

VOTE OF THANKS

By

SHRI S.C. CHAUDHRI

Hon'ble Minister, delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Society as well as on my own, it is my pleasure to move a hearty vote of thanks to the Hon'ble Minister for the really thought-provoking address he has delivered. He decided to forego the pleasure of reading a written address and I think that has been very very rewarding to us as members of the Society.

He has pinpointed the tasks which the Society and the scientists should take up as a challenge and try to come up to a certain standard of satisfaction to the policy-makers and administrators. Sir, you have very encouragingly said, and the very opening sentence of yours was, that it would be the policy of Government to encourage such non-official societies. This is a far greater encouragement to us than mere financial assistance.

You have thrown light on the reliability of agricultural statistics or lack of it. I would only say that the scientists can only provide a reliable system; they can also go to the length of seeing that it works efficiently in the field. But after that, the scientist probably is forgotten and other situations arise. You rightly mentioned that some states would like to have more money for flood relief and that some would like to create justification for more grain allocation who have not been able to procure as much as the Centre was expecting them to procure. But there is another sorry state, and I do hope many of us have come across that situation, when the same States who under-estimate their production at the time of harvesting, or at the procurement stage, go to the Planning Commission later on, for allocation of financial outlay for development of agriculture, and present what are called 'revised estimates' of production; and there is an upward revision in these revised estimates. Now this type of situation is what we in this profession have been watching for years. And this has to mend. But the cause of this does not lie with the statisticians; the cause lies elsewhere and the remedy, therefore, also lies not with the statistician but elsewhere.

Sir, I would like also to refer to the institutional arrangement that we have in our country for agricultural statistics. There is the IASRI, this particular Institute, under whose auspices we are meeting; it has been responsible, as Dr. Prem Narain also mentioned in the welcome address, for developing the techniques for collection of reliable agricultural statistics. I do not want to go into a reminiscent mood but way-back in the mid-forties, a system was evolved under which this Institute developed the objective techniques and the Directorate of Economics and Statistics in the Ministry of Agriculture put it on itself to get the objective techniques of crop estimation implemented by the States : two institutions supplementing each other. Then came a third institution-the National Sample Survey Organisation-which now, since 1974 I can say, is doing very important surveys which probably go unrecognised. These surveys are intended to exercise or sample check on the crop estimation that is being done in the States. This sample verification looks into administrative aspects as well as the technical aspects of the work and therefore these three institutions in combination are doing a very important service in the field of agricultural statistics. But again they are giving a system; and they are seeing to it that through sample verification the system is properly implemented at the field level. They can't do more than that.

Sir, I am glad again if I can go into a reminiscent mood with your permission, being associated with the Directorate of Economics and Statistics and the Agricultural Prices Commission. The Commission's recommended prices have been found to be below the expectations of the farmers right from the time this body was set up. But what is the reason behind it? You were very kind to mention some of the factors which the Commission is not taking into account in price determination and now you have directed that these factors should be taken into account. But there is another side of the coin. The Commission presumes that the fertilizer prices will remain what they are, irrigation rates will remain what they are, other charges which go into the cost of production of the farmers will remain what they are, that is they make their recommendations other things remaining the same. But in whose hands are these other things? These other things are not in the hands of the Agricultural Prices Commission. The inputs-the input prices which the farmer has to pay, if they rise after the prices have been declared by the Government for the output, then naturally the output prices would be found to be lower than the expectations of the farmers. And therefore, it is time to think in terms of the prices of inputs as well as the agricultural output together.

Sir, it is not my intention to impose any of my views here on the members of the Society; but I do feel very very grateful indeed for the very challenging tasks that you have assigned, if I can use that expression to the Society. We take them as assigned to us. And I assure you on behalf of the Society that the Society will not be found wanting in giving such assistance and advice to the Government as they would desire to have from it. This is because the Society, as you have rightly pointed out, consists of all those technicians and scientists who are working either in the States or in the Centre or in other institutions. And therefore, the Society's member, have the backing and co-operation of the States.

Sir, before I close, I would like to mention that the impression which our Hon'ble Prime Minister and you, the Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture have created the world over of the development of agriculture in our country is something which has raised the image of the country which has raised the status of the country in the eyes of the world. As newspapers reader, we find that the developing countries, some of the developing countries at any rate, have started approaching India to help them out in development of their agriculture. It is time that in this technical assistance programme of assisting agricultural development in the developing countries, collaboration on establishing proper agricultural statistical systems could also be made a part. I have a feeling that some of the countries which are looking for a proper system of crop estimation are also looking for guidance from India for providing them with such a system. In fact they have sent their trainees to our institutions in India to acquire necessary background and necessary knowledge for developing their own crop estimation system but still I believe these would be a desire on the part of some of the countries to look to India to assist them, to extend technical assistance to them in this field. And I think this is one sphere which the Society can be entrusted with in case the development of a scientific crop estimation system in the developing countries were to form a part of any technical assistance programme for agriculture in the developing countries.

Sir, I repeat that you have been very free and frank in expression to your problems and your views to us and we assure you that you will not find the Society wanting in coming to grips with any matter which is entrusted to it.

Thank you very much.