

CONSTRAINTS PERCEIVED BY THE TASK FORCE MEMBERS IN THE PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN FOR DECENTRALIZED PLANNING

Peoples' campaign for decentralized planning is an innovative approach being tested in the state of Kerala in India to ensure the initiation and active participation of the general public in the planning and implementation of the development programmes. To facilitate this, elected self-governments are constituted under a three tier administrative set up at village, block and district levels. Massive campaigns were launched for developing the human resources at grass root level and to train the public to get acquainted with the planning tools. Task forces were constituted at all the three levels for different sub-sectors such as agriculture, animal husbandry, industry, transport and education for project formulation and to assist in the implementation process. A number of constraints were being experienced by them in the functioning of the programme (Department of Local Administration, 1997).

In this backdrop, a constraint analysis was undertaken in Kasaragod, the northernmost district of Kerala. From Kanhangad and Nileshwaram blocks of this district, 32 task force members of agriculture sub-sector repre-

sented, fifteen grama panchayats were randomly selected. They were interviewed to collect information on constraints perceived by them in the planning and implementation of development projects. Since the Kerala Agricultural University plays a pivotal role in the agricultural development of Kerala, the respondents were asked to indicate their expectation of the role to be performed by the University in the people's campaign for decentralized planning.

The constraints perceived by the respondents are presented in Table 1 in the rank order of their importance. Of these, non-availability of planting materials and other inputs in time was the most important constraint as perceived by majority (28.1%) of the task force members. It was followed by lack of technical expertise to prepare long-term integrated projects (18.8%). Similar results were obtained by Desai *et al.* (1997), who found that non-availability of improved seeds and other inputs in time and timely guidance from Village Extension Workers were the major constraints faced by the contact farmers in the adoption of new

Table 1. Constraints perceived by the task force members

Sl. No.	Constraints	% of respondents	Rank
1	Non-availability of planting materials and other inputs in time	28.12	1
2	Lack of technical expertise and set up to prepare and implement long term integrated projects at panchayat level	18.75	2
3	Delay in getting technical sanction from Block Level Expert Committee	15.63	3
4	Paucity of time for programme execution	12.50	4
5	Initial confusion on how to prepare the projects	12.50	5
6	Staff shortage in panchayat and line departments	9.38	6
7	Frequent amendment of government orders regarding certain aspects of the programme	9.38	7
8	Beneficiary selection procedure in tenders and time consuming	9.38	8
9	Technical difficulty in educating the mass	6.25	9
10	Non-cooperation of some of the technical staff	6.25	9
11	Tendency to divide funds - ward-wise	6.25	9
12	Demands in the Gramasabha for projects which are not feasible	6.25	9
13	Over emphasis to subsidy	6.25	9
14	Lack of adequate number of volunteers for works related to project preparation, implementation and monitoring	6.25	9
15	General feeling among the public that benefit should be available for each and every one	3.13	10
16	Lack of integration/duplication of central/state/plan projects	3.13	10

Table 2. Role of the Kerala Agricultural University in people's campaign for decentralized planning as expected by the task force members

Sl. No.	Role	% of respondents	Rank
1	To give training on improved agricultural technologies to farmers at grama panchayat level	78.13	1
2	To distribute planting material of high yielding varieties	68.75	2
3	To help the local bodies to assess the feasibility of projects formulated	34.38	3
4	To give technical advice to local bodies	31.25	4
5	To involve and render technical assistance during project implementation	25.00	5
6	To conduct agricultural seminars	12.50	6
7	To evolve technologies capable employment generation in agricultural sector	6.25	7
8	To raise demonstration plots	6.25	8
9	To conduct training in project preparation	3.13	8
10	To adopt grama panchayat & implement model integrated projects	3.13	8
11	To conduct short duration agro clinics/farm camps similar to NSS (National Service Scheme) camps of college students	3.13	8
12	To study the major problems in agricultural sector, grama panchayats wise & give expert suggestions	3.13	8
13	To serve as members of Block Level Expert Committee (BLEC), District Level Expert Committee (DLEC) and Monitoring committee	3.13	8
14	To assist in the establishment of farm libraries	3.13	8

technologies. The other constraints in the order of importance were 'delay in getting technical sanction from Block Level Expert Committee (15.6 %)' and 'paucity of time for programme execution (12.5 %)'. The study brings to light the importance of time factor in the people's campaign for decentralized planning. The planning and implementation of projects can be made more effective if proper scheduling of activities is done and if the time schedule is strictly adhered to. The study also revealed that the task force members expected the Kerala Agricultural University to perform at least 14 roles in the people's campaign for decentralized planning (Table 2) so as to over-

come some of the constraints experienced by them. Majority of the respondents (78.1%) expected the Kerala Agricultural University to give training on improved agricultural technologies to farmers at grama panchayat level. Other important roles expected are 'to distribute planting material of high yielding varieties', 'to help the local bodies to assess the feasibility of projects formulated' and 'to give technical advice to local bodies'. The study indicates that the Kerala Agricultural University can contribute greatly to the success of the programme by ensuring the availability of its technical expertise and improved inputs at the grass root levels.

College of Agriculture
Padannakkad, Kasaragod, Kerala, India

K. Abdul Kareem
M. P. Giridharan

REFERENCES

- Desai, B.R., Girase, K.A. and Patil, R.P. 1997. Constraints faced by contact farmers in adoption of new technology. *Agricultural Extension Review* 9 (2) : 14-16
- Department of Local Administration, 1997. *Janakeeyasuthrana Prasthanam - Padhathi Nirvahana Sahayi* (Malayalam) . Department of Local Administration, Government of Kerala, India. p. 87