Chapter IX
Prospects of resource mobilisation by institutions.

9.1 Prospects.

Inspite of various constraints and bottlenecks for resource mobilisation in the agricultural sector, agriculture can be developed in the district, if coordinated efforts of agencies are utilised in an optimal manner. The small size of the holdings is the main drawback of Indian agriculture, but this, by itself, cannot prevent our agriculture from developing. Japan, for example, has made much progress in agriculture in spite of the small size of her farms." The average size of farms in Japan is only 0.84 hectare compared to nearly 2 hectares in India. Yet the average output per acre of both wheat and rice there, is about as good if not better than in some of the best managed large farms in this country."¹

The small farms' propensity to adopt improved agricultural practice is not less. The Programme Evaluation Organisation of Planning Commission of India once remarked that, the percentage of small farmers adopting improved cultivation practices was appreciably higher than the percentage adopting improved implements. Mentioning the resurvey of 18 bench mark survey blocks and 31 Community Development Blocks in 1958-59, the Public Evaluation Committee found that

even in those early years, the small farms i.e. farms with less than 2 hectares of land holding size accounted themselves better than the large farms in adopting fertilisers.¹

The roots of the small farmers' agricultural problems may be solved by the institutional supports to the farmers in the utilisation of the farm level resource endowments to adopt the new technology.² Along with this, private profit motive force is an essential factor for the encouragement of the small farms. And, therefore, in Japan the yield per unit of land of the tiny farms is the highest in the world.³

Micro planning is essential because different areas are characterised by different geographical, social and institutional features. In a vast country like India any overall standard policy prescription may not be equally effective in all the areas. Besides, a micro-level planning will help to study the various problems in their depth. Distribution of inputs including credit requires intimate knowledge of the village households, the farming technique, their economic behaviour etc. Only an intimate and indepth knowledge of those different facets of farming life would help to bring out effective policy and their successful operation.

¹ Asok Mitra-Delivery and distribution of inputs of agriculture to small farmers in the book of Waheeduddin Khan(ed)- Op. Cit. PP.47-49. P.E.O of Planning Commision of India,Nov.1969 publication, No.68, Table 5.8
9.2 Agriculture Department.

The Agriculture Department of the Government of Assam has a great responsibility for overall agricultural development of the district. The resources can be mobilised by its active participation. There were three Subdivisional Agricultural Offices at Dhubri, Goalpara and Kokrajhar at the end of 1978. Besides these, there were Plant Protection Officers, Statistical Inspectors, Demonstrators and Office staff in each Office. The Agriculture Department provides agricultural credits, holds demonstrations of various crops in different villages and engages the village level workers (Gram Sebaks) to guide the farmers under each Subdivisional jurisdiction. But the Department is handicapped in different ways. Specially it lacks trained personnel and modern implements.

But more vigorous activities are expected from the Agriculture Department which can help mobilise resources in the agricultural sector. Some Agricultural sub offices may be created in the regions or villages, where agricultural prospects seem to be bright. A number of field extension officers and village level workers may be appointed at the Gaon Panchayats and the Community Developments Blocks to guide and look after the agricultural operation at the farm level. Each village level workers (Gram Sebak) may be entrusted with a small number of villages or farmers, so that they can look
after farmers extensively and intensively. Some kind of action programme in respect of research, extension and demonstration may be framed by the active participation of rural workers, extension workers and farmers. The number of field extension workers located at the village level is much smaller in India during the seventies as compared with many other countries as shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Clientele per Extension Worker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>1698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>2696</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus a worker may be attached to smaller number of households so that, local conditions can be understood in depth and the farmers may be assisted in obtaining necessary inputs from the agricultural and other agencies. The Agriculture Officers who are educated in agriculture may assist the household farms through the Gram Sebaks (V.L.W) to adopt the placebourn occupations like fruit and vegetables growing, dairy and poultry farming, beekeeping, hand pounding paddy, oil pressing, grain processing, sericulture etc. Thus extensive motivation programme is necessary to educate and teach the farmers about the advantages and benefits of irrigation.

for double and triple cropping for higher yield.

