

[Shrimati Sushila Robatgi]

1974, issued under the Central Excise Rules, 1944, together with an explanatory memorandum [Placed in Library. See No LT-8771/74]

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIFTH REPORT

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour) I beg to present the Hundred and twenty-fifth Report of the Public Accounts Committee on paragraphs contained in the Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for the year 1971-72, Union Government (Defence Services)

12.56 hrs.

STATEMENT RE INTERIM REPORTS BY THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI F. A. AHMED): As Members are aware, the National Commission on Agriculture set up by the Government of India has been asked to make interim recommendations on such items of the Terms of Reference given to them as it may deem fit. The Commission has hitherto submitted 18 Interim Reports on different subjects. Copies of all these Reports have been placed in the Library of Sabha [See No LT-8770/74]

The Commission has presented on the 19th April, 1974 to the Government of India three more Interim Reports on the following subjects :—

- 1 Desert Development
- 2 Forest Research and Education
- 3 Certain Important Aspects of Selected Export-oriented Agricultural Commodities.

These Reports, as well as the Summary of the important recommendations made in these three Interim Re-

ports are placed on the Table of the Sabha.

I have directed my Department to examine the recommendations quickly before Government takes further action in the matter

SUMMARY OF THE IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN THE THREE INTERIM REPORTS SUBMITTED BY THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON AGRICULTURE

The National Commission on Agriculture has submitted to the Government of India today three Interim Reports dealing with

- (1) Desert Development,
- (2) Forest Research and Education;
- (3) Certain Important Aspects of Selected Export-oriented Agricultural Commodities

The important Recommendations made in these Interim Reports are summarised below:

I. INTERIM REPORT ON DESERT DEVELOPMENT

The Interim Report on Desert Development deals with the Great Indian Desert situated in Rajasthan, Haryana and Gujarat. The Commission has called for early action to arrest the rapid deterioration of the desert area and has recommended a comprehensive 15-year programme for its improvement and economic development so that much of the hardship arising there out of the drought and aridity can be mitigated permanently and lasting socio-economic improvements can be brought about in this underdeveloped region.

The integrated plan suggested by the Commission is designed to pay simultaneous attention to the development of water resources, forestry,

animal husbandry and pasture development. Among important measures for utilisation of water resources are proposals for recasting of the Rajasthan Canal Project to exclude unsuitable areas and for construction of five lift canals to bring some more areas under irrigation to extend the benefits to a larger section of the community. The Report has urged early settlement on the question of sharing the river waters for expeditious development of water resources in Haryana and Gujarat.

Groundwater exploitation is intended mainly for domestic and industrial use. For maximising the utilisation of the scanty rainwater, use of water conservation techniques like khadins, bandhs and adbandis on a larger scale has been proposed. Advocating judicious use of available water resources, the Commission has suggested alteration of the cropping pattern to utilise about 30 per cent of canal commanded areas for growing fodder crops to meet the requirements of animal husbandry in mixed farming and large-scale production of quality seeds for which the area is eminently suitable.

A large scale programme of tree plantation, development of shelter-belts and wind-breaks and rejuvenation of vegetal cover by utilising the water available in the early stages of command area development has been recommended with a view to controlling the effects of hot winds, wind erosion, sand blowing and sand casting on arable fields. Tree and grass cover has been suggested on shifting sand dunes in canal commanded areas and on those which pose a threat to habitations, roads and railways. The plantation programme is also geared to meet the requirements of fuel and small timber locally and to prevent over-exploitation of the existing resources and digging of phog roots which cause deterioration of the desert by loosening the soil.

The Commission has recommended that the economy of the desert area

should be mainly animal husbandry oriented. A major thrust of the programmes is on prevention in a large measure of the present nomadism of the cattle breeders and sheep owners for their social development and for systematic breeding of the livestock. The programmes suggested also include planned breeding for improving the productivity of cattle and sheep. In canal commanded areas, dairy development through setting up of additional milk collection and milk chilling centres and milk products factories has been proposed.

In other arid areas, the major emphasis has been placed on sheep development for which wool shearing and grading centres and wool and meat marketing arrangements have been suggested. Adequate extension support for preliminary processing of wool has been recommended for maximum utilisation of wool locally by the cottage industry and for creating more employment opportunities.

Programmes have been recommended for augmenting feed and fodder resources in the area to ensure supply of adequate nutrition to the animals. For this, proposals have been made for large scale development of pastures, regulated grazing to prevent over-use and creation of grass reserves and fodder banks for supply of hay in scarcity years.

It has been estimated that the various programmes recommended would require outlays of about Rs. 397 crores in Rajasthan including Rs. 297 crores for completing Rajasthan Canal Project and developing the commanded area, Rs. 16 crores in Haryana and Rs. 10 crores in Gujarat in addition to other items of development under the Plan in the desert areas. The Commission has suggested that the programmes should be properly phased over a period of three plans and should be given adequate organisational

tional support to ensure timely and effective implementation.

