

Session 2 - Indian Cotton 2021 and Beyond - How to Increase Cotton Productivity / Yield in India

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Cotton is not just a commodity for India rather it is our culture, way of life and tradition which connects to our roots from the very beginning of human civilization.

After partition i.e. 1947, there was a setback to cotton area and production with transfer of large irrigated cotton areas of Punjab to Pakistan, whereas the mills remained in India and there was scarcity of cotton for feeding the textile mills.

Through various governmental measures, HDP, rain water harvesting, inter cropping, drip irrigation and technology mission, the area under cotton cultivation went up from 43 lakh hectares to 133 lakh hectares presently. Similarly, the cotton yield which was around 132 kg per hectare also reached more than 500 kgs. Thus, now cotton plays a major role in sustaining livelihood of around 80 lakh cotton farmers in India.

The biggest boost to increase in cotton area had been due to the Government decision of enhancing MSP @ 1.5 times of cotton of production (A2+FL). This decision has motivated cotton farmers to a great extent and sustained their interest in cotton cultivation.

Now, India wears the crown of number one in cotton production in the entire globe. And all credit goes to our cotton farmers. I salute our farmers who have brought this pride to our nation despite their small-small land holdings. The way cotton consumption is increasing in India and almost matching with cotton production, shortly we may not have any surplus cotton for export purpose. And why should we export raw cotton, why not with value addition. We all have to think in this direction.

If we look back and introspect, we will find that although we are number one in cotton production our productivity is very low (Global average 750 kg; Australia, Brazil, USA and China- 1800-2000 kg per hectare). Therefore, there is a dire need to think ways and means for enhancing our cotton productivity.

Just imagine, what miracle our farmer can do if we achieve global average i.e. from 500 kgs to 750 kgs, our cotton production will be 600 lakh bales instead of 350 lakh bales from the same area. We will not only become AtmaNirbhar, but can also increase our foreign exchange earning manifold by cotton or textile exports.

The way forward to overcome low productivity:

- ✧ We have to create huge irrigation infrastructure or promote drip irrigation facilities to each and every farm, so that the field should not be totally dependent on rain-fed conditions. Our scientists have to play a big role in developing hybrids and cultivars, high yield, less maturity period, cotton seed varieties so that farmers can grow more cotton from the same area to improve their economic conditions.
- ✧ The availability of more than 1000 varieties of cotton seed in India is also a big challenge, because this always confuses the farmers. Therefore, there is a need to identify and produce selected varieties which are suitable for farmers considering their local soil condition.
- ✧ The seed should preferably be high yielding, with less maturity period, less water consumption, resistant to moisture stress and pest attacks.

- ✧ Awareness must be created amongst farmers by timely advisories and transfer of latest technology through:
 - Front Line Demonstration on integrated crop management,
 - Inter Cropping (Cowpea, Cluster bean, Groundnut, Gram, Soybean)
 - High Density Planting, Rain water harvesting and Drip Irrigation,
 - Soil moisture conservation techniques,
 - Suitable agronomic practices including poly-mulching, and
 - Mechanised harvesting to avoid contamination at field level.
- ✧ Contract farming may also be helpful to Increase Yield and Quality. The State Government should play a role of coordinator/ facilitator between the producer and the consumer and should ensure that:
 - One village, one variety concept should be changed to one district, one variety/hybrid of cottonseed.
 - Crop loan at lower interest on consumer's guarantee,
 - Availability of quality inputs at discounted rates,
 - Crop insurance, synchronized sowing and integrated crop management,
 - Contamination control measures from farm to factory and
 - Assured buyback of final produce from farmers' doorsteps by consumers.
- ✧ Better seed technology should be imported and customised to Indian conditions. Technical know-how agreements can be made with advanced countries.

With all these interventions, the productivity and quality of cotton will improve and India will be Atmanirbhar to meet all raw material requirement of domestic textile Industry which will reduce import dependency.

Efforts of CCI for improvement in yield:

- ✧ Propagating adoption of best farm practices through Cott-Ally mobile app.
- ✧ Facilitated distribution of two lakh kg good quality ELS cotton seeds to farmers in Tamil Nadu at subsidised rates through Govt. of Tamil Nadu. Follow-up with other potential states like Karnataka, MP and Rajasthan to make similar arrangements for supply of good quality ELS cotton seeds to farmers.
- ✧ Harvesting skills of more than 5000 cotton farmers were improved by distribution of hand-held kapasplucker machines by CCI under CSR.
- ✧ Constructed large number of check-dams under CSR to promote rainwater harvesting amongst cotton farmers in the state of Maharashtra.
- ✧ Organised various workshops so that all stakeholders viz. farmers, consumers (cotton and textile industry), Central and State Government officials, research institutes and seed producers may be motivated to put forward their views regarding improvement in yield of cotton.
