CHAPTER - 1

THE MAIN THEME OF THE PROPOSED STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION:

Karimganj, with an area of 1839 sq.kms. is a district of Assam in its Southern periphery bordering Bangladesh in the North-west side and the state of Tripura on the South-west, Mizoram in the South, and Cachar and Hailakandi districts in the Eastern side. This part of Assam had a unique history of its own. Originally, an integral part of Sylhet district which was tagged with Assam in 1874 from the Decca division of the then Bengal in order to make Assam a viable state, at the moment of partition of India, a referendum was inflicted on Sylhet district; to be or not to be with the Indian Union. The referendum opined in favour of going to East Pakistan and the entire district of Sylhet became a part of East Pakistan and it observed Pakistan Independence day on 14th August, 1947. As a result of the Radcliffe Boundary Commission Award, making the Kushiara river as the natural boundary between Assam and East Pakistan, three and half thanas of Karimganj sub-division of the Sylhet district, viz. Ratabari, Patharkandi, Badarpur and half of Karimganj came back to Assam on 17th August, 1947. This part is what now constitutes Karimganj district which till 1st July, 1983, was a sub-division of Cachar district.
If among States of India, Assam now is industrially backward and largely depending on agriculture and allied profession, Karimganj district is more so. The district is mainly an agriculture oriented economy where approximately 68.97% of the total working population depend on agriculture. As the district is industrially backward, finding no other alternative, the increased number of population have been thrusting on the agricultural sector to keep their body and soul together. As a result, the excessive pressure of population on land is beyond any proportion and proportions of underemployment and disguised unemployment are real nightmare for the planners. To feed this alarmingly increasing dependence on agriculture, none would dispute, development of agricultural sector deserves highest priority. In order to increase the productivity level, new agricultural strategy has been adopted.

As we could recall, the new agricultural strategy was introduced in 1960-61 in seven districts of the country which had assured irrigation facility. The strategy was first designated as Intensive Agricultural District Programme (IADP) and later the same was extended to other areas in the country and was re-named as Intensive Agricultural Area Programme (IAAP). The Indian agriculture, which had been stagnant for centuries, had awaken after a revolution with the expectation of transforming the colour of the leaves from
yellow to deep green. This revolution is known as Green Revolution. Broadly speaking, as a result of green revolution, with the application of technological change in the cultivation process, improved varieties of seeds, increased use of fertilizer, provision of improved water supplies in the water scarce areas, plant protection measures to resist pest attacks and plant diseases, the productivity has been increasing gradually. However, in India, except in some specific areas, the impact of green revolution is insignificant due to the absence of some relevant factors, like, wonder seeds, fertilizers, multiple cropping pattern, modern equipment and machinery, price incentives, extension of irrigation, processing, storage, marketing facilities, credit facilities, etc. All these elements of green revolution are either absent or insufficient in Karimganj district.

Keeping this general problem in view, the present study seeks to determine, first, the extent to which the new agricultural strategy is adopted in the district. Secondly, a detailed analysis is made to ascertain the degree of impact of the new agricultural strategy in the sample district. Thirdly, an attempt is also made to analyse the various reasons for its failure. Finally, remedial measures are outlined.

This Chapter is planned in four parts which, together, constitute the foundation for the entire study.
Part-I gives an account of the purpose of the study. Part-II, explains the methodology, adopted for the analysis of the data. In Part-III, the interpretation of the agricultural productivity is considered. Finally, in Part-IV a gist of the whole study is presented.

I

1.2. RELEVANCE OF STUDYING THE ISSUE WITH REFERENCE TO KARIMGANJ DISTRICT:

Karimganj, before Independence was one of the sub-divisions of the District of Sylhet in the State of Assam. At the time of Independence, Karimganj sub-division was partitioned and three and half police stations came back to India and the rest of the District of Sylhet went to the erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). On the 1st day of July, 1983, vide, the Govt. of Assam Notification No. GAG 215/83/1 dt. 14th June, 1983, the former sub-division of Cachar district emerged as an Independent Administrative District, named "Karimganj District".