9.3 Irrigation Department.

There were 48 irrigation schemes of various types—lift, flow and shallow filter irrigation in the district constructed by the State Irrigation Department enacting 1976. (See Appendix 13). Geographically Dhubri and Goalpara Subdivisions are flood prone and for this, these have less irrigation facilities than the Kokrajhar Subdivision. The Kokrajhar Subdivision, especially its Northern portion is gifted with natural dongs and streams. Some of the rivers have their origins in this area as discussed already, and for this the local farmers get more irrigation water. This area is a good rice producer of the district.

Irrigation being the main source of agricultural development, new dams, and canals and water works should be constructed in a planned manner in the district. Some of the irrigation schemes are not functioning properly due to construction defects, shortfall of rainwaters and change of river beds.

In Dhubri Subdivision where rivers are not many and natural dongs etc. are not available, and which is at the same time subject to flood damage, the shallow filter irrigation and pumpsets may be arranged. Specially, the rabi crops may be sufficiently grown with irrigation water.
In Goalpara Subdivision where there are many rivers the lift irrigation scheme can be developed easily. In Kokrajhar Subdivision more flow irrigation schemes may be taken up by the Irrigation Department. In this connection, a micro-planning should be framed by the experts with a fair knowledge of water management, so that actual location of benefit is ascertained.

One important task of rendering irrigation facilities is to manage an optimum supply of water. The surplus and the flooded water of the rivers during the rainy seasons should be preserved by constructing ponds, canals etc., so that it could also be diverted to other areas which suffer from scarcity of water and which could utilise the preserved water in the lean months.

Assam falls within the heavy rainfall zone, and as such the value of irrigation was appreciated previously for the agricultural development. The State is endowed with large water resources—both surface and ground water, however, the area irrigated by ground water is very low. The canals contribute to the irrigation of about 90 percent, the net area irrigated followed by other sources which include lift irrigation. The insignificant role of tanks, tube-wells and other wells indicates that not much important is given to the utilisation of ground water resources.

The District's data in respect of irrigation are available only from 1954-55. Goalpara district is also
endowed with large water resources. In recent years more new offices of Irrigation Department have been set up in the district to execute a few more irrigation schemes. There are Departments like Ground Water Division at Goalpara, Investigation Division at Goalpara and Kokrajhar besides Irrigation Divisions at Dhubri, Goalpara, Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon, each under the overall charge of an executive engineer.

The World Bank also has taken up some irrigation schemes in Goalpara district which is known as 'renor Programme'. The irrigation schemes which are already existence or under construction and those which have been planned are expected to help the agricultural development of the district, specially the rabi crops such as wheat, Ahu paddy and pulses. In fact the Irrigation Department is chronically suffering from lack of cohesive planning, political will and wisdom to put the entire organisation on a sound footing. A properly organised irrigation may be compared with the vein through which resources circulate in the body of agriculture.

9.4 Small Farmers Development Agency (S.F.D.A).

The Small Farmers Development Agency (S.F.D.A.) was established in 1971 at Dhubri, but in fact started functioning in 1974 with an aim to uplift the economic condition of the poor and small farmers of Goalpara district. Since then, it has been assisting the agricultural labourer, marginal and small farmers to raise their farm earning by helping them to adopt the modern method-of-cultivation.
method of cultivation. It offers subsidy and grant to the farmers fulfilling the following conditions:

(i) Small farmers having cultivable land between 1.07 to 2 hectares. The farmers should be a cultivator himself and his off farm monthly income should not exceed Rs.200/-.

(ii) Marginal farms having cultivable land between 0.4 to 1.07 hectares with other conditions as applicable in case of small farms.

(iii) Landless farmer having cultivable land of 0.4 or less hectare with his own homestead and deriving more than 50 percent of his income as agricultural labour.

The S.F.D.A allows subsidy at the rate of 25 percent to small farmers, 25 to 33\(\frac{1}{3}\) percent to marginal farmers and 33\(\frac{1}{3}\) to landless farmers against the bank loan. The Agency offers subsidy in the items like Phosphate, Potas, Power tiller, plough etc. In case of community irrigation scheme, it bears 50 percent of the energy charges. For individuals it gives subsidy for digging well, shallow tube well and for purchasing pumpset. The subsidy is also offered for dairy, piggery, goat and poultry farming and purchase of bullocks. In case of horticulture the agency bears 25 to 33\(\frac{1}{3}\) percent of the total cost. An individual member of the Gaon Panchayat level Cooperative Society is granted upto Rs.40/- to

---

purchase of Society's share free of interest by the Agency, so that a member farmer can draw up to twenty times from the bank against his share capital. From 1974 to 1976, the SFDA arranged short term loans of Rs.66 lakhs and medium term loans of Rs.16.40 lakhs benefiting 65 thousand people from the Cooperative Societies and commercial banks. For the establishment of Agro-customs Service Centre and to purchase tractors, power pumps, sprayers etc. a subsidy of Rs.5.50 lakhs was given by SFDA. Another Rs.4.40 lakhs was spent for arranging agricultural demonstrations on various high yielding variety crops at 2307 centres during 1974-76 in the district.

