers. It is now practicable to obtain good estimates of livestock population, at divisional and State level, during intercensal years.

Government have been spending large sums of money, on various Grow More Food measures and on the recently launched *Kharif* and *Rabi* Campaigns. It is, therefore, necessary to assess the results of such measures and campaigns. Assessments have already been carried out in respect of use of improved seeds, fertilisers and well irrigation in certain areas of the State. The survey of intensified improved measures adopted in Paddy Cultivation has brought out that it is possible to increase the yield by 10 Mds. per acre, which is more than 50 per cent. of the present average yield. Similarly, sample surveys conducted in the bunded areas have shown an increase of about 25 per cent. in yields of *Rabi jower* and *bajri* due to bunding alone. Such convincing data come as a refreshing experience both to the public and the Government.

Up-to-date statistical techniques are being employed in the designing of experiments and trials on research stations and in cultivators' fields. Data obtained therefrom can be directly employed, as the basis for making definite, practical and economic recommendations to the cultivators at large, for the improvement of their plant husbandry.

As every Agricultural Statistician is aware, the weakest link in collecting accurate data is the primary reporting agency. At the instance

of the Directorate of Economics and Statistics of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Government of India, more than 12,000 primary reporters were given intensive training, during the period from 1955 to 1958, in the correct methods of collecting and reporting basic and current agricultural statistics. This has already resulted in quite a fair improvement of the reporting system.

You will, therefore, see that Bombay State can be proud of the great march it has made during the last decade in the realm of agricultural statistics and the vigour with which it is pursuing this course.

Encouraging as the above achievements are, there is much headway to be made and many lacunæ to be filled. On an occasion like this, it may not be out of place to refer to a few of them.

In formulating plans for increased production, we should know the increase in yield under actual farming conditions due to various improved measures, such as application of fertilisers, irrigation, use of good seed and better cultivation practices. Experience has shown, that for this purpose, the data collected on the research stations cannot be entirely relied upon, as the conditions on such stations are often quite different from those of the cultivators' fields, and also, not infrequently, the research stations do not correctly represent the soil-climatic conditions of the tract, for which the improved measures are to be recommended. It is, therefore, necessary to carry out trials of such measures in the fields of cultivators themselves, so chosen as to form a representative sample of the region. The trials, if simple in design, serve also as visual demonstrations and become centres of propaganda for good cultivation practices. In fact, in 1955, the distinguished President of your Society, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, had referred to the need for such trials in his Inaugural Address. I am, today, happy to learn that the Bombay State Agricultural Department is embarking from next year, on a very ambitious and comprehensive programme of conducting nearly 16,000 trials annually, in cultivators' fields. I have, no doubt, the results of these trials will go a long way in instilling confidence among the farmers, about the utility of various improved practices.

The cultivator's holding is the primary economic unit of agriculture. Unless we relate the statistics bearing on types of tenancies, extent of fragmentation, patterns of cultivation, etc., to this operational holding, we cannot properly plan for the permanent improvement of our agriculture. I am glad that the Government of India is contemplating to undertake, during 1960-61, an agricultural census which would effectively bring out the salient points of the rural economy of the country.

Another problem requiring immediate attention is the cost of cultivation of crops. This information is essential, if Government has to launch administrative measures, for price stabilisation or crop financing and to safeguard the just interests of both the producer and the consumer. I learn, with satisfaction, that a sample survey designed to obtain reliable data on the cost of cultivation of sugarcane has just been completed and a similar survey on cotton and other associated crops is in progress, in this State.

At present, there is a paucity of scientifically collected data on the marketable surpluses of crops, without which, executive actions for State trading, may well-nigh prove impossible.

Information on the number and size of operational holdings is required to be collected to decide the question of ceilings on individual holdings. It is satisfying to note, that such data have been collected for a number of districts in this State and the work is in progress to collect them in the remaining districts.

Opinion is divided as to which unit areas yield better under similar conditions—small holdings of peasant proprietors or large farms of big farmers or Co-operative Societies. Properly designed and well-conducted surveys alone can furnish the needed statistics to provide an answer.

In Bombay State, it is reported that there are 35 lakh acres of culturable waste land. A sample survey recently carried out, in one of the districts, has shown, that more than 80 per cent. of the area reported as culturable waste in the district, is practically unfit for cultivation. This emphasises the need for collecting accurate data, before embarking on large developmental plans.

Again, we are not still in a position to assess the incidence of pests and diseases, the extent of the damage caused by them and the value of the remedial measures.

In most of the above cases, the real difficulty appears to be, either the want of a sampling technique or where one is available, the need for its modification to suit the varying conditions under which the data are to be collected. It devolves on your Society to take up these problems and offer solutions. Lacunæ must be filled up early, as the reality of our plan targets depends, to a large extent, on the availability of accurate statistical data.

Government, sometimes, have to take quick decisions in formulating policies which may or may not be fully correct. A heavy responsibility,

therefore, rests with such independent Societies like yours, to think calmly and dispassionately and put up before Government, your well-considered and constructive suggestions. If an independent body like yours undertakes, periodically, appraisals of the achievements of various agricultural measures such as Grow More Food programmes, *Kharif* and *Rabi* Campaigns and progress of work in National Extension Service Blocks, it would help considerably to inspire public confidence in the efficacy of the governmental measures and induce the public to participate enthusiastically in the implementation of the Five-Year Plans.

Lastly, one more important function of your Society is to educate the public to appreciate the value of correct data and the statistical techniques which produce such data. Your Society has already done yeoman service, in this direction, by arranging seminars and public lectures on topics of statistical interest and publishing, in Hindi, abstracts of the articles appearing in your reputed journal. The next step, it appears to me, is to produce popular statistical literature that appeals both to the layman and the administrator, in all the principal languages of the country. In this, one should, however, guard against the temptation of over-simplification of statistics to catch the public imagination or please the administrator. It is well to remember that statistics is not an end in itself but a valuable means to an end. Any misuse of it would defeat the very purpose, which it is expected to serve.

I have briefly indicated the immediate needs from an administrator's point of view. I have no doubt that your Society is quite awake to the tasks ahead, as can be seen from the past records and from the agenda for this session.

I now declare the 13th Annual Conference of your Society open, and wish your deliberations success. I am confident that they will help the Government in planning for the agricultural prosperity of our country and focussing public attention on the importance of agricultural statistics to the individual and to the community.