

XII.A.6. Interaction Between Environment and Agriculture - A Study on the Warrangal District of Andhra Pradesh

Nandan Nawn

Ph.D.Scholar, Centre for Economic Studies & Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Effect of environmental degradation in less developed countries is often ignored. The importance of food security pose as a trade-off. After the initiation of new agricultural strategy, the cost of cultivation has gone up substantially, especially due to pesticides. Several studies pointed out that the major share of the input cost is spent on pesticides, however, pesticides do not provide unmitigated benefits. It also creates environmental degradation in soil, air, water, it affects health of the cultivators. Most importantly it does not guarantee successful cultivation. Either due to overuse or irrational use of pesticides the pests become resistant. As a result of that the cultivators are forced to spend higher amount of pesticides the pests become resistant. As a result of that the cultivators are forced to spend higher amount of pesticides or pesticides of stronger quality. These costs do not figure into the calculation of the farmer.

In the Guntur and Parkasham district of AP, within the cotton cultivators this problem was witnessed for the first time in 1987-88. Very recently in 1997-98, in the area adjoining Warrangal district of AP more than 300 farmers have committed suicide due to crop failure. Initial studies suggest that the primary reason is the debt burden (ranging from 25,000-60,000 rupees). This paper looks deeper into the possible reasons with the help of structured questionnaires. Interviews conducted in the first week of May, 1999.

The paper examined the possible reasons behind sticking to the cultivation on the part of the farmers in the face of repeated crop failure due to emergence of pest in the past. Profile of the farmers (from secondary sources) will be compared with the farmers still cultivating cotton. The paper also looks into the question of sustainability of the new agricultural strategy in the wake of the environmental degradation.