

## Key objectives of an Agriculture Policy



Agriculture has its own standing, but it is also part of an ecosystem that has to ensure right to food, life and livelihood, right to climate resilience and protection from climate change. Therefore, Goa's Agriculture Policy must aim to ensure that agriculture is retained and sustained and that there is sustainable growth in agricultural production with equity. Consequently, the words 'sustainable', 'growth' and 'equity' are key to development of agriculture.

## Towards an Agriculture Policy for Goa

### Identification of socio-cultural and economic determinants of land use

The socio-cultural and economic determinants of land use need to be identified in the policy, if equity, and consequently sustainability is to be achieved. Further, Goa has a rich history of agricultural production achieved through toil and hard work. If Goa is green and a land worth fighting for, it is because of the toil that has got it thus far. However, this toil is neither recognised nor valued. Added to this is the fact that family labour of women and children in the field is invisibilised, or engaged in subsistence agriculture, which is not counted as work. All this results in people abandoning agriculture.

### Recognition and Dignity of Farm Labour and Decent Income

Therefore, agriculture can only be sustained through ensuring *both* recognition and dignity of farm labour, *and* a decent (as in comparable) income from agriculture. Addressing casteism and gender is intrinsic to lack of recognition and dignity to farming, is critical .

### Bio-diverse Agriculture

Time and again, it has been emphasised that the key to sustainability is also through discouraging mono-cultures, and actively supporting bio-diverse agriculture and replacing chemical inputs with organic inputs. Hence, the farmers, specially those with small holdings (less than two acres of land) need to be hand-held and subsidised through the process, while livelihoods through agriculture are secured for the long run.

### Equitable Access to Agriculture

How can access to agriculture be facilitated to attain sustainability, growth and equity? Access to agriculture can only be effective if there is equitable access to land, equitable access to schemes, equitable access to credit and equitable access to water. Do the persons actually physically cultivating have the access?

NO TO FURTHER CONVERSION OF FIELD AND ORCHARD LANDS

The Land to the Tiller Act, is a positive piece of legislation, in terms of access to land, on which access to schemes and credit are hinged. But currently, it is also weaponised by land sharks, to plant persons making false claims of agricultural tenancy, which, together with the bouncers, is sufficient enough to drive even a small land holder or actual cultivator to concede to a distress sale, which in turn leads to real estate occupying not just farmlands but even fields, and of course, the downslide of agriculture. Therefore, once it is clear that fields and orchard lands cannot be converted, these kinds of false claims could be substantially averted.

## RETHINK NORMATIVE PRESCRIPTIONS FOR SCHEMES

Those left with the lands as they cannot be sold to real estate, should be able to work those lands. For this, they have to, among other things, have access the schemes. The normative prescriptions for the schemes must take into account Goa's realities of many small landholdings. There has to be a needs assessment to envision schemes, and not targets by way of restrictions not to provide the benefits of the schemes to the eligible beyond the number set. This together with timely disbursement (NOT reimbursement) of the financial assistance for the scheme while monitoring the compliance, will go a long way. Schemes must consciously include schemes supporting organic farming and organic inputs.

## ACCESS TO FIELDS, YES! ACCESS THROUGH FIELDS, NO!

Physical access to fields is important to enable a tractor or harvester to access the field, and must be ensured. But access through fields for roads which become thoroughfares when there are big broad roads parallelly must be banned. In a village like Taleigao, it has actively reduced the area under cultivation, besides encouraging real estate projects to creep in on agricultural land. Penalties for such projects, and requirement of restoration, besides penalties for planning and development authorities and panchayat elected representatives and authorities who sanction this destruction of agriculture, could help. Such disablers of agriculture have to be addressed in the agriculture policy, apart from pro-actively ensuring enablers of agriculture. Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) before undertaking any measures that would adversely affect the traditional lands and resources of indigenous and local people, must be mandated in the agriculture policy

## ACCESS TO WATER, TO UNPOLLUTED WATER!

Without access to water, and unpolluted water at that. agriculture is not possible. So apart from schemes for subsidising construction of wells, the existing water bodies must be



preserved and sustained. Here it is important that the policy addresses also the disablers of agriculture. Farmers in Taleigao have requested that there has to be a regulation of the amount of water extracted by tankers, and a cap on further tanker licencing. This year, in February itself, the *ondos* in Taleigao had run dry. Also, the agriculture department should have powers to address issues of discharge of sewage and garbage in the fields, and to ensure that there is no blockage or disruption of drainage system which adversely affects agriculture.

#### AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT NODAL:

#### PREPARING DATABASE OF LAND HOLDINGS, INVENTORISATION OF KINDS OF AGRICULTURAL LANDS, DRAINAGE ROUTE MAPS, SECURNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION


For this purpose, the agriculture department has to be designated as the nodal department in matters agriculture. It has to have a database of the landholdings, sizes, and inventorisation of the various kinds of agricultural lands including khazans and the various kinds of agricultural uses that the agricultural land is put to, besides drainage route maps. Presently, the Agriculture Census is handled by the Department of Planning and Statistics, and it appears that that information is not found with the Department of Agriculture. Good governance should ensure that the census data is provided to, used and applied by the concerned Department.

It is the Agriculture Department that should feed information for the preparation of land use maps, apart from securing people's participation in database building, in the way the bio-diversity act provides for the same. The Agriculture Department should also conduct inspections and periodic studies that identify the needs of farmers and also the disablers of agriculture so that appropriate steps can be taken suo motu, without waiting for complaints.

#### V.V. IMPORTANT: ADDRESS DISABLERS OF AGRICULTURE

All this information must be harnessed to ensure that mining, and mega projects that will require roads through fields and will decimate the fields, or that will require water consumption that the area cannot cater to, or which does not have space for sewage and garbage disposal should not be sanctioned, and here again penalties must be specifically prescribed for those who sanction in clear violation of the provisions. Not allowing OCI Card holders to hold agricultural land is detrimental to Goa, given the context of forced (by circumstances) migration in current times, only for purposes of employment to return to Goa in retirement.

#### INCLUSIVENESS: GENDER



Also, there have to be mechanisms set up at local levels that will ensure participation of all farmers. Here it is also necessary to specially prescribe proactive measures to enlist female farmers and encourage women to be part of the farmers' clubs, as against the male only farmers' clubs today.

## REVENUE GENERATION FOR CLIMATE RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE

The fields and agricultural lands are the lungs of the locality and also prevent flooding in the areas. They are its climate resilient infrastructure, whose benefits are reaped by all the residents of the locality, and especially the high rise real estate projects in the locality. Considering the amount of resources that these projects draw from the locality, there must be a cess levied on the builders/unit-holders of these projects, and even more so on those who have second homes in Goa, so that the not so viable low lying fields can be maintained and there is value for work done in the fields.

## INCORPORATE REQUIREMENTS FOR REVITALISATION OF AGRICULTURE UNDER FOOD SECURITY ACT

The requirements mandated by the Food Security Act, 2013, for revitalisation of agriculture, such as ensuring livelihood security to farmers by way of remunerative prices, access to inputs, credit, irrigation, power, crop insurance, etc., and prohibiting unwarranted diversion of land and water from food production, must be incorporated..

## ACCESSIBLE ADMINISTRATIVE REDRESSAL MECHANISMS, ACCOUNTABILITY AND MONITORING

There must be accessible administrative mechanisms for justice, within the Department for addressing violations. There must simultaneously also be judicial remedies for holding violators in governance accountable. Similarly, there must be a monitoring mechanism.

## INSTITUTIONALISED BASIC AGRICULTURE EDUCATION FOR ALL

Basic education in agriculture must be taught in a graded way in schools and colleges. This education must be institutionalised and must not be at the mercy of a school management that will allow a proactive teacher to incorporate it in her teaching.

In summary, in the policy, there must be a vision statement, a statement of the socio economic and cultural determinants of agriculture, a thrust of proactively enabling equitable sustainable growth in agriculture and proactively addressing the disablers of agriculture.



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