

Proceedings of Meeting organized on 13th October, 2017



A meeting on “Finalization of Action Plan for 24 Drought Prone Districts under Pilot Implementation of intervention for most Vulnerable Drought Prone-Districts” was organized by National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA) at NAAS, NASC complex, New Delhi on 13th October, 2017 under the chairmanship of Dr. Ashok Dalwai CEO, NRAA.

The chairperson welcomed the participants and outlined the purpose of the meeting.

The chairman emphasized in his opening remarks that NRAA will perform as a knowledge platform and advocate policy formulation for rainfed areas. He then focused on food & nutritional security status in India, drawing attention to Country’s poor position in global hunger index; relevance of science and technology including ICT in agriculture; strategy for farmer’s doubling income; change in cropping pattern for rainfed farming, and importance of oil seeds, pulses and nutri-cereals in this regard he made it clear, that rainfed system includes dryland areas, low rainfall areas, higher rainfall areas and cold deserts etc. He also remarked that the funds have been tentatively allotted to drought prone states like A.P., Rajasthan and Karnataka to initiate dryland development activities in 24 districts and that initial activities should be rolled out from coming Rabi Season 2017. He stressed that programme should be prioritized mainly on integrated farming system and watershed based treatment approaches.

Dr. Alok Sikka, Ex DDG (NRM), ICAR advocated prioritization of rainfed areas on the basis of natural resources and socio-economic status of farmers. Agricultural activities are more diverse in rainfed areas with cultivation of over 34 crops in a year as compared to 4-5 in irrigated system. Rainfed farming is more vulnerable to climate change and therefore, it needs proper planning and designing.

Shri B. Rath, Addl. Commissioner, NRM Division suggested the need for integrated plan and one repository system for monitoring of Action Plan. Mrs. Rajni Taneja, Deputy Secretary, DM Division explained that drought management division has an MoU with CRIDA, Hyderabad and has paid Rs 8.50 lakh as 50% amount for preparation of drought proofing action plan, and that the division does not run any scheme/ programme for these 24 districts.

Thereafter, various technologies of drought proofing were presented by Dr. Ravindra Chary, Principal Coordinator, AICRPDA, Hyderabad, Dr. Sammy Reddy, Director, and Dr. K.V.Rao, Principal Scientist, all from CRIDA, Hyderabad. They explained in detail, drought proofing road map, status and templates for the identified 24 districts.

Mrs. Neeraja Adidam, JS(NRM) observed that relevant data is already available in many documents eg. DIP, DAP, DPAP etc, which should be compiled and utilized for future drought proofing plan.

The chairperson emphasized the importance of training of extension officers of all 24 drought prone districts for understanding the concept of convergence of all available schemes of the different ministries/departments (under both central and state government) and deployment of all available technologies with existing agricultural schemes based on a comprehensive and integrated plan. Dr. K.V. Rao informed that meetings have been organized in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh and now for finalization of Rajasthan action plan meeting will be organized during 3rd week of October, 2017 at Jaipur. Ms. Neelkamal Darbari, Principal Secretary, Govt. of Rajasthan explained that Rajasthan has a vast drought prone region; water availability is less and therefore livestock has significant importance in the rural economy; funds should be made available for horticulture activities. She also focused on integrated plan encompassing convergence of different schemes, farmers choice crop, risk mitigation etc. Dr. S. Roy, Director, MNCFC drew attention to the importance of satellite data and its incorporation in integrated farming system in these 24 districts. Shri Dinesh Singh, JS (MIDH) stressed on the use of annual aquifer mapping and water flow in soil upper and lower surface.

Dr. Anupam Barik, ADC (Crops) presented on crop Division Schemes (NFSM) suitable for rainfed farming with particular focus on pulses, oilseeds and millets. He also intimated that crop productivity is lower in 265 districts in comparison to state average and that he will share details of districts with low productivity in these 24 districts.

The chairman suggested the need for change of cropping pattern, with focus on drought tolerant and hardy crops like nutri-cereals, pulses, oil seeds and tropical horticultural crops.

Ms. Neerja Adidam, JS (NRM) suggested to take up development of one block in each district through convergence and that funds are available from RKVY. She also explained about RAD, value addition, agro-forestry, soil health management, organic farming, on farm water management (OFSM) of PMKSY etc. that DAC&FW is operating and that these are appropriate for rainfed areas. She also highlighted that accelerated Fodder development programme will be assisted for quality seed production in drought prone districts for development of livestock. The Chairman remarked that NRAA fund may be utilized for infrastructure, pilot study, capacity building, establishment of nursery and value addition facilities in these districts.

Dr. A. Padmaja Naik, Director, Agriculture & Horticulture (Karnataka) advocated that Chikkaballapur and Yadgir districts should be included in the list of drought prone districts of Karnataka. Dr. P. Srinivasa, Joint Director, Animal Husbandry, Karnataka, also emphasized for special package for fodder development in these districts due to shortage of 2.0 lakh MT fodder for livestock. CRIDA, Hyderabad was asked to include fodder availability in the Action Plan.

Dr. Y. Damodar Naidu, Addl. Director, AH (Andhra Pradesh) advised to buy back better available livestock germplasm from farmers in drought prone areas. He also shared details of fodder development guidelines adopted by his state.

The following issues and recommendations emerged from the meeting:

- i. CRIDA, Hyderabad will facilitate and submit Action Plans at the earliest for implementation in the identified 24 drought prone districts. Further, they will suggest initial interventions that can be adopted from the coming Rabi season, without waiting for the final Action Plan.
- ii. Implementation of the programme in the districts will be done through consortium mode. MoU will be signed by the three state representatives and CRIDA officials. The District Collector/CEO, Zila Parishad, will supervise and manage all the programmes in each affected district through convergence.
- iii. CRIDA, Hyderabad may organize the Rajasthan meeting during 3rd week of October, 2017 at Jaipur under guidance of Ms. Neel Kamal Darbari, Principal Secretary, Agriculture, Rajasthan. The action plan may consider various suggestion made by the Principal Secretary.

- iv. NRAA would act as a platform for knowledge hub, policy making, bridging the gap between centre and states in implementation of programmes and connect the people across the country, in rolling out rainfed area development programmes.
- v. Livestock sector plays a significant role in rainfed/drought prone areas and contributes to food and nutrition as also income security of rural people, especially the landless, marginal and small farmers. They provide safety nets during drought. Therefore, livestock will be given due importance in all Action Plans.
- vi. Paddy-wheat cropping system has been dominating due to availability of technology and robust procurement policy. In the interest of resources, the efficiency and suitability of India's production systems, it is advisable to shift to more hardy crops and diversified agriculture in rainfed areas.
- vii. Various agronomic and engineering technologies, besides crop diversification and sector diversification as presented by CRIDA shall form the basis of intervention.
- viii. Integrated Farming Systems (IFS) and Watershed Management approaches shall be the platform for intervention.
- ix. Considering the water stress in rainfed regions, which can get exacerbated with the impact of climate change factors, sustainable approach to development is important.
- x. Income approach to agriculture should be given due importance, besides production strategies.

At the end of the meeting, CEO, NRAA thanked all the guests and participants.

M K Srivastava
1.11.2017

M.K. Srivastava
(Director (AH&F)
National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA)