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Planning for Agricultural Development in Himachal Pradesh

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Abstract Himachal Pradesh is predominantly an agricultural State where Agriculture, Horticulture, Fisheries and Animal Husbandry provide direct employment to about 71 percent of the total population. The Agriculture Sector contributes nearly 30 percent of the total state domestic product. Considering its importance to the state economy SWOT analysis is very important for a proper planning for agricultural development in Himachal Pradesh. Diversification of crops by implementing various Developmental Programmes and disseminating the relevant technology can increase productivity, production and profitability of field crops.

Keywords Agricultural Development, Employment, Agro-climatic zones, diversified crops

Introduction

In developing countries like India, the rate of growth of economy is mostly dependent on the Nature of Land utilization and growth of agricultural sector because this sector provides food, labour, raw materials, foreign exchange, market for industrial goods etc. Himachal Pradesh, as its name suggests, lies in the lap of the Himalayas, the temperature in the Pradesh varies according to elevations and

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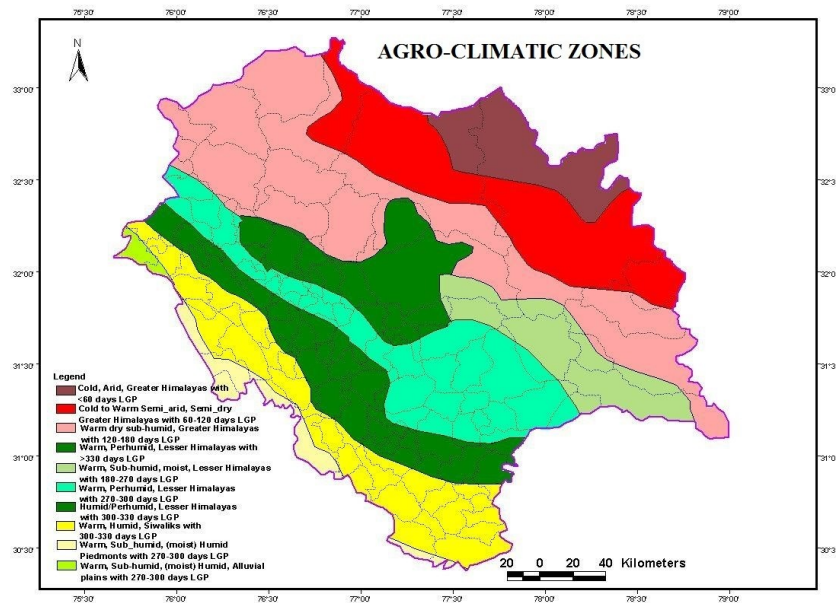
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so do land utilization. Himachal has received attention of the Government for the development activities. But the growth on these areas has remained far below that in plains. This may be due to the peculiar geographical conditions of hilly areas and dynamic land utilization pattern. Keeping in mind the above points, in this study we will critically examine the dynamic nature of land use and land cover pattern of Himachal Pradesh which may be helpful in planning activities in Himachal Pradesh and other hilly areas having similar socio-economic and physical conditions.

The future strategy for development of agriculture and for the well being of farmers has to be based on the existing agro-climatic conditions, resource base etc. These prerequisites are reflected to a large extent in the activities already adopted by farmers or have not yet been adopted but are recommended by scientists and are in a processes of adoption. Sometimes it is observed that a particular activity may be very successful under controlled experimental conditions but is not so successful under uncontrolled field conditions. This happens due to many factors like, improper extension, low use of inputs, other deficiencies in pre and post harvest management. Many of these factors can be adequately tackled through appropriate policy measures.

This section envisages to highlight the specific areas for further boosting these activities as there still exists a lot of untapped potential in terms of productivities, adoption levels, area allocation etc. This has to be achieved through appropriate policy measures. It is in this context the specific recommendations are being made separately for each activity. The reflection of these recommendations in policy document is bound to have desired results on the crops of Himachal Pradesh



Map 1 Agro Climatic Zones, Himachal Pradesh

Off Season Vegetables

- Take suitable measures to augment the irrigated area. The irrigated area in the state is stagnant at 17 per cent for the last many years and it is basic prerequisite for vegetable cultivation.
- The machinery for extension should be geared up for providing latest technology, inputs and market information. The agro-climatic conditions in various pockets of the state are conducive for the cultivation of various exotic vegetables like broccoli etc. These have vast export potential, which can be and should be exploited.
- Various pockets in the State, although suitable for the vegetable cultivation cannot undertake this activity only due to lack of roads. This problem should be looked into.
- The research for making possible the vegetable cultivation in hitherto new areas for this activity should be facilitated. This should also aim at finding out new cropping pattern, crop combinations etc.

Floriculture

- As this is a new activity for farmers of the State, extension services need to be strengthened. The provision for planting material (seeds, seedlings, bulbs etc.) of assured quality and in desired quantity is essential.
- This activity despite having large export potential has not been adopted by majority of potential cultivators. Thus, they need motivation and their fear about risk and uncertainty in production and most importantly marketing of this highly perishable product needs to be allayed. Presently, each farmer has low volume of product, which he has to market in Delhi the nearest market of big size. For this provisions can be created in State Transport Buses, which can transport the flower overnight to Delhi.
- The big companies dealing in flowers and having tested production technology, which can make their own marketing arrangements within the country and abroad should be facilitated. Presently a few companies are operating in the State but it needs further boost so that scale of operation becomes larger.