Judging from the above activities performed by the SFDA, it may be assumed that the active functioning of the SFDA in a wider area can play an important role for resource mobilisation in the agricultural sector of the district. The Agency may take up a programme to identify the farmers in the villages and make an assessment of their real problems and needs, and may adopt a planning for both small and big farmers. Agency's activities carried on with the help of trained personnel should be widened, so that it may work as a coordinating institution between the farmers and the agricultural resources.

2. Ibid., PP.10-13, and Official at Office, Dhubri.
9.5 Agro-industries Development Corporation.

The Agro-industries Development Corporation was established in Assam in 1967-68. It has branches at Dhubri, Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Bilasipara and Bongaigaon, (however branch office of Bongaigaon was withdrawn in 1978).

The Corporation provides credit to the farmers as matching shares to the bank finances. Instead of cash payment direct to the farmer, it pays the money to the supplier of the inputs- the supplier being the bank in major cases. Thus it supplies credit indirectly to the farmers. Besides, inputs like fertiliser, pesticide and seed, the Corporation provides ploughing, harrowing and paddy dissecting harrowing on hire to the farmers. The cost of hiring is as follows (during 1978): -

(i) Ploughing Rs.18/- per 0.13 hectare.

(ii) Harrowing
   1st operation Rs.12/- per 0.13 hectare.
   Subsequent operation Rs.10.3/- per 0.13 hectare.

(iii) Paddy dissecting harrowing
   1st operation Rs.50/- per 0.13 hectare.
   Subsequent operation Rs.36/- per 0.13 hectare.

During 1968-70, an amount of Rs.5,04,000 was sanctioned by the Corporation of which Rs.3,78,000

1. Govt. of Assam, Agro-industries Development Corporation Office at Dhubri (Assam).
was received back and Rs.1,26,000 remained outstanding from the farmers in the district. After 1970, the hire purchase system was totally suspended due to certain difficulties, specially farmers' aversion to agricultural implements which are very costly. The farmers, specially the small size, find it quite uneconomic for their agricultural operation.

The Agro-industries Corporation can play a vital role in mobilising the resources, if the ground for credit viability by supplying all infrastructural facilities, irrigations, agricultural implements etc., is created among the farmers. The Corporation is not lacking in the finance and equipment, but the agriculturists cannot utilise those on account of the unremunerative returns from them. The villages, in this matter, may be reorganised on the basis of community. In this case, some sort of joint venture or collective motive may arise among the farmers living in the community, and as a result mutual adjustment of time and finance convenient to them might be created to utilise the resources of the Corporation.

9.6 The Seed Corporation of Assam.

The Seed Corporation Of Assam was established in Assam during 1966-67 with Rs.1 crore as capital. It provides seeds of good quality to the farmers through its offices located at the main centres of the Subdivisional headquarters. The Corporation's offices are located at Dhubri and Kokrajhar of the district. At present, there
are four seed farms at Kokrajhar and Goalpara Subdivision each and one seed farm at Dhubri Subdivision. A network of seed farms and seed corporation to provide quality seed to the farmers is a necessity in the district. The quality seed is a very important agricultural resource which can increase the agricultural productivity. In Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya State, there is record yield of potato at 28 tonnes per hectare due to use of quality seed, fertiliser and improved practices by the farmers. The crops like paddy, wheat, mustard, potato and pulses can be produced in much larger quantities in the district, by the use of quality seed.

In our field survey, we came across a number of agriculturists who reported that they purchased their seed in the open market from the traders and these seeds had no grading and were substandard in quality. Again some agriculturists reported that they preserved the seed in their households just after the harvesting. But they do not practice proper grading and scientific storing. Therefore, the role of quality seed provided by the seed farm and seed corporation has a far reaching effect on the agricultural productivity and agricultural resource mobilisation of the district.

