CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
Agriculture is the lifeblood of a nation. A strong foundation of agriculture is a pre-requisite for rapid economic and social development in India. The development of agriculture and the well being of farmers also depends on a proper and efficient functioning of agricultural markets in India. Marketing is one of the factors stimulating agricultural production of an area. An efficiently organised market system not only facilitates the proper and smooth disposal of what the farmer produces but also acts as a catalyst to stimulate higher production. It also protects the small and marginal farmers from the exploitation of middlemen. It is, therefore, very important to provide a well developed marketing infrastructure to optimise the dividends of the farmers. If the farmer is not reasonably sure of fair treatment in the market where he sells his produce, his incentive to put in additional effort to increase output is blunted. If the standard of living of the farmer has to be raised and his economic position improved, he is not only to be helped to produce more, but also to be assisted in the disposal of his surplus at remunerative price, with minimum cost. The marginal and small farmers
who cannot afford to come to the market yard because of their economic disability resort to forced sales in the villages and to the unorganised agencies from which they borrow loans and advances. In other words, the produce is sold soon after harvest due to the prevalence of poverty, rural indebtedness, unsatisfactory nature of communication, lack of holding power and the need for finance. This leads to glut and depresses prices during harvest season. In the absence of a well developed and scientifically organised marketing system, the production efforts are likely to suffer. Hence, the significance of 'Marketing' in agricultural development is beyond debate. The development of agricultural marketing is essential for modernising agriculture. Through a well developed rural marketing, it is possible to develop the rural economy. Therefore, development of marketing in rural areas assumes paramount importance in the context of agricultural development. In the post independence period, there has been a distinct improvement in the conditions of agricultural markets in India. The concept of co-operative marketing, regulated markets etc., are some of the developments in providing integrated marketing facilities.
The regulated markets have created favourable conditions for the farmer to dispose of his marketable surplus without much exploitation. They have enabled a section of the farmers to get a remunerative price for their produce.

It sounds paradoxical that despite being predominantly an agricultural region, agricultural marketing has not developed to the full extent in Anantapur district. The infrastructural facilities for organised marketing do not exist in full form.

The empirical findings of the study have been summarised at various points throughout the preceding chapters. It may now be possible to combine these into a more orderly interpretation.

FINDINGS:

The following are the major findings of the present study.
The data on the age distribution of respondents reveals that a majority of the respondents were middle aged and hence, their experience would lead to innovations in agriculture. It was noticed that caste has a significant bearing on the position of the farmer. A majority of the small and marginal farmers were illiterates and hence, prone for economic exploitation.

Our study inferred that the big and medium farmers were in an advantageous position and most of the benefits of irrigation and commercialization had not percolated to the marginal and small farmers in an appreciable manner.

Our analysis of the farm and non-farm assets indicates that the big farmers with economic and viable landholdings possessed more farm and non-farm assets than the marginal and small farmers.

Commercial banks together with co-operatives, constitute the main institutional agencies that have been
catering to the agricultural credit needs in Anantapur district. Our study suggests to reshape crop loan policies. These loans should be advanced for irrigated as well as unirrigated crops. Besides, full entitlement of crop loans should be confined to small and marginal farmers only, to ensure loans for more needy categories of borrowers. Large and medium farmers can as well tap some of their resources, progressively, to finance their farm operations.

CROPPING PATTERN AND YIELD LEVELS:

Our analysis reveals that the small and marginal farmers despite the problems of inadequate finance and other inputs could bring more land under cultivation and raised commercial crops like Groundnut, Sunflower etc. It was proved that the small and medium farmers were more efficient than the big farmers in terms of land utilisation.

There were also variations in the yield levels/cost of production of various categories of farmers. The size of landholdings had a significant bearing on the yield/cost levels. The yield levels varied positively with the size of holding.
The study elicits that the prices of agricultural products, of inputs and of manufactured goods have a bearing on the type of crops, the farmer will grow and the proportion of land he devotes to different crops etc. Not only the level of prices, but also changes in price affect the decisions as to what to grow and how much.

