

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
AGRICULTURE  
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:802  
ANSWERED ON:05.03.2007  
IRRIGATION OF ARID AND SEMI-ARID LAND  
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**Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:**

- (a) the area of arid and semi arid irrigated cultivable land in the country, State-wise;
- (b) whether the wasteful flow of huge quantity of water available for irrigation due to the absence of proper water harvesting has led to droughts and hardship to farmers;
- (c) if so, whether the Government has formulated any policy on conservation and harvesting of rainwater and set up Rainwater Management Authority and Rainfed Area Authority to regulate and check wastage of rainwater;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the steps taken for better management of agricultural resources and providing alternative employment opportunities to the farmers?

**Answer**

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA)

(a): The states having substantial areas under arid and semi arid conditions are; Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu and Uttar Pradesh. The extent of net irrigated land in these states is annexed.

(b): The arid and semi arid areas generally receive low rainfall and any deviation from the normal rainfall causes draught like situation. Besides, some amount of runoff water goes unutilized as there are no natural barriers to store it. The exploitation of groundwater is generally more than the annual rate of recharge. The recent droughts in many States are the testimony of reduction in groundwater buffer. Water harvesting technologies, such as percolation ponds, check dams, etc., may help in combating draught situations.

(c): The National Agriculture Policy accords abiding importance to integrated and holistic development of rainfed areas by conservation of rain water on watershed basis. A Government Order to set up the National Rainfed Area Authority (NRAA) has been issued on 3.11.2006.

(d)&(e): The National Rainfed Area Authority will advise, guide and monitor the implementation of programmes covering all aspects of sustainable and holistic development of rainfed areas, including appropriate farming and livelihood system approaches. The Authority has a two tier structure. The first tier is the Governing Board that will provide necessary leadership and appropriate coordination in implementation of programmes. The Governing Board will be chaired by the Union Agriculture Minister and co-chaired by the Union Rural Development Minister. The second tier would be the Executive Committee consisting of technical experts and representatives from stake holder Ministries. The mandate of the Authority are:

1 To prepare a perspective plan, outlining the national strategy and road map for holistic and sustainable development of rainfed farming areas.

2 To evolve common guidelines for all schemes of different Ministries including Externally Aided Projects (EAPs) for development of Rainfed / Dry land Farming systems.

3 To coordinate and bring convergence within and among agricultural and wasteland development programmes being implemented in rainfed areas of the country.

4 To identify rainfed areas in different States which need priority attention and prepare watershed development programmes for integrated natural resource management in consultation with States, focusing on multi dimensional crop, livestock, horticulture, agri-pasture integrated systems and programmes for landless farming communities.

5 To identify gaps in input supply, credit availability, dissemination of appropriate technology and other requirements relevant for rainfed areas.

6 Guide the implementing agencies on priority setting and monitor the specific interventions required.

7 To develop plans/ programmes for capacity building of Centre / State Government functionaries in rainfed areas.

8 To suggest modalities to strengthen National and State Level Institutions concerned with Rainfed/Dryland areas, and establish institutional linkages with prioritized watersheds.

9 Monitor disbursement of rural credit/ insurance cover/ safety net programmes developed for rainfed areas.

10 Set the research agenda including a critical appraisal of on-going programmes and promote diffusion of required knowledge for integrated farming in rainfed areas to district and lower level authorities.

11. To evaluate the effectiveness of completed watersheds and concurrent evaluation of on-going programmes.