CHAPTER- II

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF ASSAM
Assam is a state rich in natural resources. Different ethnic groups display distinct living styles of their own. Although agriculture is the livelihood of the different ethnic groups, the agricultural practices of the different groups are not identical. The Assamese people are traditionally more accustomed to Kharif crops while the immigrant Muslim communities especially of the char areas are more interested in Rabi crops. The Nepalese give interest to cattle rearing and dairying farming. A section of the people belonging to SC category practice fish culture. Tribal population is accustomed to pig farming culture. The topography and climatic conditions of Assam allow the people to go far different agricultural practices.

The climate of Assam is cool but humid. Assam receives heavy rainfall during the monsoon season and annual rainfall of Assam varies between 2432mm to 2585mm (Statistical Hand Book. 2008, p82).

According to 2001 census report the total population of Assam was 2, 66, 55,528. The growth rate of population in the state was higher than the growth rate of population in India during the period 1991 to 2001.

The transport and communication system of Assam is not much developed. As per Statistical Hand Book, 2008, the total road length of Assam was 37700km in 2007-08 of which 2754 km were National Highway, 3134km were state Highway, 4414km were major district road 26221km were rural and 1177km were urban roads. The total length of railway lines is 3756.64km. Of which 2172.44km is broad gauge and
1496.72km. is meter gauge and 87.48km is narrow gauge. The Inland water transport is not so developed in Assam. Besides the Central Inland Water Transport Corporation (CIWTC), some other private services provide ferry services at 73 ghats on the Brahmaputra and the Barak rivers (Statistical Hand Book 2008, pp207&221).

So far as in air transport is concerned, there are eight airports in Assam including the Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi International (LGBI) Airport.

Power is the basic infrastructural requirement for the growth of industries as well as overall economy of the state. The Assam State Electricity (Supply) Act, 1948, has been taking prime responsibility of integrated power development of the state. The Assam State Electricity Board (ASEB) and presently its successors companies-Assam Electricity Power Generation Corporation Ltd.(APGCL), Assam Electricity Grid Corporation Ltd. (AEGCL) and Assam Power Distribution Corporation Ltd. (APDCL) are the Govt. organisation for generation, transmission and for distribution of power. Assam has its total installed generation capacity of 401.5M.W in 2007-08 against total demand of 868.9MW. In order to meet the domestic demand, the state continued to purchase power from other sources. The consumption of electricity in the State has increased to 2525.526MU during 2007-08 as against 2243.981MU during 2006-07. There are 25,124 numbers of villages in the state as per 2001 census. Out of these
numbers of villages had been electrified as on 31.03.2008 (Statistical Hand Book, Assam, 2008, pp203 to 206).

Finance is the major constraint for the development of industrial and agricultural sectors. The Farmers require finance for both short and long period. The banking facilities of the state have increased manifold during the last two and a half decade. The widening network of Scheduled Commercial Banks have been playing a crucial role in the mobilization of savings and investments in the state according to the quarterly statics of deposits and credit of Scheduled Commercial Banks of Reserve bank of India, March 2008, the number of reporting Bank offices of all Scheduled Commercial Banks in Assam stood at 1317, of which 403 were Regional Rural Banks (Statistical Hand Book, Assam, 2008, p237).

The Banking network operating in the country as well as in the state have been grouped under (i) State Bank of India and its Associates (228), (ii) Nationalized Banks (645), (iii) Foreign Banks (1), Regional Rural Banks (403) and (v) other Scheduled Commercial Banks (40). (Statistical Hand Book, Assam, 2008, p237). These groups of Banks have a distinctive role to play in the economic scenario of the State and Central Sector. All India level financial Institutions also take part for the development of industrial and other important sectors of the country. Among them, the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD) has assumed the biggest responsibility in helping the rural
farmers with credit in the recent time.

Plants and animals sustain human life. Ever since man appeared on the surface of the earth, he has been living mainly by exploiting the plant and animal resources both directly and indirectly. Direct dependence on plant and animal resources is more pronounced in Assam, where subsistence agriculture is the mainstay of economy. Rearing animals along with cultivating small patches of land has, therefore, become an important activity of the farmers of the region. The main animals reared in Assam are cow, buffalo, goat, pig and poultry. Sheep and horse are also reared but to a lesser extent.

Assam has more than one half a million pigs (15.43lakh as per 17th livestock census, 2003). These animals reared with least care and in a primitive manner. But there is a great demand for pig and its meat in North East India. As pigs are traditionally reared by the tribal communities so the number of pig is more in Kokrajhar, Karbi Anglang, North Cacher and Dhemaji Districts. Efforts have been made in recent years to raise pig in modern scientific method. For this some model pig farms have been started. One such farm is located at Khanapara and the other at Diphu. More productive and larger varieties of pigs, such as Hampshire, Large White Yorkshire, Middle White Yorkshire etc. have been brought to Assam to produce hybrid pig. Hybridization centers have been started under national piggery project at Joydihing in Lakhimpur district.
Piggery development scheme is a centrally sponsored scheme and assists to strengthen the existing two pig Breeding Farms in Assam. The Farmers and the self Help Group (SHG) members are covered under this programme as its target group. Of late the pig breeding farms have started producing piglets and distributing among the SHGs/Farmers of the State. Interested Farmers/SHG members will be trained on “Scientific Management and Rearing of Pigs”. Moreover, a “Piggery plus scheme” is being introduced with the financial assistance from SBI with a vision to establish a pig village.

The whole of the world has given prior importance in piggery development. The World Bank assisted our state for proper development of pig farming. This assistance is presently utilized at Umrangshu in Karbi Anglong District which has been satisfactorily working and progressing.

To bring excellence in pig production in the NE region, producing 25 per cent of country's total pig population, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has come up in 2002 with the National Research Centre on Pig at Rani, 12 kilometres away from the LGBI Airport.

The centre will conduct innovative research in order to provide technology backstopping for enhanced pork production, employment generation and poverty reduction among socially and economically weaker sections through the medium of pig husbandry. (www.highbeam.com)
This is the only pig research centre in India. In this institution research would be done on Nutrition, Breeding, Food, Health and Reproduction. Presently, research works have been started on Nutrition and on Health.

Pig Farming is an important livelihood under small animal development scheme in the NER. NER has about 20% of all India pig population. Assam is the leading state in the NER with the highest pig population, occupying the second position in India. (Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2006, p83)

Pig rearing and pork production remained neglected in India because of the unimpressive practice of management by the traditional pig farmers. In Assam pig rearing had gained popularity in the early seventies with the introduction of exotic breeds of pig. The piggery department of the state Govt. and the agricultural university takes some important steps to improve the swine industry on the scientific line. Different financial institutions have been established in recent days, which provide financial assistance against feasible schemes. The state government has also started providing financial assistance in the form of loan, subsidy etc. to the pig farmers. Moreover the Government has been organizing training programmes for the farmers to make them well apprised of the modern techniques and methods.

Pig farming has already been developed to some extent but from the
commercial point of view there is much scope for improvement.

REFERENCES


http://www.highbeam.com