9.7 The Fertiliser Corporation of India.

The Fertiliser Corporation of India is maintaining its dealers in various places in the district and providing nitrogen, phosphate and potash to the agriculturists on

---

1 An article by Dr. G. Kaul titled 'Agriculture in N.E. India' published in the News Paper "Assam Tribune" from Guwahati dated 22.4.1981.
payment and with 25 percent subsidy given by the S.F.D.A or Agro-industries Development Corporation. One great difficulty is that the volume of transactions of the agricultural inputs in the rural areas is so small that the dealers of the Fertiliser Corporation do not feel encouraged to open shops in the rural areas. So, many places of the district do not have any dealer in fertiliser.

According to the Agricultural Census in Assam in 1970-71, the consumption of fertiliser per hectare was only 2 kilograms as against 22.74 kilograms in Andhra Pradesh, 37.46 kilograms in Tamil Nadu and 40.31 kilograms in Punjab. The use of fertiliser in agriculture proper is still very little as bulk of the fertiliser is consumed by the tea gardens in Assam.

In India different States have different degrees of fertiliser consumption. Even within a particular region, there are differences. Assam has 73 percent of the total cultivable land in plains with a production of 9½ quintals of foodgrains per hectare, but Manipur with its plain areas produces 16 quintals per hectare. Of the total cultivated land, 21 percent is irrigated in Assam, while the percentage is 53 in Manipur. In respect of high yielding variety the percentages are 20 and 45 in Assam and Manipur respectively. Similarly, the consumption of fertiliser is very low in Assam, only 3 kilograms per hectare against Manipur's 14 kilograms per hectare. Such differences are

not mainly due to differences of soils of Assam and Manipur but due to the differences of agricultural practice. Assam’s resource mobilisation is poorly shaped, the affect of which is spread all over its districts.

One of the reasons of very low utilisation of fertilisers is, as we have already noted earlier, the farmers’ ignorance, the other reason being, as our survey reveals, lack of assured water. Due to infrastructural constraints such as road, transport, communication etc., the movement of fertilisers becomes difficult. In our investigation, we often heard complaints and counter complaints from the farmers and the dealers of fertilisers. The dealers maintain that there is not adequate demand and the farmers complain they do not get it in the villages. This circular reasoning has to be resolved. One solution could be to open dealership in important villages with the infrastructure of secondary or tertiary roads connecting these villages with the nearby ones. Again to popularise the use of fertiliser, the pesticide might be supplied to the villages to reach the farmers' crop fields. The Plant Protection Staff of the State Agriculture Department has an important role to play in this regard. Gaon Panchayats and Community Development Blocks may be equipped with power operated machine to spread pesticide in the crop fields on nominal hire basis to the farmers.
9.8 Agro-customs Service Centre.

In 1978, there were ten Agro-customs Service Centres in the district, which were located at Halakura, Hashdoha, Geramari, Parbatjowar, Chapar, Manikpur, Srijangram, Kokrajhar, Sakti Ashram and Sunari. These were established by the financial help of S.F.D.A at Dhubri.

The Agro-customs Service Centres offer inputs like tractor, pumpset, duster etc. on hire basis to the farmers for agricultural practice, of which 50 percent cost is borne by the S.F.D.A. Moreover, the Small Farmers Development Agency (S.F.D.A) bears the cost of maintenance of the office staff of the centres fully for the first year and partly for the second and the third year (at the rate of two-thirds and one third of the cost respectively). Upto 1976, the S.F.D.A spent Rs 7 lakhs on this scheme.¹

After 1976, no additional service centre has been opened by the Government. It is a regrettable matter that the Agro-customs Service Centres have not been of use to the farmers in the district. The cost of the service charged by the centres is such that it does not become economically viable to the farmers. On the one hand, the cost charged by the S.F.D.A seems to be prohibitive for the small farmers. And on the other, such service facilities by themselves cannot do much, unless they are supplemented by an economic holding, (which our field survey indicate should be at least 2 hectare size holding) proper and adequate institutional credit, irrigation, seed and manure, marketing facilities, establishment of warehouses etc.

¹S.F.D.A Office at Dhubri, (Govt. of Assam).
9.9 Community Development Block.