The size of operational holding is another crucial factor. There is great scope for raising the production manifold over the present level by initiating several institutional and technological changes.

DISPOSAL PATTERN:

The size of land holdings, yield levels, transport, financial background etc. have a bearing on the disposal pattern. Our study revealed that a majority of the marginal and small farmers preferred selling their agricultural products in their villages due to economic constraint and meagre marketable surplus. It was also noticed that a sizeable number of marginal farmers sold their produce to the local money lenders well before harvesting with a view to clearing off their old debts.
The importance of bullock carts in transporting the produce was slowly declining except in case of marginal farmers.

The unorganised institutions such as commission agents, fellow farmers, local traders etc. play a crucial role in providing marketing information. The role of Agricultural Marketing Committee in this regard has not been very effective. Majority of the respondents were unaware of marketing rules and regulations due to widespread prevalence of illiteracy.

The agricultural marketing system prevailing in the sample villages was characterised by a considerable degree of diversity. The available methods of grading and standardisation, storage facilities, infrastructural facilities, mode of payment, unhelpful attitude of the commission agents and purchasers, market deductions etc. hampered the economic interests of the farmers.

MARKETING EFFICIENCY:

It was found that the respondent's age, family
structure and cropping pattern have no significance or association in terms of marketing efficiency. But the factors like education, caste, landholdings etc. influenced the marketing efficiency at the grass root level. The steps such as Adult Education, preferential treatment to small and marginal farmers in the matter of credit, better tenurial system, enlargement of the size of very small farms. etc. increase marketing efficiency and thereby ensure better dividends to the farmers at the grass root level.

CONCLUSION:

An effective approach to the problems of agricultural marketing in this drought prone region requires a clear and comprehensive understanding of the district's agricultural structure, the pattern of land utilisation, the combination and relative importance of crops.

Secondly, in the marketing system for agricultural commodities, the intervention of and interaction between a large number of agencies, organisations and functionaries take place. The well being of the system can be ensured
only by adequate man-power planning at all these levels. The potential for greater market efficiency will also need to be identified and measures that will require to be set out. To be able to effectively attend to all the critical issues of agricultural marketing, the need of the hour is for 'marketing man-power' having the requisite expertise in relevant areas.

Our final conclusion is that the malpractices are not unusual despite a notework of vigilance. In many instances the farmer is at the mercy of the unscrupulous traders or brokers. He has neither storage facilities nor an access to reliable market data. He is often exploited to such an extent that arbitrary deductions are made for alleged poor quality, false measurements, unwarranted commissions, etc. It can thus be inferred that a farmer at the grass root level needs mass media to know the prevailing prices of different agricultural commodities. He should be educated to fare better in this field work.

SUGGESTIONS:

An adequate and timely finance as a short term
advance is to be made available to the farmers. This will provide immediate financial support to the grower to meet the pressing cash demands, increase the holding capacity of the farmer, enable the farmer to avoid distress sales. This would facilitate direct sales between the purchaser and seller without intermediaries and multiply the arrivals in the market yards.

The organizational pattern of Marketing Department has to be changed in size, number and hierarchy with the increase in number and size of the markets. An effort is to be made for an orderly marketing system wherein efficiencies in terms of operation, and pricing are of a high order.

Best improvement in the present marketing systems can come through an indirect approach fostering better marketing methods, better storage and transportation facilities, education and training of agents, quick and accurate market intelligence services and well coordinated institutional arrangements.

A suitable structure of support price for various
agricultural commodities adjusted from time to time in the light of cost of production has to be evolved so as to ensure a fair return to the farmers. Arrangements should also be made for procurement of agricultural produce if the prices fall below that level.

The measures such as consolidation of land holdings, adult education, special financial support to weaker sections must be taken note of for enhancing the marketing efficiency of farmers at the grass root level.

The study suggests setting up of Marketing Centre as an apex body to streamline the entire gamut of agricultural marketing. It has to formulate, implement and monitor policies on a continuing basis.