Basically, Karimganj district is more agrarian in comparison with some other districts of the state. The District is industrially backward due to the non-availability of some relevant factors invariably connected with the industrial development. However, in the organised sector, tea industry plays an important role in the economic development of the
district. There are 27 Tea Estates with 8298.8 hectares under tea plantations, providing employment opportunities to more than Twenty thousand persons daily. Production of tea has been 6667 M.T. approximately. Besides tea industry, there are also cotton ginning, saw-mill and plywood industry in the district. In unorganised sector, on the other hand, there are considerable numbers of motor repairing and various other workshops, biscuits and soap factories, agro-based small-scale and cottage industrial units like bamboo and cane, basket making, etc. The products of bamboo and cane like sitalpati, Torza and some other fencing materials are unique in design and character in the region. There is a "Sugar Mill" named "Cachar Sugar Mill" at Chorgula in Ramkrishna Nagar Development Block, established in early seventies and its production during 1982-83 was 37.93 M.T. But at present, the production of the mill cannot run smoothly due to the non availability of raw materials and host of other constraints, and it has been declared by the Government of Assam as a sick unit.

As there is insufficient scope of employment opportunity in the industrial sector, a large section of the working force, i.e. approximately 70% of the total working population has chosen agriculture and allied activities as their primary source of livelihood. The number of population depending on the agricultural sector has been increasing overtime creating disguised unemployment mainly due to two
reasons. First, the high rate of growth of population in the district. Second, the limited scope of job opportunities in the secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy. The net result is that the total gross income as well as the per-capita income decreases which in turn increases the volume of the population living below the poverty line covering approximately 60% of the total population in the district now. Thus to remove poverty, on the one hand and to feed the increased population on the other, the development of agriculture is the only viable alternative in the district. So the government has taken necessary initiatives for the development of agricultural sector with the application of new agricultural strategy in the production process. To follow the new agricultural strategy, the farmers are to apply modern scientific capital equipments in place of bullock-plough, chemical fertilizer in the less fertile areas, artificial water facilities in the water scarce areas, H.Y.V. seeds in place of 'deshi' (indigenous) varieties and the pesticides, fungicides, etc. for pest attacks and plant diseases. Thus Intensive Agricultural Development Programme has been launched in the district also, anticipating higher productivity in the agricultural sector. The application of all these relevant factors in the production process collectively is known as "package programme". The development of agricultural sector is invariably related with the economic development of the
district mainly with two important objects in view: (a) to feed increased number of dependence and (b) to provide employment opportunities to the additional labour force.

II

1.3. THE STATISTICAL DESIGN OF THE STUDY:

In order to undertake the proposed study, we have taken resort to both the 'primary and secondary' data in compliance with the varied requirements of the study. In case of primary data, systematic random sampling method has been followed. The entire district is first viewed block-wise and then three sample villages of representing three categories of performances, 'developed', 'intermediary' and 'backward' are taken (the names of the villages are selected in consultation with the District Agricultural Officer, Karimganj) from each block and at least three sample persons are interviewed from each sample Village through personal approach. However, a format of the table is given below.
TABLE 1.1