There were twenty Community Development Blocks in the district in 1978, of which six were in Goalpara and seven each in Dhubri and Kokrajhar Subdivisions. These Blocks were established during the period of Second Five Year Plan with the avowed objective to develop the villages in all respects." The main object in forming the C.D. Block had been to bring development administration as near the village as possible and to equip it with a qualified team for coordinated and integrated sectors of agriculture, animal husbandry, rural industries and nutrition, and so on."¹

For this the C.D. Blocks were established in some selected backward villages, so that each of them can be a centre for a number of villages and serve the villages easily in all respects.

There is a Block Development Officer (B.D.O) overall incharge of the Block. There is a staff under him consisting of cashier, accountant, peon, chowkidar, fan puller etc. Besides, for the extension services, officers are appointed to look after agriculture, social welfare, social education, child welfare, panchayat, veterinary and cooperation. Besides these, there is a senior Gramsebak, one junior Gram sebak and one Gramsebika. There are weaving instructor and fishery instructor. Moreover, there are eight

village level extension officers under the Block. So, the C.D.Blocks seem to be adequately staffed and equipped for the economic development of farmers in the villages.

Prior to 1972, the Blocks were working along with the Anchaylic Panchayat, when there were three tier system as per Assam Panchayat Act of 1959. According to ammended Gaon Panchayat Act of 1972, the Gaon Panchayat was made two tier viz. only Gaon Sabha and Mahakuma Parisad at Subdivisional level. The institution of Anchaylic Panchayat was abolished as per the Act of 1972, since then the responsibility of the Block was taken away from many programmes of the village development.

At present the Mahakuma Parisad makes direct correspondence with the Gaon Sabhas. At the same time, the Agriculture Department excepting occasionally, keep correspondence with the Blocks. Thus ambitious Blocks with all kinds of official staff became inactive since 1972. Sometimes, The District Social Welfare Officer of the State Government uses the Blocks to distribute nutritious food among the villagers. During 1976-78, the Blocks were entrusted with the task of constructing some village roads supervised by the Mahakuma Parisad under the Minimum Need Programme of the Government of India.

But these Blocks have enough scope of service in the villages since they are nearer to villagers. With all categories of officers and workers, the Blocks can be a guide and philosopher of the villagers and change their
outlook, which can help the mobilisation of resources effectively into the household farms. The Blocks can easily supply information and educate a large number of farmers to adopt the modern method of cultivation.

The village welfare and agricultural growth are interdependent. So some welfare schemes should be entrusted to the Blocks. At the same time, the Blocks can extend various administrative and research support at different levels which are essential to modern agriculture.

The functional literacy and adult education programmes can be taken up by the Community Development Blocks to educate and guide the farmers in their work. The communication devices for breaking down the barriers of illiteracy in the rural areas might be entrusted to the Blocks, at least for sometimes to come, in a workable manner. The mass media communications such as the radio, television, film projectors, slides etc. being too costly and beyond the capacity of the farmers, trained workers might be sent through the Blocks to the farmers to explain the technicalities of modern agricultural development as far as possible in a non-technical language. "In any case, while these mass media create awareness and curiosity among people, it leaves them at that level unless the effort is followed up by the intensive contacts with individuals, small groups and
communities in terms of their specific needs".  

9.10 Gaon Panchayat.

Under the Assam Panchayat Act of 1959, the Gaon Panchayat(G.P) formerly known as Gaon Sabha, was established in 1961. There were 43, 34 and 38 Gaon Panchayats in Dhubri, Goalpara and Kokrajhar Subdivisions respectively in the year 1978. Each G.P. has an average 30 to 35 villages with an average population of 15 to 20 thousands. The average area of each G.P. is 10 to 15 square kilometres. A Gramsebak(Village level worker) is attached to the G.P. with the duty to distribute seeds and fertiliser to the farmers under its jurisdiction.

Considering the increased agricultural activities, the number of Gramsebaks has been raised to four during 1978.

The earning of the Gaon Panchayat is very meagre and as a result they cannot undertake any developmental works. The staff posted under the G.P. can play a vital role in the development of village economy, being a grass root level organisation of the Government with proper representatives of elected members one from each village. The G.P. can mobilise the inputs in the farming households, as they are quite near the farmers. As the Gaon Panchayats are the grass root level organisation elected by and hence responsible to the local people, it may be worthwhile to lend all necessary infrastructural facilities to the villages through such locally elected bodies.