H. INTERIM REPORT ON FOREST RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

In its Interim Report on Forest Research and Education, the Commission has observed that the existing base of forest research in India is not sufficiently adequate to implement the programmes based on the approach outlined in its earlier two Interim Reports on 'Production Forestry-Man-made Forests' and on 'Social Forestry'. The Commission has also drawn attention to the need for substantial research support to the forestry programmes in the context of fast changing technology in the field of management and utilisation of forests and the need for adoption of dynamic forestry practices. The Report deals with the steps needed to remove the organisational, technical and financial constraints and to re-vitalise forest research and education in the country.

The Commission has divided forest research into three groups, viz. (i) forestry and biological research; (ii) industrial and utilisation research; and (iii) forest management and operations research, including statistics, economics and marketing research. It has also indicated the types of organisation necessary to carry out basic, applied and adaptive research at local, regional and national levels. The Commission has recommended that facilities required to carry out basic and applied research bearing on forests should be built up in the agricultural universities. Other universities may also organise research on forest problems to the extent feasible and possible. For this purpose, the State forest departments should provide the necessary facilities and support. The State forest departments may, if necessary, establish properly equipped and staffed research institu-

tes in order to tackle applied research problems of a local nature. In addition to basic research, the Central forest research organisations should take up applied research of regional and national importance, and also assist forest research organisationally and financially in the States, having inadequate research base. The industrial research which requires a large capital investment and special expertise and equipment should be the responsibility of the Centre. At present, there is no well organised unit of industrial design to expedite commercial exploitation of proven pilot experiments, and this should be made good. The Central Government should also set up, where necessary, multi-disciplinary regional forest research institutes. In addition, there might be centres to take up specific problem-oriented research projects.

The agricultural and other universities which are to undertake forest research could introduce forestry as one of the subjects in the under-graduate course. Gradually, the scope of forest education could be widened to graduate, post-graduate and doctorate Degree courses in forestry, as qualified staff and other facilities needed for research become available. In order to create more opportunities for employment of forestry graduates, under-graduate course could be broad-based, so that a wide choice of careers is possible. Moreover, forestry could be included as one of the elective subjects in the competitive examination for the Indian Forest Service; besides preference to the university graduates in forestry can be given in the recruitment of the State Forest Service officers and Forest Rangers. There should be an integral approach to research and education, by which teachers are actively involved in research and vice-versa. The Commission has also recommended that the Forest Research Institute, Dehra Dun, because of its long tradition of research and teaching, should

be developed as an academic institution for teaching in forestry both at the under-graduate and post-graduate levels.

In order to promote forest research and education within the existing administrative structure and also in order to achieve the desired degree of coordination between Central and State forest research institutes and the universities, a high-powered Council of Forest Research and Education (CFRE) should be set up in the Union Ministry of Agriculture, with the Cabinet Minister of Agriculture as its Chairman. One of the tasks of the CFRE would be to have a realistic assessment made of technical manpower, including each category of specialisation needed at professional levels in forest management, research and industries.

The universities and forest-based industries, besides the Central and State research organisations, should be more thoroughly involved in the identification of problems and formulation of programmes for inclusion in the Five Year Plans. Once the programmes are formulated and approved and allocation of funds is made, the institutes/centres should have full authority for incurring expenditure.

The Commission has recommended that in the Five Year Plans the total funding for forest research and education should not be less than 1 per cent of the forestry and logging sector's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product. The possibility of levying an R & D Cess on industrial products of Forest Corporations and forest-based industries or a cess or surcharge on sales tax on forest produce should be explored as a source of finance for forest Research and Development.

The Commission has also made several recommendations regarding the personnel policy and cadre management with a view to improving their efficiency.

III. INTERIM REPORT ON CERTAIN IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF SELECTED EXPORT-ORIENTED AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES

In its Interim Report on Certain Important Aspects of Selected Export-Oriented Agricultural Commodities, the Commission has covered five commodities, namely, tea, coffee, tobacco, pepper and cardamom which together account for about 40 per cent of the total exports of agricultural commodities of the country. The Commission has attempted to make a broad assessment of the export possibilities of these commodities in the light of the likely trends in production and internal demand over a period of time. An endeavour has also been made to identify some of the countries where a high level of demand could emerge for these commodities. Various measures to facilitate exports or to mitigate the influence of factors inhibiting the export drive in respect of these commodities have been discussed in the context of forecasts of the future demand.

In regard to tea, the Commission has suggested that a country-wise assessment of its export possibilities, not only to traditional buyers but also to the new markets, should be made on a continuing basis. It observed that the internal demand for tea has been kept at a low level by fiscal measures to adjust exports to production. The internal demand for tea worked out by the Commission is much higher than that envisaged at present and this suggests an aggressive production programme and a re-orientation of the existing approach. The first essential step is to collect, by means of survey, the basic data in respect of classification of tea plantations into good, medium and others as also the extent of surplus land suitable for growing tea through the co-operation of various tea planters' association and the concerned State Governments. Good plantations with efficient management and high yields should be allowed to expand the area in the normal way. Medium plantations

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should reach the level of good management before they are allowed to expand. Wherever feasible, additional capital and technical assistance necessary to improve yields of medium plantations should be provided. In other plantations, which include a large number of small holdings, a scheme on the pattern of Tea Development Authority in Kenya could be developed and taken up in the co-operative sector. The Commission has laid special stress on the problems of tea estates in Darjeeling, rehabilitation of sick plantations, promotion of internal consumption of lowering of cost of production as also the initiation of a programme of long term development of tea industry. It has also recommended that financial assistance to each plantation should be based on its actual performance and not on State regional average yields and has also suggested the criteria for rendering financial assistance to various types of tea plantations.