Systematic Sample Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Blocks</th>
<th>Villages Selected from</th>
<th>No. of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developed Intermediary</td>
<td>Backward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. North-Karimganj Block</td>
<td>Jatua</td>
<td>Sazpur Lafashil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. South-Karimganj Block</td>
<td>Kayastagram Gandhi</td>
<td>Suprakandi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mahakal Block</td>
<td>Malua</td>
<td>Shrigouri Ghoramara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. R.K.Nagar Block</td>
<td>Ratabari</td>
<td>Rupagram Rongpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Patharkandi Block</td>
<td>Unamgram</td>
<td>Sibergool Mantigram</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. :- Three persons taken from each sample village, So, total persons taken in each block are, 3x3=9.
A statistical enquiry is always undertaken to supply answers to certain questions relating to any problem. Here in this study, a statistical enquiry is undertaken to know the general informations regarding the farmers of the district, choice of technique used in the production process in the agricultural sector, institutional assistance, if any, etc. There are various types of enquiries, say (a) Government, semi-government or private; (b) primary or secondary; (c) Census or sample enquiry; (d) confidential or open to public and (e) Regular or ad-hoc enquiry. In case of the field investigation, private, primary and sample enquiry are followed which is open to public in general. Similarly, in the case of the collection of data, there are various methods, say (a) Direct personal investigation; (b) Indirect oral investigation; (c) Schedule/questionnaire filled by informants; (d) Investigation through enumerators and (e) By local correspondents. Among them, a particular method may be followed. Here in this study attempts have been made to know a some informations through indirect oral investigations as well. Thus a statistical enquiry is undertaken to collect relevant informations from the actual farmers by means of questionnaire. It is desirable to complete the work of the survey in shortest possible period to get the informations without any significant variation. To avoid the scope of variation in case of the related data, the field
investigation in the entire district is completed almost within a year, i.e. from 1.7.90 to 13.10.91. A detailed type of questionnaire used for the field survey is given in the Appendix- 1.1.

Other informations are collected from the secondary sources. The main secondary sources are : (i) Economic survey, Govt. of India; (ii) Economic survey, Govt. of Assam; (iii) Statistical Hand Book, Govt. of Assam; (iv) District Statistical Hand Book, Karimganj, Assam; (v) Economic Review, Deputy Director of Economics & Statistics; (vi) Report from the office of the District Agricultural Officer, Karimganj, Assam; (vii) Report from the Department of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam; (viii) Census Report of the Government of India; (ix) Various publications issued by the Office of the District Planning Officer, Karimganj, Assam; (x) Various Publications of the Regional Agricultural Research Station, Akbarpur, Karimganj, (a wing of the Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat); (xi) Reports from the Secretariate, Government of Assam; and (xii) Reports from the office of the District Settlement Officer, Karimganj, Assam. It is found that some data necessary to estimate different components were not available in the exact form in which they were wanted. In such cases, the data base was prepared by using arithmetical adjustments.
Among the three sectors of the economy, viz. Agricultural sector, industrial sector and tertiary sector; agricultural sector plays a vital role in the economic development of the State in general and Karimganj district in particular. Due to industrial backwardness, about 92.7% of the total population are living in rural areas and about 70% are depending on agricultural sector for their livelihood. Thus the agricultural sector is treated as the key for accelerating the pace of economic development of the backward region. In Karimganj district, rice accounted for nearly three fourth (75%) of the Gross cultivated area of the district. Out of the 75% of the gross cropped area, autumn and winter paddy together, consists nearly 90% of the area. Area under tea sugarcane and approximately 10% and 4% of the gross cultivated area respectively. Without any revolution in the agricultural sector, the economic development of this vast section of the population cannot be imagined. Like other areas of the country, in Karimganj district also, initiatives are undertaken for the development of the agricultural sector. A comparative study has been undertaken to ascertain whether the productivity level has increased or not to know the magnitude of the impact of new agricultural strategy in the district. From empirical investigation, it is observed
that the productivity has increased no doubt due to Green Revolution: but this increment is like a little drop of water in the great ocean. Necessary and suitable measures are proposed to improve the existing productivity level in the sample district.

IV

1.5. A GIST OF THE WHOLE STUDY:

The entire study is planned in five substantive Chapters.

Chapter-II describes the economic background of Karimganj district. In this account emphasis is given to the economic background of present Karimganj district with special reference to certain factors relevant to the productivity trends in the agricultural sector. In this chapter a comparative study is undertaken to ascertain the state of agricultural backwardness of the sample district compared with the average of the State.

