The main activities of the community projects in the centres of Kurnool, South Kanara, Erode, and Palghat for increasing agricultural production is examined below.

SEED DISTRIBUTION

Seed distribution has been entrusted to certain village co-operative societies and marketing societies and is working satisfactorily. The societies get a commission of Re 1 per bag (of 125 lbs) seeds distributed. They get the seed from the agricultural demonstrator on credit. Certain selected ryots are asked to distribute at the same rate of commission. Better seeds are exchanged for local seeds. Agricultural demonstrators also distribute both nuclear and improved seeds.

The cultivator looks at both these seeds as same in quality as both are sold in the depot of the demonstrator. The appointment of propagandists on a salary of Rs 50 per month for spread of improved methods under the Grow More Food Scheme was stopped in 1951-52 as suitable men could not be found for this work. The scheme of registered model farms, one for each Taluq, with aid to such farmers upto Rs 250 each has also been stopped. There can be no justification for any subsidy to a farmer over and above what he has to spend for collecting improved seeds. This cost is covered by the premium paid to seed-farm ryots for such seeds.

Let us examine against this background the contribution of community projects for the multiplication and distribution of seeds. The projects are expected to start one seed-farm in each block. This will help multiplication of nuclear seeds given by the Department. The seed-farms have not so far come into being. The village guide for every 4 villages and the demonstrator of the Project distributes loans for seed and manure at 4½% per cent interest to enable ryots to buy them. But the Project is in no way helpful to the Department in the effective organisation of distribution. The Project staff have no relation to the marketing societies and to primary societies which distribute seeds, neither are they used by the Agricultural Department for pushing on seed multiplication. Seed distribution is pushed in the Project area by a special staff who collect indents for seeds. This leads to depletion of stocks and deprivation for other areas. The demonstrators of the regular line and their subordinates also distribute seeds in the same area.

Community Project areas should in the first place be confined to those which have irrigation facilities. Secondly, they should develop ryots' seed-farms for multiplying nuclear seeds. They ought to have this programme as they have a large village staff who can supervise seed-farms. Thirdly, seeds, even of the nuclear variety, may deteriorate unless the land is properly manured and water is sufficient for the crop. The village guides should have proper training in this and the demonstrator who supervises these guides should also have the necessary experience. Fourthly, a campaign to treat the seeds in order to maintain their purity is necessary. The work done by the APOS in Erode is commendable in this respect. Fifthly, targets should be set for the production of seeds. Distribution targets, however, have been thought of. The Agricultural Department has no doubt its targets for production for each district, and the Community Project may follow the same procedure. It is indeed a tragedy that a project nourished by the Union Government with a huge staff, loans, and grants should aim in parallel to do that of the Agricultural Department but without the latter's direction and supervision. Evacuation will be difficult when both the agencies are engaged in the same activity in the same area. Seed distribution is not well-organised even under the Agricultural Department. The latter has no defined relation with co-operatives for distribution of seeds. The agricultural demonstrators have also to sell seed instead of confining themselves to

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conducted an intensive campaign. Community Projects should promote an organisation, preferably a seed corporation on no profit and no loss basis, to arrange effective distribution of seeds through co-operative societies and private licensees as recommended by the Bombay Committee on Grow-More-Food.

Lastly, it ought to be possible to notify certain areas in projects where only improved varieties should be grown. When a better seed has established itself as superior to others and its suitability to a tract is not in doubt, there should be legal enforcement by a ‘Pure Seeds and Seedlings Act’ as in the Punjab. The variety grown in the notified area must be able to supply seeds for other areas.

A run her developmental activity of the Community Projects is the supply of vegetable and fruit seeds. There are villages in Kurnool where ryots are not used to growing vegetables. The present scheme helps such villages. Some village guides show special activity in these directions. The distribution is, however, uneven. It needs more planning and steady review. Apart from the Community Projects the Rayalseema development board also distributes coconut seedlings in large numbers. But they do not seem suitable for certain villages and do not grow.

