

Road-3

Road Map for Agrarian Prosperity in Assam

Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least - Gothe

A road map is important in finding our way very clearly from the labyrinth of endless lanes and reach the destination. However, for moving on a road, one can make his choice – to go on foot or use a vehicle. Again, use of a particular mode of transport depends on various factors especially available resources. The road map is a series of guideposts to keep one headed in the most economically chosen direction. It also gives alternative paths that can be tread with various combinations of cost factors.

The road map has been classified into three segments.

Segment- **A** covers those guide posts which are interdependent and applicable for overall development of Assam. These cover, among other things, a detailed policy from the Government of Assam, GoI's PURA scheme, promotional organisation like NEC.

Segment- **B** covers those guide posts relating to various sectors covered under agriculture and horticulture and discussed in the section immediately after Segment-**A**.

Segment- **C** covers those guide posts relating to people's institutions like FMCs, SHGs/ Joint Liability Groups [JLGs], Farmers' Clubs, Water Users' Associations etc.

Some of the proposals would trigger off overall development of various sectors in the state and accelerate the pace of rural development. In order to make the reader understand the components described, charts wherever considered necessary, have been developed. In describing various components of the road map, a two year horizon [2004-06] has also been adopted.

Segment A

i. Comprehensive agriculture policy - need of the hour

At present, the agriculture development in the State is undertaken through independent measures by different departments. This has resulted in dissipation of efforts and thin spread of surplus, if any, available to the farmers. As mentioned earlier, agriculture encompasses various segments like irrigation, mechanization, animal husbandry,, plantation and horticulture, extension services, land reforms, etc. But, measures taken by the Government continue to focus on different components of agriculture sector.

What is needed is synthesising them into a firm and realistic state policy on agriculture taking into account the developments taking place at the national and international level. Such a policy document should cover among other things :

➤ identifying core sub-sectors for focused development-food sector, horticulture, animal husbandry and fisheries;

- strategies for shifting farmers from mono-cropping to double/ multiple cropping;
- strategies for diversification to plantation and horticulture including commercial plantation of bamboo, allied sectors like animal husbandry and fisheries;
- facilitating adoption of contract farming;
- strategies for developing organic farming;
- bringing post harvest technology;
- encouraging private initiatives in agriculture and allied sectors;
- strengthening physical connectivity in rural areas leading to development of social, economical and technological connectivities;
- development of markets for agri products-Nationally/Internationally;
- repositioning FMCs; and
- strategies for developing and using people centred organizations like SHGs, Water Users' Associations, Farmers Clubs, etc.
- strategies for using Information, Communication Technology (ICT) for developing a suitable data base of land records, provision of extension services, etc.

Realising the need for such a policy, the GoA has come out recently, with their Agricultural Policy. The Policy should ultimately lead to commercialization of agriculture by instilling confidence among the investors both national and international. A chart covering various segments under agriculture, sectors allied to agriculture and horticulture is given in Exhibit-1.