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Policy Analysis of SAMRUDHI (Agriculture Policy, Odisha 2020)

Abstract:

Odisha as a state is largely an agrarian state where 61.8% of its total workforce is engaged with Agriculture. 18% of the state's GDP comes from the contribution of this work force. Odisha's major agricultural and allied produce revolves around Paddy, Milk, Brinjal and Meat. As per the Government of Odisha, state's agricultural GDP doubled in real terms between 2001 to 2016 with average annual growth rate of about 4.5%. The average monthly income of the farmer which was earlier around Rs1,062 during 2001-02 got increased to RS 7,731 as per the report shared by NABARD. Still, large numbers farmers in Odisha are languishing in poverty and are falling into the debt trap of the local money lenders. Even though the Farmer's income grew fast in the period mentioned above, the real potential of the agriculture sector in Odisha has never been realized. In the year 1996, the state Government's policy accorded the status of industry to agriculture. Since then, there were two other agriculture policies were drafted subsequently in the year 2008 and 2013, but the economic, social, technological and political thrust in order to promote farmers as Agripreneurs were largely missing. Keeping the above findings in mind the Government of Odisha introduced the new agriculture policy 2020 known as SAMRUDHI which is aiming to focus on the overall well-being of the farmers, resource optimization, uses of advanced technology in the Agri sector etc. Present paper will analyze the present policy and share its observations by taking into account the historical back-ground of the agriculture sector in Odisha.

Introduction:

Odisha being largely a rural and agrarian economy, it makes all the more important for the state to have a policy that directly impacts well-being of the farmers engaged in Agriculture and allied sector. State has majorly three wings under its agriculture department which looks after the over-all health of the agriculture sector such as Directorate of Agriculture, Directorate of Horticulture and Directorate of Soil Conservation and Watershed development (GoO, 2020). In addition to this there are other organizations like Odisha State Seeds Corporation (O.S.S.C), Odisha Agro Industries Corporation (O.A.I.C), Agriculture Promotion and Investment Corporation of Odisha Limited (APICOL), Odisha State Seed and Organic Products Certification Agency (OSSOPCA), Institute on Management of Agricultural Extension (IMAGE) and Odisha Cashew Development Corporation are working under the above mentioned major departments out of which Directorate of Agriculture being the oldest one functioning since 1945. The large pool of departments engaged in the sector justify why Agriculture in Odisha has always been an sector of importance, however the

condition of the farmers still not improved the way it was intended for .Women farmers are also about 48 % of the total work force engaged in the sector . Earlier state government's policies like 1996 ,2008 and 2013 agriculture policies did focus on agro-processing ,increasing farmer's income ,integrated farming ,organic farming ,crop diversification rainfed farming contract farming ,post-harvest management etc ,but on the ground the actual realization of the policies could not happen as expected .Since a large swathe of workforce engaged in agriculture in Odisha ,monitoring mechanism as well as scheme's reachability to the target audience has always been a challenge . The present policy named as SAMRUDHI did identify the gaps and largely focuses on the well-being of the farmers through increase in income, robust monitoring of the implementation of the schemes ,augmentation of present schemes like KALIA (Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation) ,resource optimization and advanced technological intervention etc ,however largely missed out on effective integration action plan with all the 33 units of KVKs in the state ,robust feedback loop system, skilled grievance management executives ,establishing mass scale research institutions. Though the present policy mentioned about the strategy to tackle the above-mentioned issues, however the strategy seems to be missing many evaluation-based points.

Objective:

Major objective of the paper is to analyze the gaps in the policy as regards effective implementation on the ground and efficacy in the departmental integration in achieving the larger goal of small and marginal farmers' well-being.

Salient Features of SAMRUDHI: -

The State Government of Odisha with a vision to harness the true potential of Agriculture sector which can be sustainable aiming at continuous increase in the farmers' incomes and welfare while ensuring nutritional security, launched the Odisha Agriculture Policy 2020 named as SAMRUDHI (GoO ,2020). Objective of the policy was broadly about ensuring continuous growth of Famers' income by ensuring sustainable, stable, scalable agriculture growth followed by making the growth process inclusive of small, marginal and landless famers (GoO,2020).