GREEN MANURE CROPS

The raising of green manure crops has rapidly increased in all the Project areas, and to a greater extent in Palghat Taluq, owing to a heavy rainfall. But there are tracts in the Kurnool Project areas, and to a greater extent in Palghat Taluq where cultivators have little knowledge of raising green manure. In the Kalingarayan Channel area (Erode Community Project) the raising of kolinji with the second crop to be ploughed in April in the field is common. Round about Kodumudi, some is cultivated with jowar and some with sunhemp which is also used as green manure. Kolinji is used both for human and cattle consumption. It is necessary to examine to what extent poverty compels a cultivator to raise a food crop instead of a manure crop. The Director of Agriculture has been conducting an intensive campaign for growing various green manure crops and this naturally helps community project areas too.

The Japanese method of cultivation is spreading everywhere, among the richer landowners. It will filter to the small ryots in course of time. The reduction in the quantity of seed sown and area of seed-beds, the provision of a raised seed-bed, the removal of weeds after drying the interspacements—all these are appreciated by the ryots. But heavy manuring of seedlings is not possible where seedlings have to stand on seed-beds for 4 to 6 weeks after which period alone second crop lands are available for transplanting in the Erode Project area. The ryots also represented that the Japanese method needed water and manure at the proper time. Unless they were sure of water for the second crop by bunding streams or otherwise, there was not much hope for the spread of the Japanese method in the Palghat area. Where a single crop is raised and the adoption of Japanese method is possible, there is the danger in areas of heavy rainfall that very fast seed-bed may be washed away. The advantage of leaving larger space between seedlings when transplanted had been known in many areas long before the introduction of the Japanese method. The Japanese method is appreciated, nevertheless, for the economic method of raising nurseries and manuring them properly.

PLANT PROTECTION

The demand for fungicides and insecticides has increased. But they are not available in sufficient quantities. In the Kurnool area there is great demand for insecticides for spraying fruit trees. Neither the regular demonstrators nor the village guides have a sufficient knowledge of sprayers and dusters in all the centres. Big ryots, co-operative societies and panchayat boards will certainly buy these, if their purchase is properly planned. In view of the fact that a small field may prove a menace to the area if infected with pests and the need for wholesale eradication of such pests, the possibility of controlling such pests through the large stall maintained by the Community Projects makes it worthwhile exploring the feasibility of applying the Pests and Diseases Control Act to the Community Project areas in respect of essential crops. Pesticides are offered at half rate and hand-operated dusters and sprayers are issued free. This policy will not work in the future as there is a heavy demand for pesticides and equipment for spraying and dusting. The Projects should be able to influence the existing organisations and medium and big ryots to buy them at cost price.

Plant protection by use of insecticides is a technical operation. There is a regular staff under the Agricultural Department for this purpose. Project officers can help by providing the funds and organisation for the sale of equipment and insecticides, but can hardly plan and pursue a programme of plant protection except by the regular staff.

CHEMICAL FERTILISERS

The Community Project depots sell special manures as ammonium phosphate, urea, and triple super at 50 per cent less than the market price. Once the use of these manures is demonstrated, there will be no need to sell them at 50 per cent of the market price which benefit reaches only the big landowners who could afford to pay the market price. When private firms sell these manures at double the price, their sale at a subsidised price will only tempt their resale. At Chagulmuri (Kurnool) cultivators alleged that, while they could not purchase any triple super, the Co-operative Loan and Sale Society, which sells fertilisers for which it gets a (cash credit loan from the Central Co-operative Bank, supplied a private merchant in two lorries triple super which was smuggled to Guntur District. Whether this allegation is true or not, it cannot be gainsaid that the scope for black-marketing is great owing to the existence of two different prices. These valuable manures are sold at such a rate, they have been made available in large quantities in advance of experience of their suitability for different soils and instruction of ryots in their use. A subsidised price cannot make up for the inevitable time-lag in their sale. The earlier the subsidy is abolished, the better.