In Karimganj district, special problems have been created by demographic factors. The tremendously high rate of growth of population is responsible for the creation of disguised unemployment in the agricultural sector. The rate of growth of population is 41.82% in Karimganj district according to 1991 Census. From empirical investigation, it is
observed that the district is industrially backward and about 70% of the total population depend on agricultural sector. The contribution of agricultural sector to the Net District Domestic Product is approximately 56% of the total, which in turn confirms that the district is more agriculture-oriented than Assam as a whole where approximately 47.9% share comes from the same sector to the Net State Domestic Product. As the agricultural sector plays as a prominent sector in the district, to increase the productivity level the government has undertaken various measures to popularise the application of modern scientific techniques in the production process with their impacts are described in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter-III provides an account of the impact of the applications of new farm technology, use of modern farming equipments, H.Y.V. seeds, practice of multiple cropping, use of fertilizers and pesticides in the production process in the district. Attempts have been made to ascertain whether the productivity has increased or not after Green Revolution. On the basis of empirical investigation, it is

1. In 1990-91, the contribution from the Primary sector (Agriculture and allied activities) is 47.9% at current prices and is 42.7% at constant (1980-81) Prices, [Vide Appendices 2.3(A) and 2.3(B)].
found that there is a slight change in the productivity level due to all these efforts; but this increment is quite negligible in comparison with the other developed states in the country.

The Chapter-IV deals with the two important constraints, viz. flood and irrigation. These two contradictory elements play a vital role in the field of agricultural productivity level. It is obvious that the productivity will increase, if irrigation is provided and flood is controlled by effective measures. Depending on the primary as well as the secondary data, it may be pointed out that the productivity has increased at least in some specific areas with effective irrigation facilities in the district. So far as the flood control measures are concerned, it is observed that most of them are ineffective and insufficient in accordance with the actual needs. To improve the irrigation facility and to control flood, necessary measures are suggested in the proposed study for the betterment of the prevailing situation and fruitful results.

Chapter-V reviews the institutional aspects of the new agricultural strategy with special emphasis on the landownership pattern and commercialisation of the marketable surplus. In this Chapter, preparation of records of rights of permanently settled estates, resettlement of Ilam r
temporary areas of the sample district, abolition of the Zamindari system in permanently settled portion of the then Karimganj sub-division on payment of compensation to the owners through acquisition of lands held by the Zamindar under permanent settlement by the Assam Government on and from the 14th day of April, 1960, are discussed in details. Attempts have also been made to undertake the village level blockwise study by means of personal interviews with the farmers through questionnaire to ascertain the land-ownership pattern in the district.

So far as the volume of marketable surplus is concerned, it is found that (depending on the data available from the secondary sources only) there is a little volume of marketable surplus approximately amounting to 0.1 Lakh M.T. per annum in the district. But in practice, it is found that, the picture is quite the reverse since a significant volume of rice is imported from other states to meet the scarcity of food items like rice in the district. However, there are some villagers who argued that after harvesting, to enjoy higher prices, a considerable volume of rice crosses the international border, though the same cannot be verified with proper evidences, due to the malpractices of smugglers. Thus the volume of marketable surplus becomes meaningless in the practical sense.
Chapter-VI concludes the study. In it, the findings of the preceding chapters are employed to examine whether or not, the impact of the new agricultural strategy is remarkable in the sample district. Finally, it is argued that the impact of Green Revolution is very negligible in Karimganj district. The prominent reasons responsible for its failure are:

(1) Economic backwardness and illiteracy of the rural masses;
(2) Preponderance of marginal and sub-marginal sized farm-holdings;
(3) Inadequate government facilities;
(4) Lack of honest implementation of the government funds in time; and
(5) Lack of balanced regional development.

In this Chapter, necessary measures are suggested to overcome the inevitable constraints on the way to intensive agricultural development of the district. The important ones are summarized below:

(1) Initiatives should be undertaken to improve the general economic condition of the rural people;
(2) Meaningful measures should be taken to spread education facility to each and every corner of the district;
(3) Government facilities should be made available right in time and the various development plans and programmes should be implemented honestly by the authority concerned;

(4) The application of new agricultural strategy should be popularised among the mass farmers so that the aims and objects of Green Revolution may be achieved in near future; and

(5) To develop agricultural sector, other relevant sectors should be developed side by side. All these done effectively, there will be over all economic development of Karimganj District in near future.