Following are the major components of the policy such as:

Leveraging Science and Technology

Adaptation to climate change

Markets Linking

Resource optimization

Upgrading existing infrastructure

Diversification of crops to higher value

Human Resource upgradation

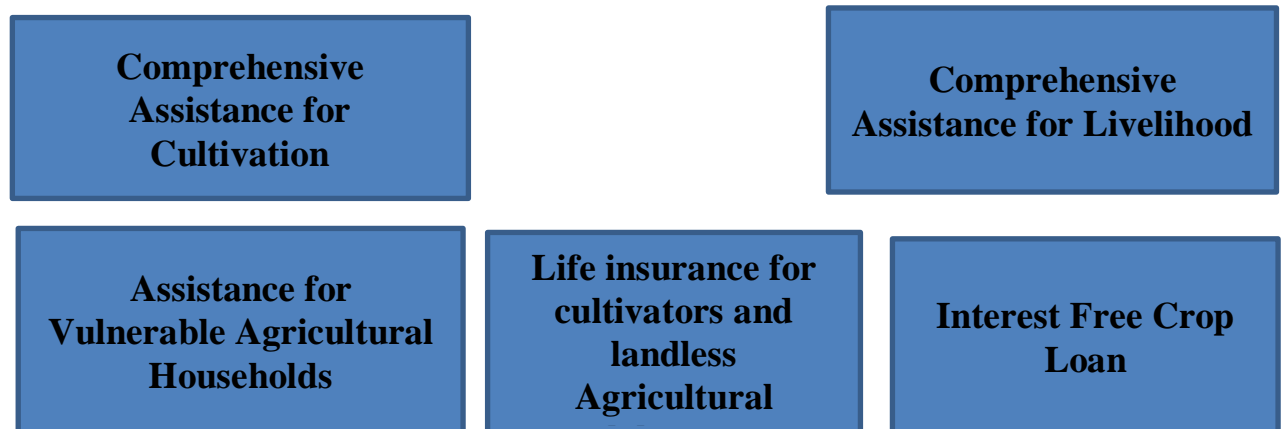
Strengthening Institutions (GoO,2020).

As per the Government the present policy is a shift in approach against all the previous ones as it is digressing from the practices of working in silos rather than taking simultaneous reforms under broader strategies like building an echo system where interlinking of inputs, production and markets can be established, focusing on sustainable increase in yields of paddy and diversification to high value crops ,promoting processing units ,encouraging ecologically sensitive use of water ,soil and land ,creation of value chains of livestock ,dairy ,poultry & vegetables ,Focusing on aggregation of farmers in FPOs ,Reduction in wastage , thrust on pre and post-harvest management ,introduction of new technology ,leveraging central schemes and building on existing schemes like KALIA .

Salient features KALIA:

KALIA (Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation) scheme of the Government of Odisha was one of the highly touted schemes launched in 2018 aiming to deliver unconditional cash transfer directly to small and marginal farmers ,sharecroppers ,landless agri-households having a target of 75 lakh beneficiaries which amounts to almost 92% of the cultivators in the state (GoO ,2020) .

The scheme has broadly 5 major segments attached to it like



Assistance for Cultivation:

Under the scheme financial assistance of around Rs 25,00/ per family over five seasons was earmarked for the small, marginal and landless farmers against the purchase of farm inputs.

Assistance for Livelihood:

The scheme has a provision to provide financial assistance of Rs 12,500 to each landless Agricultural Household for agricultural allied activities.

Assistance for Vulnerable Agricultural Households:

The scheme will provide financial assistance of Rs 10,00 pe family per year to enable landless and vulnerable cultivators to take care of their sustenance.

Life Insurance for Cultivators and Landless Agricultural Laborers :

The scheme provides benefits of life insurance of Rs 2,00,000 for a minimum premium amount of Rs 330 where Government of Odisha will share 50% of the premium followed by personal accident cover of Rs 2,00,000 against a nominal amount deposition of Rs 12 where 50% of the premium will be shared by the state. These are meant for the age group falling between 18 to 50. People falling into the age bracket of 51 to 70 years the entire premium of Rs 12 will be borne by the Government.

Interest Free Crop Loan:

The Gram Panchayat identified vulnerable landless laborers, cultivators, share croppers and agricultural families will be provided crop loan amounting to Rs 50,000 with 0% interest.

The present policy SAMRUDHI is aiming to build upon the KALIA scheme through a new approach like streamlining last mile connectivity, sanitization and upgradation of land record, focusing on spreading awareness, regular monitoring and evaluation followed by awarding the successful KALIA beneficiaries (GoO -DoAFE ,2020) .

Findings on KALIA Scheme :

The highly publicized KALIA scheme which was even termed as better than Loan-waiver went into the rough weather within 2 years of its launch due to poor records on targeted beneficiaries. Implementation of the scheme faced criticism from the opposition leaders as the Government was unable to satisfy the queries raised against exact numbers of beneficiaries due to lack of records on numbers of small & marginal, landless farmers and sharecroppers.