Community Projects do not give manure on credit for sale to co-operative societies unlike the Agricultural Department. This is possibly because the Project officers themselves issue loans and prefer to do the distribution of manures themselves. They thus get entangled in business and clerical work, which retards their other activities.

While its value as a manure is well understood in Erode and Kurnool Project centres, urea is not so popular in Palghat taluq. The value of triple super is yet to be understood in both Erode and Palghat areas. The proper dose of phosphates on laterite soils and the combination of bulky organic matter and lime with phosphates has yet to
be popularised. There is need for a study of the application of phosphates to different soils. There is need for direction and advice to the agricultural staff of the Community Projects by soil chemists, which cannot be given by a non-technical Project officer of the Revenue Department.

The regular demonstrator sells super-phosphate in the same area at considerable profit and it is double that of Community Project fertilisers. It is but natural that he should be tempted to advertise his phosphates as superior to triple super. He, too, has to show results. This was my experience in one of the areas in a project. Co-operation of the sales of fertilisers by two departments is obviously necessary.

The distribution of chemical fertilisers was given until recently to 14 tender firms and co-operative societies on a 50:50 basis. The Agricultural Department had powers to issue licenses under the Madras Manure Dealers Licensing Order 1949 and to control quality and prices under the Madras Manure Mixtures Quality and Price Control Order 1950. It had a special staff to inspect depots, to note irregularities, and analyse samples whether they were up to the standard guaranteed. The Department wanted more powers in order to enforce the orders effectively. The Director of Agriculture proposed comprehensive legislation on the model of the Fertilisers and Feeding Stalls Act of the UK. Manure mixtures have sometimes been found to contain foreign matter like mud and ash. Oil mills and dealers in animal cakes do not ordinarily heed the advice by the Department. In Bombay, manure mixtures are manufactured by the Department and by contractors under its supervision, and arc distributed by co-operative societies,

just when the Director of Agriculture, Madras, wanted more powers and staff to control quality and price, the Government of Madras has cancelled the existing orders. It thought the orders discriminatory since 14 firms were selected for distribution of chemical fertilisers. There will be no price control nor quality control in future. Fertilisers will be sold to any body by the Agricultural Department, and the buyers will be free to re-sell at any price. The Chief Minister has appealed to the high moral sense of the merchants for the maintenance of good quality and reasonable price. This change has put the co-opera-tive societies at the mercy of private trade.

A Retrenchment Committee in Madras recommended 3 years back that it was unwise to utilise the technical staff of the Agricultural Department for business and the work of distribution of manures and iron articles should be handed over to co-operative societies. In conformity with this recommendation, Government has been reserving 50 per cent of the fertiliser business to co-operative societies. To strengthen the societies to undertake this business, it gave a guarantee to the Imperial Bank to advance to Central Co-operative Banks up to Rs 50 lakhs for financing distribution of chemical fertilisers. It gave a special subsidy of Rs 15 lakhs in 1951-55 to sell chemical fertilisers and ground-nut cakes at reduced prices. It made free grants and loans for construction of godowns.

The Registrar of Co-operative Societies also set up the necessary organisation for administration and supervision to check and audit the increased transactions. During 1951-52 co-operative wholesale stores and marketing federations through their 221 depots and branches and 2,102 select primaries sold 21,512 tons of ammonium sulphate and 8,220 tons of super-phosphate to ryots. Under the new policy which has been adopted since October 1, co-operative societies have to depend on their own resources in purchasing fertilisers from the Government. Fertilisers are handled by a Central pool of the Government of India. A co-operative supply society has certain inherent disadvantages in competing with private traders in the open market. It must sell at a fixed price, conform to quality, and cannot deliver stock. A trader may vary his price from person to person, may refuse to sell his stock, and has more scope to adopt unfair practices. Why spend so much money and effort to build the co-operatives if the State does not want to foster them? It the Government of India, which is the custodian of fertilisers, wishes to encourage a free market, why then should the Planning Commission, the Ministers' Conference, and the Union Minister for Agriculture lay down the state policy of fostering co-operative action as the future type of economy in the country? Co-operatives need a great deal of strengthening even to be able to sell the 50 per cent of fertilisers allotted to them. It is a pity that instead of directing state policy in this direction, Government should have put the societies on a par with private trade.

