

Executive Summary

The over-arching objective of Agriculture Department was to ensure comprehensive agricultural growth in the State in terms of both production and productivity as also farmers' welfare. We conducted audit of Agriculture Wing of Agriculture Department covering the period 2006-11 during April to July 2011 with the broad objective of assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Chief Controlling Officer (CCO) in operationalising the State Agriculture Policy 2008 (SAP) for achieving the afore-stated broad objective of the Department. We also looked at the robustness and efficacy of the strategies adopted to achieve these policy objectives.

We are of the opinion that the CCO did not attach adequate importance to planning as an instrument of development and growth of agriculture in the State. Audit noticed that despite announcement of State Agriculture Policy (SAP) in 2008, the Department was moving without direction and focus in the absence of any long term planning. While perspective plan was not prepared despite its requirement under the State Policy and instructions of the Chief Minister, the Annual Agriculture Plans were prepared centrally at the Directorate level without consulting District Agriculture Plans prepared by the Planning and Co-ordination Department which were then routinely approved by the CCO. Bottom-up approach in planning taking into account local needs, knowledge and problems to bridge the existing gap in availability of resources and capacity building etc., was largely missing.

(Paragraphs 2.2 and 2.4)

Though the State had irrigation potential for 30.36 lakh hectares, the fact that only 20.85 lakh hectares (69 per cent) were under crop cultivation was an area of concern. Jalaniidhi scheme for captive irrigation virtually failed in Jagatsinghpur district due to irregular execution of shallow tube wells in saline affected Gram Panchayats (GPs).

(Paragraph 3.3)

Though the seed replacement rate (SRR) of the major crop i.e., rice, gradually increased, the productivity decreased and was far below the national average. Similarly, agricultural productivity of other major crops like pulses and oil seeds remained much below the national average.

(Paragraphs 3.4 and 4.1.1)

There was less supply of quality seeds to the growers than what was required by them. Instances of sale and distribution of sub-standard seeds resulting in crop loss and consequent compensation payment, sale of subsidised seeds to persons without permits, low fertiliser consumption and inefficient organic farming came to our notice during audit.

(Paragraphs 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.3.2, 4.3.3 and 4.3.4)

Opening seed sales centres in all 6234 Gram Panchayats (GPs) was one of important strategies in SAP 2008; these centres were opened only in 1625 GPs affecting the objective of doorstep supply of seeds to the farmers.

(Paragraph 4.1.7)

Non-functioning of soil testing laboratories, slow pace of construction of seed storage godowns and agricultural market yards, neglect in establishment of agro service centres particularly in the backward districts, delay in commissioning of seed processing facilities, seed certification and testing facilities etc. also came to light during audit.

(Paragraphs 4.1.4, 4.1.5, 4.1.6, 4.3.1, 5.3.2 and 6.2.6)

As against the requirement of buildings for Farm Information Advisory Centres in each of the 314 Blocks, construction of 200 such buildings alone were planned and a mere 61 buildings completed as of April 2012.

(Paragraph 6.3.3)

Large scale vacancies of Village Agriculture Workers (44 per cent) and Assistant Agriculture Officers(46 per cent) who are at the cutting edge of all extension activities in the Department affected agriculture extension service in the field like timely training of farmers, demonstration of modern technology and dissemination of package of improved agricultural operations.

(Paragraph 7.1)

There was inadequate monitoring at the CCO level over the subsidy management and seed procurement by Agricultural Promotion and Investment Corporation of Odisha Limited (APICOL), Institute on Management of Agricultural Extension (IMAGE) and Odisha State Seed Corporation (OSSC) exclusively set up for such purposes.

(Paragraphs 4.1.3 and 5.3.1)

Research activities and infrastructural development works undertaken by the Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology were not monitored despite release of ₹ 14.59 crore under Rashtriya Krishi Vikash Yojana (RKVY) during 2007-11. Besides, the soil fertility map required for formulation of nutrient management strategy could not be prepared although funds were not a constraint.

(Paragraphs 6.2.3 and 8.5)

The required annual concurrent evaluation of implementation of NFSM scheme in the State was not undertaken since the implementation of the scheme in 2007-08. Despite instruction of State Level Sanctioning Committee (May 2010), the third party evaluations on the execution of RKVY projects were yet to be received.

(Paragraph 6.4)

Budgetary as well as financial controls were found to be unsatisfactory as many instances of non-compliance with the provisions of Odisha Budget Manual, financial, treasury and service codes by test checked Drawing and Disbursing Officers (DDOs) were noticed.

(Paragraph 8.2)

Internal Audit remained handicapped with 44 per cent vacancies at the level of auditors and without Internal Audit Manual being prescribed at all.

(Paragraph 8.6)

Monitoring of the performances of DDOs as well as inspection of field offices by the Controlling Officer (CO) and CCO was inadequate and ineffective.

(Paragraph 8.8)