Other Recommendations

One of the common recommendations for all the profitable enterprises is the requirement of good infrastructure. The roads should be dependable and all weather. This is very crucial for taking benefit of agro-climatic conditions of the State and to avoid wastage, as almost all products are fragile and perishable. Simultaneously good telecommunication network is also a prerequisite for taking advantage of favourable market situations. The continuous inputs from research institutions are mandatory for maintaining the competitiveness of Himachal agriculture. The input delivery system needs streamlining and a strong vigil is necessary to avoid marketing of spurious inputs especially insecticide/pesticides.

Future Emerging Areas in Himachal Pradesh

- High value and low volume crops (Kalazeera, Saffron, Kuth, etc).
- Off-season vegetables (Pea, Cabbage, Capsicum, Cauliflower, Tomato, French beans).
- Forest-based products - medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) like Salam Panja, Patish, Karu, Rattan jot, Somlata, etc.

- Quality Apple.
- Niche-based agricultural crops (Tea, Potato).
- Organic Manure-Based Agricultural Products

SWOT Analysis of Agriculture Sector

The existing status of Horticulture Industry in Himachal Pradesh exhibits a scenario of strengths, weaknesses, risks (threats) as also opportunities in view of the changes that are rapidly taking place in the field of production technologies and marketing opportunities.

Table 1: SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats (Risks)
1. Comparative advantage of the production of almost all kinds of crops-Temperate of sub-Tropical-due to diverse agro-climatic conditions available in the State.	1. Lack of irrigation facilities due to scarce availability of water resources.	1. Ample opportunities for the diversification of agriculture through introduction of high value low volume crops which have so far remained un-exploited due to different constraints, e.g., Kalazeera, Saffron, Kuth, etc. Off-season vegetables (Pea, Cabbage, Capsicum, Cauliflower, Tomato, French beans). Niche-based agricultural crops (Tea, Potato). Organic Manure-Based Agricultural Products	1. Likely increase in the competition from the foreign producers in the agriculture trade even in the domestic market after the World Trade Order becomes fully effective.
2. Comparative advantages in the production of vegetables, seed potato, ginger. These crops are marketed when there is no local supply in the markets of plain area.	2. Small, scattered land holdings and sparsely located population.	2. Opportunities for the improvement of productivity and quality of crops already under cultivation by induction of standardized technologies.	2. Likely increase in the inter state competition for the marketing of agricultural produce due to increasing interest in other Hilly States for the development of agriculture.
3. Vast domestic market for the hill vegetables and other crops due to limited availability of areas for the production of such crops in the country.	3. Lack of micro climatic approach for the development of vegetables and other crops in different areas.	3. Although in the foreseeable future, the domestic market will continue to be the main	3. Likely change in the policy of the Central/State Governments for reduction in import duties and subsidies/support price for agricultural produce as a sequel to the globalize trading regime.
4. Fairly well developed institutional framework for the development of agriculture in the form of research, extension, credit, marketing, pro-	4. Wide spread natural vagaries like drought, hail storms, frost, etc.		
	5. Serious gaps in the application of modern technologies for increasing production and improving quality and productivity.		
	6. Lack of scope for the mechanization of the agriculture for timely execution of various operations and savings in labour costs.		
	7. Difficulty in technol-		

<p>cessing and communication infrastructure.</p> <p>5. Nearness to the main distributing wholesale market at Delhi and other markets in the plain.</p>	<p>ogy dissemination due to difficult terrain, hostile climate, poor communication facilities and sparsely located population.</p> <p>8. High cost of marketing mainly due to high cost of transportation.</p> <p>9. Lack of organised system of marketing through co-operatives.</p> <p>10. Lack of bargaining power with the individual growers due to small volume of produce.</p> <p>11. Inadequate availability of market intelligence to the farmers resulting in imbalance in distribution of produce in different markets.</p> <p>12. Concentration of current efforts for the commercial production of only a few crops like potato, ginger, tomato, cauliflower, cabbage.</p>	<p>plank of agriculture of H.P., yet opportunities do exist for exploring the market in the adjoining countries of SAARC, West Asian region and Middle East countries for the export of Himachal agricultural produce in the future.</p> <p>4. As the levels of pesticide use in Himachal agriculture is quite minimal as compared to other countries, opportunities exist for developing organic production of crops in suitable areas for export marketing by affecting some changes in existing production technologies.</p> <p>5. Opportunities exist for the value addition in the agriculture produce through adoption of improved post harvest management, packing and storage technologies for improving shelf life, reducing losses and increasing the marketing season/period in the year.</p>
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Source: Agricultural Policy in Himachal Pradesh: A Policy Matrix in a Federal System, 2004

Conclusion

The future strategy for development of agriculture and for the well being of farmers has to be based on the existing agro-climatic conditions, resource base etc. Future emerging areas in mountain states like Himachal Pradesh are: High value and low volume crops (Kalazeera, Saffron, Kuth, etc). Off-season vegetables (Pea, Cabbage, Capsicum, Cauliflower, Tomato, French beans). Forest-based products - medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs) like Salam Panja, Patish, Karu, Rattanajot,

Somlata, etc. Quality Apple. Niche-based agricultural crops (Tea, Potato). Organic manure-based agricultural products. There is potential for export of apples, off season vegetables, potato and flowers from Himachal Pradesh. To meet the challenges of new economic policy and WTO there is great need to develop production and marketing infrastructure in the state.

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