



## PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF AGRICULTURE IN THE DISTRICT OF HAILAKANDI

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### ABSTRACT

*Increased agricultural production satisfies the most urgently felt needs of the bulk of population in an underdeveloped economy and it is the most rapid and dramatic demonstration of progress for the overwhelming majority of population. Hence, in an economy of Hailakandi also, where almost 80% of people live in rural surroundings and are mostly engaged in agriculture for their livelihood, it is the development of agriculture which holds a position of basic importance in any scheme of economic up-liftment. However Hailakandi, being an agrarian economy, is lagging far behind when compared to other districts of the state as it is faced with lots of problems in this sector. Hence, in order to pave the way for agricultural development in the district, the Govt. is adopting various remedial measures from time to time.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Shail crop, Finished products, non-agricultural sector, Allied activities, inter-industry relationship, chemical fertilizers.*

### INTRODUCTION

Many opinions are there behind the origin of the term / word 'HAILAKANDI'. Among them some holds the fact that the word "HAILAKANDI" has been derived from the term / word 'SHALI' or 'SHAIL' crop on the basis of the observation that 'SHAIL CROP' grows abundantly in Hailakandi. It has an area of 1327 sq. km. with population 5,42,872 nos. and is situated at a distance of 336 kms from the state capital with two major rivers viz., Katakhal and Dhaleswari. She is adjoined in the North East by Silchar, South by the State Mizoram and in the west by Karimganj.

The foundation of the economy of Hailakandi in the State of Assam, as of most of the other Districts and States of our Country, is agriculture. There is no denying the fact that increased agricultural production satisfies the most urgently felt needs of the bulk of population in an underdeveloped economy and it is the most rapid and dramatic demonstration of progress for the overwhelming majority of population. Hence, in an

economy of Hailakandi also, where almost 80% of people live in rural surroundings and are mostly engaged in agriculture for their livelihood, it is the development of agriculture which holds a position of basic importance in any scheme of economic up-liftment.

Let us have a look on the district agricultural profile at glance in what follows.

### **DISTRICT AGRICULTURAL PROFILE AT A GLANCE**

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA	132700 Hectare
FOREST AREA	74115 Hectare
CULTIVABLE AREA (PADDY)	47500 Hectare
AREA UNDER TEA	5420 Hectare
PRODUCTION OF WINTER PADDY	BORO DHAN (RICE)
PRODUCTION OF SUMMER PADDY	SHAIL DHAN
MAJOR FRUIT PRODUCTS	BANANA, PINEAPPLE, PAPAYA, JACKFRUIT, GUAVA, COCONUT, ETC.
MAJOR FOREST PRODUCTS	BAMBOO, TIMBER (SAL, SEGUN, SUNDI, CHUM, GAMARI), SAND, ETC.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Considering the need and importance of agricultural sector in Hailakandi, the present paper attempts to highlight the following objectives :

- (1) To make an overview of agricultural Development of Hailakandi emphasizing its Role in the district.
- (2) To look at the problems faced by Agricultural Sector of Hailakandi.
- (3) To highlight the prospects of Development in Agricultural Sector of Hailakandi.
- (4) To highlight the Government measures / steps taken to pave the way for agricultural development in Hailakandi.
- (5) To suggest Remedial Measures for Agricultural development in Hailakandi.

Let us now discuss the various objectives mentioned above in what follows.

#### **(A) Agricultural Development of Hailakandi; Its Role :**

The importance of agriculture in the economic development of any economy rich or poor, is borne out by the fact that it is the primary sector of the economy which provides the basic ingredients necessary for the existence of mankind and also provides most of the raw materials which when transformed into finished products serve as basic necessities of the human race.

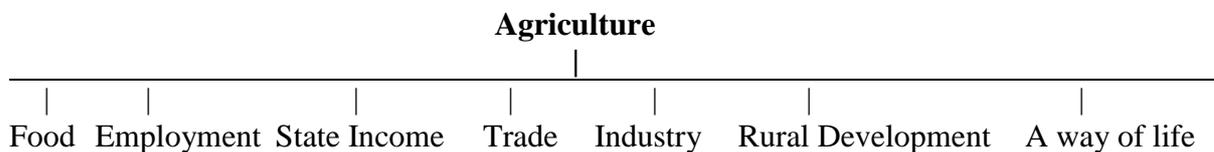
In Hailakandi, a flourishing agricultural sector is far more important for the development of the economy, since farming is less a business than a tradition in the district. The role that the agricultural sector is playing in the district of Hailakandi at present can thus precisely be discussed under the following heads :