The State Government may grant tractor, power tiller, pumpsets, seeds and fertilisers etc. to the Gaon Panchayats for modern agricultural practice. Under such circumstances, an agricultural revival may be started with the farmers persuaded to give up their conservative habits and customs and to take up the modern agricultural techniques.

9.11 Banks.

There were 48 bank offices of all categories working in the district during 1978. (See Appendix 5). There were 5 District Central Cooperative bank branches which were merged with the Assam Cooperative Apex Bank during 1978. The United Commercial Bank is the lead bank of the district for the agricultural development in Goalpara district.

The commercial bank came to lend credit to the agricultural sector from 1974. Before that, the Assam Cooperative Apex Bank through the District Central Cooperative Bank lent agricultural credit upto 1970 when they stopped credit after facing a large amount of unrealised loans and advances.

According to lead bank report of the United Commercial Bank published in 1978 in 'Credit Plan-1977' the commercial banks in the district advanced in 1976 agricultural credit (both direct and indirect) amounting to Rs. 40,05,000/- of which Rs. 35,46,000/- (or 88.54 per cent) are still outstanding. ¹

It is such a high rate of default that perhaps makes the commercial banks no longer interested in advancing credit to the farmers. According to that report of the United Commercial Bank, the bank service in the district as on December, 1976 was one office to every 58,555 people. Subdivisionwise the figures were 47,428 in Goalpara, 65,465 in Dhubri and 64,551 in Kokrajhar. The credit deposit ratio of the bank in the district was 29:5. In Goalpara district a bank office served 199.21 square kilometres. It can be said that the banking service is not available at an easy distance.  

The banking service should be within the easy reach of the farmers, so that they can be informed of, and accustomed to the banking services and thus help mobilise the rural savings. On 24th September, 1976, the total bank deposit of the district was only Rs. 782.77 lakhs. 

The increasing trend of bank branches in the district in recent years (from 32 in 1976 to 48 in 1978) is encouraging and helpful for the overall economic growth of the district. Cordial relation between the bank officials and the farmers may be developed, so that the farmers may be thoroughly informed of the credit and other official procedures of the banks. Credit on the differential rate of interest at 4 percent may be introduced to help the small

1. United Commercial Bank-Credit Plan 1977, Ch. IV-Ch. VIII-P. 32.
2. Ibid.
farmers. Different amounts of credit might be sanctioned to different categories of farmers on their economic viability. Crop insurance may be introduced in case of crop failure due to inclement weather and other natural calamities. Trained agricultural officers may be appointed by the banks to facilitate the credit absorption of the farmers of different economic viabilities. The bank credit is a most important input for the mobilisation of agricultural resources in Goalpara district. The industrial credit has "a much broader connotation now and combines itself both technical guidance and planning of the farm business."¹

9.12 Cooperative Society.

The Cooperative Societies were established with the common intention of selfhelp, production, distribution and provision of services among the members of the Society. Most of the Societies at present are inactive and incurring loss.

The Government of Assam established 116 Gaon Panchayat level Cooperative Societies in 1975-76 in Goalpara district as per Cooperative policy of the Government with financial help. In Dhubri Subdivision 43 Societies with 83,158 members, in Goalpara Subdivision 35 Societies with 74,572 members and in Kokrajhar Subdivision 38 Societies with 80,423 members were established during 1978 besides other Societies. The lead bank report of the United Commercial

Bank (1977) shows that the G.P. level Societies conducted business in the district worth Rs. 333.21 lakhs in 1976 of which 224.76 lakhs accounted for by essential commodities and Rs. 108.45 lakhs by the other commodities.¹

Cooperative Societies are the main source of agricultural credit of the farmers in Goalpara district as well as in the State. The Assam Cooperative Apex Bank and other commercial banks finance the individual farmers through the Cooperative Societies. The former credit system was as follows:

1. The Reserve Bank of India
2. The Assam Cooperative Apex Bank
3. The District Central Cooperative Bank
4. The Primary Credit Society
5. Individual farmer.

After the abolition of District Central Cooperative Banks in October, 1977, the agricultural credits are made by the Assam Cooperative Apex Bank and the commercial banks to the Societies for distributing among their individual members of farming households. After the establishment of G.P. level Societies, the former Societies such as Krishak Sahayak Samabay Samities and Gaolia Banks were abolished and were sent for liquidation in 1973.