Since the scheme was launched near to the General and State assembly election which happened in the year 2019, it was seen as to woo the gullible voters from the farm communities. The scheme was launched in haste and owing to poor implementation many beneficiaries including small & marginal farmers, sharecroppers, landless laborers missed out on getting the benefits where as many ineligible individuals got the benefits which was later confirmed by the Government. The State Government also initiated investigation into the fake beneficiaries so as to return the money to the state exchequer. The State Government suffered major financial loss owing to which they decided to merge with the central Government's PM Kisan SAMMAN Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme. The Government has now reduced the financial assistance to Rs4000 as against earlier Rs 10000 due to the merger of both the schemes. Since no criteria was mentioned in the scheme, many share croppers were left out of receiving any benefits. Later the State Government promised to add additional 25 lakh beneficiaries including share croppers to avail the scheme. Only time will say if the real beneficiaries are availing the scheme or not.

Observations and Suggestions:

Policies like SAMRUDHI and Schemes like KALIA of the State Government did try to mitigate the gaps in the agriculture and allied sectors in the state. Odisha as a state is having a conducive environment for multiple crops to grow, but sometimes marred by climatic conditions like cyclones, frequent floods, frequent draughts. The state is divided in 10 agro-climatic zones. Rs 75,800 crore worth of agriculture and allied output was produced in Odisha out of which more than 50% contributed by Paddy (24.4% of the value), meat (11.3% of the value), milk (9.1% of the value) and brinjal (6.8% of the value) (GoO,2020). Even after so many policies and schemes implemented in the state, Odisha is still heavily dependent on neighboring states like West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and many other states to meet the demand of not only vegetables like Potato, Onion also other allied products. Its time for the policy makers to do a detailed analysis on the conditions prevailing on the ground. Instead of considering Lab to Land approach, time has come to go the reverse way to sense the issues being faced by the farmers.

In Odisha there are 33 numbers of KVK (Krishi Vigyan Kendra) spreading almost across all the Districts. State must do a thorough analysis on SMS (Subject matter experts) across all the KVKs whether they are well equipped with requisite resources or not .KVK in general through providing technology inputs to farmers ,training ,awareness does several farm support activities and there are subject experts in the domain of Agri-science ,Agri -

engineering ,Horticulture ,Seed Technology ,Animal Husbandry ,Home science .Many a time it was noticed there were lack of subject experts available in the KVK in all the above mentioned domain at one time . This should have been given due importance to facilitate all the schemes on the ground through proper awareness. The grievance addressing solution is not adequate in Odisha. Even most of the websites are outdated and non-functional most of the time as upgradation was not done against them. A robust feedback loop system should be in place, though the present policy did mention about usage of advanced technology in assessing and providing quick solution based on feedback from the ground. Use of compact agri machineries and availing local service solution is a major constraint in Odisha . The policy should strongly focus on this to empower farmers in using easy operable Agri-equipment to reap the maximum benefits without wasting time against going to distance places for servicing. This can be taken into consideration in the policy. Since the policy is aiming to create more numbers of Agri-preneurs, its time to have more numbers of research institutions focusing also on skill developments . Assessing the youth engagements in the Agri-sector can also help the Government to make proper strategy to create a startup echo system dedicated for Agri-sector. A Share market like portal can be thought of giving the exact updates on the prices of the produce and brining the buyer and the seller on level playing field though Central Government E-Nam is trying the same model. Like other states Odisha is also infamous for debt trap issues faced by small and marginal farmers from the local money lenders . Professor of IIM Ahmedabad and visiting faculty of ISB Prof Sukhpal Singh has highlighted Reverse interest trapping methods being adopted in some of the southern regions of Odisha which is hardly known to anyone. The Government should take cognizance of such dangerous practices which may prove to be detrimental for the Farmers' wellbeing.

Its high time the monitoring mechanism as mentioned in the scheme should be given due importance to see actual realization of well-intended schemes on the ground.

Conclusion:

The Government of Odisha's Agriculture policy 2020 named as SAMRUDHI is yet another attempt by the state government to reform the agriculture and allied sector in Odisha. The state can also leverage upon the Central Government's three reformist Farm laws launched in 2020 and also on various beneficiary schemes intended for the Agri-sector. As I have mentioned earlier, sometimes we missed out on the assessment of the failure of the earlier policies. Timely assessment and evaluation of policies and a Land to Lab approach may help effective implementation of the policies on the ground. Cold storages in Odisha are in shambles as most of them are un-operational leading to wastage of post-harvest. Since the maintenance

cost of these cold storages are higher than the original cost of having it, most of the time lack of effort in this segment was noticed. The present scheme has a mention on having increasing numbers of cold-storages and proper pre and post -harvest management strategy in place. It should not reflect only on paper. A proper cohesion among Agri research experts, political leadership of the state and the Agriculture institutions is a must to see an effective policy implementation mechanism in place for the Agri -sector in Odisha .

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