Marginal increase in agri-food production

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Records show that the overall crop production – discounting paddy – enjoyed a slight increase during a phase that lasted Dimapur in an estimated 40,000 Metric Tonnes to 48,000 Metric Tonnes loss in production from April to December in 2009. During the phase of damages assessment undertaken by the Department of Agriculture in Dimapur, before the rains arrived, the total affected area was already estimated at around 20,000 hectares.

Additional information on the level of production in Dimapur for the past three production years shows a slight increase. Discounting paddy, which was estimated at 90% by agriculture officials in August, cereals and lentils and commercial crops faced relatively well but not good enough by agricultural standards of yearly monsoons. Production of cereals in the district had a poor run, however. During 2007-2008, cereal production over 40,000 metric tonnes harvested at 1,354,947 Lakh Metric Tonnes. But for the current phase of 2009-2010, the total area of production is recorded at a mere 81,420 Metric Tonnes and 66,463 hectares.

Pulses increased slightly from 11,863 Metric Tonnes during 2007-2008 to 17,946 Metric Tonnes in 2009-2010. Notwithstanding the estimated slight increase in generic commercial crop production, policymakers have acknowledged the need for long-term action plans to check negative repercussions from seasonal exigencies such as delayed/reduced rainfall. With Nagaland still a rural agriculture economy, agriculture officials had earlier pointed to pooling government funds to meet local emergency aids. The state government’s appeal to the central government to grant funds for the drought in 2008-2009 could not be. As the central government’s refusal demonstrated, the Nagaland government is expected to design disaster management action plans to tackle seasonal exigencies that the central government may not in future again assist.

Long-term drought action plan needed

Al Nougillie

The Agriculture food production index for Dimapur shows a marginal – if not cynical – increase over the past three fiscal years. The small upturn is remarkable considering Dimapur district was pegged Nagaland’s worst-hit, by the long spell of drought that swept across the country in 2008-2009.

The drought across the country in 2008 impacted the Indian agriculture economy in ways more than merely shrinking the stock index. It also set into motion an escalation in prices of agricultural produce and consumption, one which has still not receded. The drought and the onset of reduced rainfall, the agriculture sector was compelled to seek alternatives.

Also hit by a “drought-like” season, Nagaland state estimated a production loss to about Rs. 100 crore, as estimated by the Agriculture department in 2009 alone. The state depends on Dimapur for food production – or at least, as the supply base. And when the dry spell swept northern India, the condition of Nagaland’s commercial hub was no different with the Agriculture department’s periodic assessment throwing up disturbing figures.

For instance, the Agriculture department had told this reporter earlier that the “rice bowl” regions of Jahan and Mediphemas were entirely put to the monsoon’s mercy. Sub-division Mediphemas is one of the two largest rice and paddy producing swaths in the contiguous Dimapur region. A recent record made available accounts 70% of the Mediphemas bowl to be under cultivation. The drought reduced the production area’s base to at least 67% of Dimapur’s production. The delayed monsoon finally arrived but two-times lesser than the normal rainfall of 1,047 mm. Thus, the most affected area of Dimapur’s agriculture crop base was paddy. Other generic commercial crops (mustard etc) enjoyed a comparatively remarkable run of production.

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