

- d. inadequate priority to emerging challenges, particularly post-harvest, marketing and environmental conservation
- e. the multiplicity of institutes with overlapping mandates has led to duplication of research work.
- f. Lack of accountability, less emphasis on multidisciplinary research, weak interaction among researchers, extension workers and farmers and the private sector and excessive centralization of planning and monitoring. A thorough reform of ICAR system is needed to address these weaknesses.

Regarding extension, the existing Training and Visit (T & V) system of extension is top-down in its approach and there is little participation by the farmers. There is, therefore, an immediate need for reforming and revitalizing the existing agricultural extension system in the country. The main ingredient of reforms should be

- a) active involvement of farmers through user groups / association
- b) participation by the private sector and the NGOs.
- c) increasing use of media and information technology to disseminate the knowledge on new agricultural practices and the information on output and input prices and
- d) building gender concerns into the system.

Section II : Redrafting the Agenda for Agricultural Development :

The process of liberalization of the Indian economy, introduced through economic reforms initiated in 1991, has largely bypassed the agricultural sector. The reforms as have been actually introduced by contemporary policymakers are mainly inspired by market theology, and are not grounded in the India-specific socio-economic milieu. These reforms have given, a false start to agricultural development, as they constitute a bundle of contradictions e.g. food subsidy is not consistent with market theology, the MSP system has resulted in the emergence of large surplus of rice and wheat.

The Underfed and the Undernourished : It is the agenda for agricultural development drawn up by contemporary policymakers inspired by market theology which needs to be urgently redrafted. India continues to remain the abode of the largest number of underfed and undernourished persons in the world, inspite the high level of production of foodgrains. FAO defines food security as "the physical economic access for all people at all times for enough food for an active, healthy life, with non-risk of losing such access and as such is directly connected with livelihood in developing countries". The so-called 'surplus' on basis of which policymakers build their strategy for agricultural development is 'effective demand surplus' and not a genuine surplus. It domestic food security is to be ensured where is the surplus for exports. Infact as a consequence of raising the issue prices of foodgrains in the PDS, the off-take of foodgrains declined significantly indicating that foodgrains became increasingly inaccessible to the poorer sections of the population. According to FAO, more than 225 million Indians remain chronically undernourished and the UNDP estimates that over one-half of all Indian preschoolers suffer from malnutrition. Eliminating hunger should therefore be the first priority on the redrafted agenda on agricultural development. Enriching the consumer basket of the relatively better off thus becomes a priority of the second order. We must first look at those consumers whose baskets are practically or nearly empty.

In the redrafted agenda the approach should be : Eliminate hunger first and poverty later. The co-existence of embarrassingly large stocks of foodgrains with FCI and sizeable