MODERNIZATION IN AGRICULTURE

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture has always been accorded an important position in the Indian society. There is endless evidence, including several British and European accounts, to show the flourishing state of our agriculture in the pre-British period. As regards the technical aspects of Indian agriculture, the British or European observers of 17th and 18th centuries were in no position to appreciate or evaluate them. Several of the indigenous practices which were perfected centuries ago, such as the rotation of crops, the practice of drill husbandry etc. were relatively unknown in the 17th century Europe, and are often cited as the major advances achieved during the 18th century 'agricultural revolution' in Europe. There were also efforts made by the British to 'improve' Indian agriculture during the 18th and 19th centuries. The important question is next dealt with- whether or not the soil of India is becoming exhausted under the present systems of cultivation. The goal of our agricultural strategy should be to support the modernisation of agriculture. Modernisation entails farmers adopting good agricultural practices, employing productivity enhancing farm inputs, making decisions about input use and choice of crops or livestock to maximise their profit and selling more of their output on the market. It will bring about a switch towards the production of higher value crops, as well as raising yields per acre and yields per worker. If small holder farmers are to embark on the transition to agricultural modernisation, the vicious circle of poverty, lack of resources and low productivity which characterises smallholder food crop farming must be broken. Good agricultural practices includes proper land and seedbed preparation, proper plant population and spacing, timely planting and weeding, pest control, soil conservation and proper harvest and post harvest handling.