- (1) **Share In State Income** : The share of district agriculture in State Income is a crucial indicator of the role that agriculture plays in the economic development of a State. As the State economy rides on the wheels of progress, the relative contribution of agriculture in state income declines with the economy becoming more and more prosperous, i.e., with the faster development of non-agricultural sectors, the share of agriculture in state income declines indicating a better level of economic advancement. On the other hand, agriculture is the single larger contribution to district and thus in state income. Therefore, a progressive agricultural sector means a higher level of district as well as state income and consequently, a higher level of economic development.
- (2) **Provider of Employment** : The agricultural sector in the district has absorbed the bulk of additional labour force (60%), though many must have got low intensity employment and consequently low incomes.
- (3) **Supply of food and fodder**: Entire supply of food to the population originates in this sector. It also provides fodder to sustain livestock as Livestock are the sources of milk, eggs, meat, wool and hides.
- (4) **Agriculture and Industrial Development**: Rising agricultural productivity supports and sustains industrial development in several important ways. Agriculture supplies manpower and raw material to industries and provides a wide market for industrial products. Industries like paper, leather, matches, etc. depend on allied activities of agriculture like forestry, fisheries, etc. However, it is to be noted that in Hailakandi, no remarkable development took place on this inter-industry relationship, e.g.

#### **Agro Based Industries in Hailakandi**

No. of Industries	Name
1.	Paper – Mill, Panchgram
2.	Sugar – Mill, though not in operation at present

Besides, agriculture also contributes to trade, capital formation etc. In short, the manner in which it contributes to the economic development can be seen from the chart given below :-



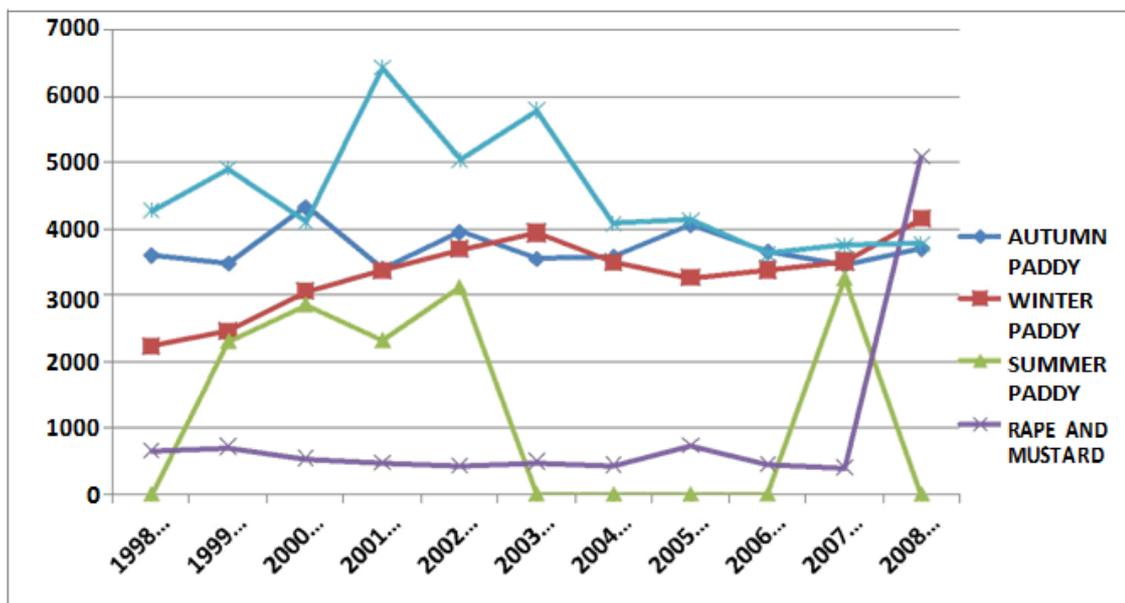
It thus appears from the above that agricultural sector occupies a central place in the district as well as the state economy.

#### **(B) Problems Faced By Agricultural Sector of Hailakandi**

Before going to discuss the various problems faced by the agricultural sector of Hailakandi, let us have a look on the trend of agricultural production of some crops in Hailakandi.

TYPES OF CROPS	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
AUTUMN PADDY	3604.6	3484	4338.4	3400.6	3959.2	3552.2	3577.2	4064.4	3662.8	3456	3708
WINTER PADDY	2232.4	2459.6	3064	3372.8	3699.3	3940.8	3504.8	3264	3384	3508	4152
SUMMER PADDY	N.A	2310.4	2869.2	2320.8	3130	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	3264	N.A
RAPE AND MUSTARD	658	720	540.4	484.8	432.4	488.8	444.8	733.8	454.4	407	5080
POTATO	4280.4	4913.6	4116	6421	5048	5782.4	4089.6	4134	3636.8	3758	3780.4

SOURCE: - DIRECTORATE OF ECONOMICS & STATISTICS, HKD



It is evident from the graphical representation of the above table that the production trend over the years is almost constant or the change is very marginal.