The Government decision to sell fertilisers to any body or any institution instead of allowing only 14 firms to have a monopoly in 50 per cent of the trade will be widely commended. The emergence of a surplus in fertilisers in the market is one of the reasons for decontrol. What is this surplus due to? Will the same surplus continue after a few months? Can cornering be prevented? Should not quality and price in the free market be controlled? What about the difficulties to the cultivator who cannot get fertilisers near his village, who may have to pay a high price, and some times buy adulterated fertiliser? One result of decontrol may well be the combination of private dealers to pool their resources and control the market.

Everything therefore is topsy-turvy. When the state puts primary agricultural co-operatives of small holders on a par with private traders, it makes it more difficult for Community Projects to sell manures through established co-operatives. Neither the projects have been given proper direction and facilities to sell only through co-operatives except for very special reasons.

The other points impressed about manure distribution were as follows. The time of distribution of loans should tally with that of application of manures. In some villages in Erode Project, it was represented that manure loan could be used only in the latter half of August for the pure base of ground-nut takes when these cakes sold at an excessively high price. The Project officers find it difficult to issue loans as and when required as they have other work to do. Loans given by the Agricultural Department under the intensive manuring scheme could not reach in time in the Erode area, thus resulting in borrowing from private agencies. There is a great rate of interest for purchase of manures. The price at which the regular demonstrator sold manures was a little less than the price charged by central co-operative stores to agricultural primary co-operatives. The commission for the central co-operative stores should be therefore reduced to the minimum. The Community Projects gave a commission of Rs 15 per ton on chemical fertilisers to selling agents which was Rs 3 more than what the
The Agricultural Department gave for sale of fertilisers through them. In so far as there was a central pool to supply chemical fertilisers, margins for distribution can be easily standardised.

COMPOST PITS

The campaign for rural compost started under Grow-More-Food schemes is being continued with vigour under the Community Projects. In irrigated areas where a landowner has sufficiency of land for making the compost, where water cannot percolate or collect in compost pits and where green leaf is available without any payment, compost pits have spread rapidly. Much depends on the village guide, some of whom evince a zeal for this kind of work. The poorer folk, however, sometimes make themselves scarce, as two demonstrators told me, when pressure is put on them to make compost. For the poor, there is little attraction in the shape of eventual increase in crop production. Compost manure gives one-third more manure than manure pits and this may increase production by 3 per cent which is hardly impressive for the small peasant. Cowdung and ash are popular in Palghat tahiq as they are more suitable for its soils. It is to be noted that where a Panchayat Board executive takes interest, compost can be collected on a large scale (eg, Shri Krishnarao at Arlagadda, Kurnool). A subsidy of Rs 5 per ton (250 cu ft) is given both by the Agricultural Department and the Community Project. It is doubtful, however, to what extent it will induce the small holders to make compost pits, who may not have surplus land for this purpose measuring 10'x6'. The benefit of this subsidy goes mainly to big and medium landowners. In some villages compost pits are neither on the farm nor in the backyard of houses but are dug in a common site outside the village. The extra labour involved in carrying cattle dung and house rubbish to this site deters many. There is need for co-ordination of the work of agricultural fieldmen who work in the regular line and that of the village guides in this respect.

Also municipalities and panchayat boards should have a definite programme of making compost and selling it. Community Project staff and the agricultural staff should have a definite place in making such programmes and pushing on their execution.

"Now that compost-making has been sufficiently popularised, there can be no reason for any special concessions such as transport of compost at concessional rates for local bodies in the lorries of the Agricultural Department. It will be none too soon if legislation was enacted for conservation of manure making it obligatory on the people in notified areas to compost or preserve their farm yard manure and other waste-material in the pits. Similarly local bodies might be notified to compost their refuse before disposal.