

INTEGRATED FARMING IN KERALA: A PARADIGM SHIFT TOWARDS SELF-SUFFICIENCY

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Abstract

The present article unfurls a discussion on the analysis of the performance of the integrated farming in Kerala during the trying times of the Pandemic Covid 19 using secondary data. Kerala is a unique state which had to rehabilitate eight lakh migrant workhands who returned from different parts of the world especially from Gulf Countries. The farming sector was the only solace for the migrant skivvies. The government of Kerala has taken bold steps to rehabilitate them as best as possible. Kerala not being a land for wheat and pulses, depends completely on other states for meeting its consumer demands. Agricultural policies tries to strengthen its production in paddy, vegetables, fruits, spices, yield from animal husbandry and plantation crops with the distribution of high yield breed of plantation crops and livestock to the farmers through Karishka Kendra (Project adopted by the Govt. of Kerala). The constraints of clustering around marginal land holdings and less large agricultural farm cultivation pushed towards integrated farming models. The integrated farming has helped to ensure profitable and sustainable farming method to the farmers at high efficiency and less cost. The rice + fish model has increased the net return income from Rs. 181724 to Rs. 220010 as compared to the basic single crop model. It also showed a high benefit cost ratio of 2.63 and 2.86 among the farmers who practiced rice + fish model and Coconut + Banana + Dairy Cow + Poultry + Goat model respectively. The study estimated that around Rs. 1570.75 Crore is lost due to the lockdown as the supply chain broke out and marketing and storage facilities proved insufficient to tackle the impact of the pandemic over the agricultural sector. The agricultural promotion in a decentralised manner has helped to create an awareness among the people towards self-sufficiency which has clearly being reflected in the online registration number for farming activities. With the support of the Kerala Agricultural University around 1500 kg of seeds and 2 lakh seedlings were sold and other inputs like bio-inputs, lure traps and vermicomposting recorded a sale around 150 tonnes.

Key words: Integrated Farming, decentralised planning, agriculture and allied sector, farm inputs and sustainability

Introduction and Research Problem

There are two major challenges before Indian agriculture today: Ecological and Economical. The conservation of our basic agricultural assets such as land, water and bio-diversity is a major challenge. How to make agriculture sustainable is the challenge

- M. S. Swaminathan

Kerala has occupied an erect position in terms of its human development index, literacy rate and sex ratio and it is showing great potentials for ecotourism and information technology. But the agricultural sector of the state pulls back the economic indicators. The agriculture and allied sector accounted a negative growth of -0.5 percent in 2018-19. In 2018-19, Agriculture including livestock contributed nearly 11 per cent in the state's GDP (*Economic Review, 2019*). In 1955-56, the main economic activity of Keralites was agriculture as 53.1 per cent of the total workforce were engaged in agriculture and related activities. The upward trend in growth of service sector hindered the positive growth or significance of agriculture in the state's economy. But still, Kerala is the major contributor in national output of cash crops like Palmyra (100 %), nutmeg (99.8 %), clove (95.6 %), rubber (84.1%), cardamom (70.2%), pepper (64.8 %) etc. and home gardens play a significant portion of the agricultural sector. About 3.2 million of the 5.2 million households in Kerala has been involved in agricultural and related activities including animal husbandry, homestead farming, micro-enterprises etc. (*NSSO, 2015*). According to the State Planning Board (2011) data, state which had been producing nearly 70 percent of the country's coconut production, dropped into 42 per cent during 2011-12 and later into 27 per cent during 2018-19. And considering the production of rice, state is able to produce only 12 per cent of its total requirement. These data increases the concern over the dependency level of Kerala over other states in terms of food consumption.

Rising population and frequent series of natural calamities paves way to think over strategic adjustments in the agricultural sector in order to feed its population. The status consumer state has always been a threat to the economy of Kerala. And when the entire world was frozen by the quick waves of COVID-19, the state too witnessed a backlash in its supply chain. Questions over the performance of the agricultural sector was reconciled to the policy framework. Agricultural sector in Kerala needed a new phase of highly effective and productive circumference. Even though science and technology related to agriculture have advanced over the past years, it requires more time to get infused into Indian farms. Integrated farming techniques can solve the issue of productivity, as it can use most out of the land and livestock's that farmers possess (*Lee Kheng Heng, 2017*). Integrated farming helps to bring out solution to the issues related to agriculture by adjusting the component interrelations. Kerala has a significant legacy of growing multiple-component farms