¹ United Commercial Bank-Credit Plan-1977, Ch. V.P.25.
The banks finance the agricultural sector by providing short, medium and long term credit for the duration of 6 months, 1 to 7 years and 10 to 15 years respectively through the Cooperative Societies, and in some cases by providing direct credit on the merit of the farmers' security. Short term loans are given for the purchase of seed, fertiliser, irrigation and labours. Medium term loans are given for the purchase of cattle, pumpset for water and irrigation, tubewells and fencing etc. The long term loans are given for land reclamation and levelling, permanent irrigation system, purchase of tractors, construction of pucca canals and pucca fencing. Long term credits are given through the Assam Cooperative Land Mortgaged Bank on the mortgaged land up to the valuation of 50 percent of the credit.

The Cooperative Societies' network is well spread in the villages and touches everyone, who is in need of agricultural credit. If proper attention is paid and necessary prerequisites such as personal knowledge of members' credit problems and credit viability among themselves, are taken well ahead, many drawbacks of the Societies could have been removed. On the other side, there should be speedy disbursement of credit in required amount and proper supervision of credit to ensure effective utilisation and repayment. Given the above conditions, the Cooperative Societies in the district may yet prove to be a success and play a vital role for agricultural resource mobilisation.  

The habit of loan repayment can be developed by persuading the farmers to adopt modern method of cultivation and convincing them of the great benefits obtained from it. For this the structure of the Cooperative Societies is to be changed. A Society might be enlarged and all the farmers of the specific area be enrolled as members. The credit sanction should not be restricted to share capital of the member farmer (at present maximum limit is Rs. 800/- per member). Credit sanction should be based on farmer's productive viability and credit requirement rather than farmer's assets and securities. Again it would be very effective if the Society is formed with the representatives from the State Government such as Agriculture Department and Irrigation Department and the representative from the commercial bank. Such a Society would be more purposeful because all problems and solutions would have been discussed among the members and in this way credit resources would be find avenues in the agricultural sector. The banking and other credit agencies can be reorganised with new liberal procedures to support the Cooperative Societies, so that identification of farmers' viability as well as production and repayment can be well integrated.

The idea of Cooperative Farming has been apparently gaining ground in Assam since the publication of the report of the Cooperative Planning Committee of the
Government of India in 1946. However, it was organised late in Assam during 1961-66 when the advantages of Cooperative farming were demonstrated to the farmers. Though the record shows that at the end of 1971-72, there were 114 Joint Farming and 294 Collective Farming Societies in Assam, these Farmings could not make much headway nor could impress the farmers in Assam. In the later period the State Government did not make any venture for the success of this programme.¹

In view of the small agricultural holdings existing in Goalpara district, the policy of Cooperative (or Collective) Farming may be introduced, so that collective resources are diverted to agriculture. But this Cooperative (or Collective) Farming will have to be supported by non farm employment policy, which is a State Government matter. It is seen that the farmers cannot overcome the subsistence level, and most of the credit goes to consumption. Even under the strict supervision of the credit, the additional production is likely to be used for consumption. So, the small farms which are not viable, are to be consolidated into a Cooperative (or Collective) Farming along with the non farm employment opportunities such as small, cottage industries etc. With the support of non farm employment opportunities this Cooperative (or Collective) Farming may have an

¹. Government of Assam, Agro-economics Research Centre for Northeast India, Agricultural Development in Assam, 1978, Ch.VI, F.130.
important role to play for the resource mobilisation in the district, which can enthuse the agricultural sector.

The Government of Assam adopted the scheme of Agricultural Farming Corporation in 1972 formed with genuine landless cultivators in a compact area of vacant Government land under the Community Development Blocks. The main objectives of the Corporation were:—

(i) To organise the genuine landless cultivators into a corporate body.

(ii) To maximise agricultural production by the application of modern and improved methods of farming.

(iii) To bring about commercialisation of agriculture with an emphasis on profitability as the main objective.

The State Government encouraged the organisation of at least one Corporation in each of the Subdivisions of the State in 1972-73. By the end of March, 1974, nine such Corporations were organised in the State.

The concept of Farming Corporation is a revolutionary one. Under expert guidance, it can achieve great success, and the ills of small holdings can be removed. The Corporation has not been able to achieve success due to many social and political reasons. However, this kind of Corporation is highly welcome in Goalpara considering the large number of landless cultivators in the district.