In the case of coffee, the Commission has urged that realistic estimates of the demand for coffee in the world markets should be made and that the scope for developing new export markets should be explored. With proper propaganda and retail marketing facilities, the internal demand will also be very much higher than at present envisaged. The programme for production of coffee should take note of these factors.

The Commission is of the view that plantations in the size range 2 to 10 hectares can be made viable if they are provided proper input services and adequate extension support. The problems of small coffee growers of Kerala deserves urgent attention. The Coffee Board should take the leadership in organising Farmers' Service Societies in plantation areas where small holders are thickly congregated. Further, in the new areas coming under plantations and in some of the potential areas indentified by the Board, small holders' coffee plantations may be systematically deve-

loped on the pattern of the Tea Development Authority in Kenya. For rehabilitating small plantations, the Coffee Board should, after a quick survey, arrange to complete, within 2 or 3 years, gap filling in such plantations with clones of high yielding varieties of coffee. Properly run coffee plantations should get the working capital from banks, and the development funds of the Coffee Board should not be allowed to be locked up in working capital.

In regard to tobacco, the Commission feels that, with the general consumption trend towards the low nicotine content of virginia, the tobacco grown on light soil areas with irrigation should find favour from the marketing point of view. It is also essential to safeguard the interests of tobacco producers by making an inroad into the world trade in filler tobacco especially when India has got varieties which could find a place in the world markets provided they are offered at competitive prices. The Commission considers it desirable to have a second string of exports in the public sector which could cut across the monopoly of foreign concerns. The Commission has recommended that the proposed Tobacco Board should be entrusted, *inter alia*, with the task of studying the preferences of the traditional buyers for tobacco with low nicotine content grown in light soil areas and taking steps necessary for improving the export prospects of filler tobacco.

In regard to pepper, the Commission is of the view that the programme for popularisation of Panniyur-1 hybrid, which is not only high yielding but is also suitable for export from the quality angle, should be given high priority. A suitable plan of action for eradication of wilt disease should be expeditiously taken up by the Ministry of Agriculture in consultation with the concerned States. For stepping up exports of pepper, it is essential to collect detailed infor-

mation about the qualities popular in the importing countries and the ruling prices as also the sources of supply so that the competition can be planned accordingly. Due weight should be given to foreign specifications in the Indian grading system so that production of pepper of lower pungency becomes possible in the country. The requirements for meeting the export demand for high pungency pepper are small and could be met without difficulty. The two main considerations in encouraging production should be the yield and quality acceptability for the bulk of the export market. In view of the demand from certain countries for processed pepper products, the economics and possibility of exporting them should be examined.

As far as cardamom is concerned, the Commission feels that infestation by *Katta* disease is responsible for low yields and that urgent steps are necessary to control this disease by uprooting all the affected plants. It has suggested, that the Cardamom Board should undertake a survey of the plantations so as to assess the area infested with *Katta* disease. The area under replantation programme should be stepped up substantially. Suitable packages of practices for adoption by the small farmers need to be devised. The system of growing cardamom as a mixed crop with arecanut and pepper in protected valley locations should be adopted. Efforts should be made to evolve denser varieties of cardamom for export to the Scandinavian countries. Attention should also be given to the manufacture of processed products of cardamom. If the economics of these products is found favourable, the countries to which these products could be exported should be indentified.

12.51hrs.

STATEMENT BY MEMBER RE.
NEW FRIENDS COOPERATIVE
HOUSE BUILDING SOCIETY

MR SPEAKER: Now, Shri Vajpayee to make a statement under direction No 115.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU (Diamond Harbour): On this, I want to make one submission. I had given a privilege motion on this and I was advised by the Secretariat to bring it up under Direction No. 155. Then, later on, of course, I have been ruled out. I would like to get one minute, if you would so please.

MR SPEAKER: Now, Shri S. M. Banerjee.

SHRI JYOTIRMOY BOSU: I just want to tell you something important.

I have got some additional information, very serious information, which indicates that perjury has been committed by the Lt. Governor, and the House has also been misled. In the case of one particular member—I take full responsibility for this statement—the Lt. Governor had taken the initiative to write to the Co-operative Society to give her land. She is Mrs. Shakuntala Masani who is a great friend of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. I have got documentary evidence to produce before the House. I take full responsibility for this statement that the Lt. Governor had written to the Co-operative Society to give her land. I have got the documents in my possession. If you want, I can lay them on the Table of the House. I have got the original documents. Kindly have a look at this. See what is going on.

MR. SPEAKER: No, no; not at this time.

श्री ब्रह्म बिहारी बाजपेयी (ग्वालियर):
अध्यक्ष महोदय, माननीय सदस्य जो मामला