This unsatisfactory behaviour of agriculture in Hailakandi is due to the following problems that the district agriculture is faced with:

(1) Limited Use Of Fertilizer :

In Hailakandi, farmer’s outlook is very traditional. They do not like to use modern techniques and chemical fertilizers. This has been shown in the table given below:

DISTRICT-WISE CONSUMPTION  
OF FERTILIZER IN ASSAM, 2007-08

DISTRICT	Total (In Tonnes)	In % (Percentage)
HAILAKANDI	1314	1.14
KARIMGANJ	2897	2.52
CACHAR	5452	4.75
ASSAM	114878	100

Source: Directorate Of Economics & Statistics, Hailakandi

The table reveals the fact that in comparison to other districts of Assam, Hailakandi consumes only 1.14% of fertilizer while Karimganj 2.52% and Cachar 4.75%.

(2) Inadequate Irrigation Facilities: Lack of irrigation facilities is one of the major reasons for low agricultural productivity in the district. One must note here that in 2011, net area irrigated in Hailakandi is only 3 hectare (in comparison to other districts), i.e.,

DISTRICT-WISE NET AREA IRRIGATED DURING THE YEAR  
(FROM 2005 to 2009)

(Area in hectare)

District	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
HAILAKANDI	13.53	-	-	15.00	3.00
KARIMGANJ	-	61.00	5.00	2.50	17.00
CACHAR	35.00	35.00	33.00	271.00	95.00
ASSAM	62329.46	52726.31	52870.39	104378.76	75602.55

Source : Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Hailakandi

(3) Small Size of holding: In Hailakandi, average size of land holding is very small (less than 2 hectares) and are fragmented into a number of tiny plots for which cultivation on them can be carried out only by labour intensive techniques. Modern techniques of agriculture cannot be adopted in small plot of land and the possibilities of increasing agricultural productivity becomes limited. This results in low productivity.

(4) Uncertain water supply : Water is one of the primary requirements for the success of agricultural crop enterprises and is very vital for modern agriculture. But even today nearly 80% of the district's cropped area is entirely dependent on the vagaries of rainfall. In the one hand, untimely and uneven rains results in devastating flood and on the other extreme irregularity causes drought also, i.e., gamble in monsoon. Thus, lack of assured and regular water supply not only creates uncertain conditions for the agricultural output but also acts as a bottleneck in increasing agricultural production.

(5) Capital Deficiency : It is known to us that capital deficiency is acute in agricultural sector of Hailakandi. This capital deficiency not only stalls the improvement in agriculture but also hamper the process of structural transformation. Owing to inadequate capital, the rural working population is not in a position to

exploit the fuller growth potential to its advantage.

(6) Roads & Transportation : Poor rural transport facilities, high transportation costs and lack of metalled roads in rural areas of the district are some of the major bottlenecks in the quick and cheap movement of agricultural commodities and inputs.

(7) Marketing & Storage Facility : There is no organized market as well as storage facilities for agricultural production in the district for which the cultivators are forced to sell their produce at unremunerative prices. As the cultivators do not get proper price of their products, their motivation for hard work is lost thus resulting in low productivity.

(8) Limited Use of HYV of Seeds : There is limited use of High Yielding Variety of Seeds in the agricultural sector of Hailakandi. Seed Farm existing in Hailakandi :-

#### SEED FARM IN HAILAKANDI

Name of the District	Name of the Seed Farm	Total Area (In Hect.)	Cultivable Area (In Hect.)	Non-Cultivable Area (In Hect.)
HAILAKANDI	KUCHILA SEED FARM	6 Ha	3.3 Ha Land under Hort. Crops – 5 Ha	Land under ponds – 0.08 Ha

Source : Deptt. of Agriculture, Hailakandi

Moreover, in Hailakandi, area under HYV of seeds is also limited, e.g. during 2008-09 area under HYV of paddy in Hailakandi is only 1.98 percent, i.e.,

#### DISTRICT-WISE AREA UNDER HYV OF PADDY (2008-09)

DISTRICT	Total(AREA IN HECT.)	%(Percentage)
HAILAKANDI	26700	1.98
KARIMGANJ	38789	2.88
CACHAR	43864	3.26
ASSAM	1345077	100

Source : Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Hailakandi

The point to be noted here from the above table is that except Hailakandi all other districts (taken as example in the table) are having area (under HYV of paddy during 2008-09) more than 2 (Two) percent.

(9) Level of Education : Levels of education and training in the district are extremely poor resulting in poor quality of human capital. Unless levels of learning and professional skills are considerably improved and so long as capital is qualitatively poor, adoption of modern technology would not be possible and the unsatisfactory performance of agriculture would continue.

(10) Research Centre: There is no research centre for agricultural sector in Hailakandi thus providing no opportunity to introduce any new techniques of farming.