1. Govt. of Assam, Agro-economics Research Centre for Northeast India, Agricultural Development in Assam, 1978, Ch.VI, P.131.
Among the various types of Cooperative institutions discussed above, each institution has got its own objectives, which cannot be supported or dismissed at one and the same time. In Goalpara district, the village and farming conditions are more or less the same. The farms are mostly of small sizes and there are large vacant areas fallen under the fallow waste, grazing land etc. consisting about 157000 hectares. (See Table 4.3 of Ch. IV). In the above context, setting up of three types of Cooperative Societies viz., Primary Credit Society, Cooperative (or Collective) Farming and Farming Corporation in the district may be quite helpful.

As the individual farm is not to lose the right of his property under the Primary Credit Society, this type of Cooperative Society is desirable among the medium and big farmers in the district. It is applicable to marginal and small farmers also, who do not like to lose the property right. The Cooperative (or Collective) Farming is desirable in case of small farmers, especially the marginal farmers, because they would be more benefited in various agricultural activities by pulling their resources collectively into a unit. The Farming Corporation may be formed among the landless agriculturists in the Government vacant plots. Under such corporations, the landless agriculturists would get their wages besides other economic benefits such as share of production etc.
As it appears, it is not worthwhile to suggest a specific Cooperative Society for a particular village or area. As the Cooperative Society is a democratic body, the ultimate choice remains with the farmers.

Besides the above agencies, there are other centrally sponsored schemes like Intensive Sattie Development Project, Rural Artisan Programme, Project on Land Development, Crash Schemes for Rural Employment and Tribal and Scheduled Caste Development Corporations etc. which can contribute to the agricultural development as well as rural development in Goalpara district. The World Bank Project for agricultural development in the district taken up recently designed to strengthen the agricultural extension services at the farm level is expected to contribute greatly to the agricultural development.

9.13 Cropping pattern and development of soil condition.

The cultivators of the district do not attach importance to multicropping due to lack of credit facility and irrigation. The change in cropping pattern by adopting improved crops and intensive cultivation can give higher rate of production. From 1971-72 onwards, the production of cereals like wheat, maize, and millets has increased proportionately. It has been observed that wherever there is an extension of irrigation, the crop production and multiple cropping have been satisfactory.

High yielding variety (HYV) cultivation has been making headway in the district since 1969-70. High yielding
variety encourages double or multiple cropping because HYV seeds give quicker yields. In 1969-70, 10.68 hectares of land were brought under HYV cultivation which has been increased to 39,082 hectares of land in 1975-76. This is almost four fold increase in HYV crops within a relatively short period of five years.¹

The soil being different from place to place in Goalpara district (in Assam also) sometimes the nature of the soil varies from place to place even within the same plot. It is, therefore, necessary to classify the lands of the district on the basis of soil and climatic conditions. "In the search for factors responsible for variation in growth of output as a whole and in its component elements, a necessary first step is to eliminate the effects of differences in soil and climatic conditions. For this purpose the districts will have to be reclassified into regions, more or less homogeneous in respect of soil and climate. It would then be possible to attempt a meaningful analysis of the factors accounting for changes in crop area, shift in crop pattern, and changes in per acre yields within each region."²

¹ United Commercial Bank-Credit Plan, 1977, Ch.IV, P.9.
However, the whole proposition lies with the State Government, because of the duties of classification of land, soil testing etc. lie with some institutions like Soil Testing Laboratory, Agriculture Department, qualified staff etc. which are beyond the capacity of the farmers. It is suggested, therefore, that some soil testing institutions similar to Soil Testing Laboratory of Jorhat in Sibsagar district, be established in Goalpara district which will help the farmers to detect the nature of the soil and to use the right type of fertilisers and water in proportion. Thus the progressive farmers would get the facility to improve their productivity vis-à-vis resource mobilisation.

Infrastructures such as road, and communication including postal services, market, power, educational training and information centre as discussed earlier can play an important role in resource mobilisation into the agricultural sector. Some very important infrastructures like processing, storing and power have significant role to mobilise the resources for the agricultural development of the district.

In view of the poor industrial performance of the district, it is necessary to give attention for the development of cottage and village industries to absorb the surplus agricultural labour force to minimise the pressure on farming households. The allied economic activities such as dairy and poultry farming, fruit trees plantation etc. have a wider scope for development in the district which can improve the economic status of the agriculturists.

*********