(11) Labour Scarcity: Scarcity of labourers in agricultural sector of the district has become a major problem today, i.e., other remunerative non-agricultural occupations are attracting more labour force than the agricultural sector. This has been shown in the following table –

DISTRICT	Total Workers	Agricultural Labourers	% (Percentage)	Other Workers	% (Percentage)
Hailakandi	179881	25690	14	85716	48
Karimganj	303294	45735	15.08	167920	56
Cachar	465734	62576	13.44	280976	60
Assam	9538591	1263532	13.25	4199374	45

Source : Directorate of Economics & Statistics, (2008-09).

The table indicates that only few percent (14%) of labourers are engaged in agricultural sector of Hailakandi in comparison to the percentage of other workers (48%).

It is thus obvious from the above that the problems faced by agricultural sector of Hailakandi are centuries old and these cannot be set right in a short period of time. However the way government is concerned about these problems, it is hoped that in the near future, district agriculture would be marching ahead, solving most of these problems.

### **(C) PROSPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT IN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR OF HAILAKANDI**

Though district agriculture is faced with large variety of problems yet it is observed that there is wide prospect of development in this sector, e.g. –

- (1) In Multiple Cropping, i.e., Ginger, Turmeric, Teel, Horticultural crops (including vegetables).
- (2) In Agro-based industries like match industry, sericultural industry, etc.
- (3) Development through improved technology including application of HYV seeds, Bio-fertilizers, Irrigation facilities, etc.

### **(D) Government Measures / Steps Implemented so far In Agricultural Sector of Hailakandi :**

Realising the fact that agriculture has the capacity and potentiality to contribute a lot for the economic development of the district and thereby state, also being faced with several problems, all possible measures have been initiated by the Government to boost agricultural production, some of which are outlined as follows :

### **NAME OF SCHEMES :**

- (1) ATMA - AGRICULTURE TECHNOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT AGENCY (Only Demo.)
- (2) RKVY - RASHTRIYA KRISHI VIKAS YOJANA
- (3) AVY - ASSAM VIKASH YOJANA
- (4) SEED VILLAGE PROGRAMME
- (5) AACP - ASSAM AGRICULTURAL COMPETITIVENESS PROJECT

- (6) HORTICULTURE TECHNOLOGY MISSION
- (7) IPM - INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT
- (8) INM - INTEGRATED NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT
- (9) KCC - KISHAN CREDIT CARD
- (10) MMMA - MICRO MANAGEMENT MODE OF AGRICULTURE
- (11) TSP - TRIBAL SUB-PLAN
- (12) STATE PRIORITY SECTOR

### **OTHER STRATEGIES LIKE ;**

- (1) Attaining self-sufficiency in food,
- (2) Increase in crops intensity, i.e., replacing single cropping by double cropping and introduction of short duration variety,
- (3) Greater stress on high value crops like horticulture and vegetable,
- (4) Extension of area under rabi, crops in flood free season, etc., etc.

### **(E) REMEDIAL MEASURES / SUGGESTIONS**

There is no denying the fact that Hailakandi, being an agrarian economy, is lagging far behind when compared to other districts of the state. Hence, in order to pave the way for agricultural development in the district, the following remedial measures are suggested :

- (1) Demonstration on new crops.
- (2) Awareness Programme.
- (3) Demonstration on Zinger and Turmeric.
- (4) Mechanization through Power Tiller, Tractor, Hand Compression Sprayer, etc.
- (5) Exploration of flow irrigation, deep tube well (natural resource where available).
- (6) Application of Bio-fertilizer.
- (7) Land reclamation / Soil conservation.
- (8) Area Expansion on potential feasible horticultural crops (including vegetables).
- (9) Cold Storage Construction In Feasible Location.
- (10) Marketing through Auto Van / Thella.
- (11) Training In Farm Power Machinery.
- (12) Kishan Mela in the District.
- (13) Training of Seed growers on Quality Seed Production.
- (14) Training on Marketing.
- (15) Seminar in the District.

### **CONCLUSION**

The picture / scenario that emerges from the above analysis can thus be summarized under the following heads :

- (1) Shifting of labourers from agricultural to non-agricultural sector.

- (2) Plots of land utilized more for construction of houses, brick industries, roads, etc. rather than for cultivation.
- (3) Total food grains production not only insufficient but also lacks quality.
- (4) Prospect of development in agricultural sector through multiple – cropping system, improved technology, etc.
- (5) Prospect of setting – up agro – based industries like match industry, sericultural industry, etc.

To conclude, we can say that in the absence of a developed agricultural sector, the base for “take-off” into a mature economy would be weak for which the economy would be characterized by wide spread disguised unemployment and thus high rate of population growth is expected to remain in a pitiable condition. In other words, it is the agricultural sector which makes it feasible for other sectors in the economy to emerge and grow.

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