

Downfall of agriculture in kanyakumari district

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Abstract : Kanyakumari district is famous for its vast green stretches of paddy fields, rich forests, coconut groves and mineral sands. The total geographical area of the district is about 167,184 hectares. The district is divided into four parts as Agastheeswaram, Thovalai, Kalkulam and Vilavancode Taluks for the administrative convenience. Kanyakumari district is purely agricultural and solely depends on its economy upon agricultural income. Topography also should be taken into account before determining the soil-crop relation. Cropping pattern may be defined as the nature of crops that are grown and the percentage area under each crop in a given period of time. Cropping intensity of any region is influenced rarely by the availability of protected irrigation.

Key words

Agriculture, Cultivation

Introduction

Kanyakumari district is famous for its vast green stretches of paddy fields, rich forests, coconut groves and mineral sands. The district has many beautiful spots, besides cape-coloring, the southernmost tip of the sub-continent, where two seas and the ocean mark the Land's End. Kanyakumari district has been named after the goddess Kumari Amman, who is a very popular deity of this area and known far and wide in the country. The legend is that the goddess Parvathi in one of her incarnations as Devi Kanya did penance on one of this rocks of this 'Land's End'(tip) to marry Lord Shiva.

The total geographical area of the district is about 167,184 hectares. The district is divided into four parts as Agastheeswaram, Thovalai, Kalkulam and Vilavancode Taluks for the administrative convenience. Among these four taluks, Agastheeswaram and Thovalai taluks are collectively known as 'Nanjilnadu', as it is producing a lot of rice. This part is also known as the granary of erstwhile Travancore state.

Kanyakumari district is purely agricultural and solely depends on its economy upon agricultural income. Agriculture is the main stay of the people and more than eighty percent of the people depend on agriculture either as renters or tenants or labourers. By and large it was subsistence agriculture in which every family produced for its living. Agriculture is, and always has been, an activity involving a close interaction with the environment. Soil climate and topography and hydrological, biological condition together, extract a major control upon forming operation and profitability of agriculture.

The soils are mostly loamy and assume sandy or clay character depending on the accumulation of waste on the surface. The depths of the soil vary widely. Valleys and low lying areas where the waste from the surrounding hills accumulates, the soil is fairly deep and such places often support vegetation. On the hills slopes and elevated grounds which are subject to heavy waste, the soil has a characteristic yellow or reddish or reddish yellow colour on the tops and higher slopes of hills where the waste is excessive, the ground is rocky and soil shallow and hard.

Land

Land has deciding influence over the other factors of production. Quality of soil often determines the quantity as well as the quality of the crops. The prevailing soils of Kanyakumari district are predominantly red ones, poor in lime, potash and iron oxide and low in phosphorus. Alluvial soil, found in some parts of Nanchilnad, was comparatively fertile with more organic contents than the soils of Kalkulam and Vilavancode.

Topography also should be taken into account before determining the soil-crop relation. Undulating land provides little facility for progressive farming. The lands of Kanyakumari district formed three distinct types - the highlands, the midlands and lowlands. The highlands and lowlands were unsuitable for paddy cultivation. Even in the midlands, a considerable big portion, omitting the Nanjilnad valley was disagreeable to wet cultivation, owing to their elevated nature and rugged terrains. So cultivation was restricted to the small patches in between the undulating hillocks.

Cropping Pattern

Cropping pattern may be defined as the nature of crops that are grown and the percentage area under each crop in a given period of time. Cropping intensity of any region is influenced rarely by the availability of protected irrigation.

Intercropping is widely practiced in all the four taluks. In the dry as well as garden lands, a variety of fruit trees like mango, Jack, anvil together with Alexandrian laurel, tamarind and green manure trees are grown. Cashew trees are also cultivated in all the four taluks. Vegetables are grown in large quantities in the table lands under lift irrigated condition. It is an important source of living to the people of Kalkulam and Vilavancode. In the arid regions of Aralvoimozhi too vegetables are grown with water lifted from the artesian Wells.

In the rain scarcity belts of Thovalai taluk, a variety of dry crops like groundnut, cotton and chillies are grown under rain-fed condition. Floriculture is also very prominent in this region. Flowering shrubs like the oleander (Nerium) Jasmine, Camomile (Chrysanthemum) and fragrant southern wood are cultivated in large quantities. Due to the scanty and erratic nature of the rainfall in most part of the year, dry cropping here is on the whole unprofitable. Intercropping of pulses is practiced substantially along with cotton, groundnut and chillies. Yam, Ginger and sweet-potato are also raised both on rain-fed and lift irrigated conditions.

Present conditions

The economic freedom and social status had a negative impact on agriculture in Kanyakumari district. The tenant-labourers, who become the land owners wanted their children and the generation as a white collar job holders. As their social status has improved they do not want to work in the field anymore. They desire to make their generation as computer engineers, doctors, teachers, professors bankers and administrative officers but not as the tillers of the soil.

The attitude of the land owners and the indifferent attitude of the labourers towards physical work affected the agriculture sector a lot. It has its echo on agricultural production and even the net cultivable land area. As a result, most of the wet lands in Kanyakumari district are converted into houses, hospitals, hotels, wedding halls and rubber estates. Further many if the irrigation schemes are in negligence. Most of the tanks and canals in Kanyakumari district become a place to dump the household waste and the construction waste of the nearby population. The banks of river, stream, ponds and tanks etc are encroached illegally either for construction or for plantation. Above all proper maintenance and renovations etc., are not done in the recent past. Because of that the capacity of major dams like Pechipparai and Perunchani and minor dams like Chittar I and Chittar II etc are decreasing. Leakages in the canals particularly in the aqueduct in Mathur are also not yet cared for.

Even though, the irrigation schemes that were put up during the 20th century, resulted in the large scale production during the 20th century, faced a set back in the 21st century. The economic freedom and diversification and the social upliftment of the so called like castes of the 19th and early 20th century were the major causes, though they were indirect. Importance given to the white-collar jobs, consumption of money, corruption and negligence of civic rights and duties also are the other causes. This led to a negative impact on not only agriculture, but also economy and even in society too.

The following table shows the decrease of cultivable lands and agricultural production in Kanyakumari district in recent year.

Sl.No	Category (area in hectares)	1997	2000	2009	2012
1.	Paddy cultivated area	33659	32004	18187	16959

2.	Forest area	54155	50486	42850	21406
3.	Uncultivable land	3338	3338	4000	5827
4.	Land put to non-agricultural uses	24480	25091	28409	32517
5.	Net area sown	82179	82667	78791	74615
6.	Area sown more than once	19142	17986	12335	12335
7.	Total cropped area	101321	100653	978485	87685

From the above table it is concluded that though the paddy cultivation and the total cultivable area was increasing till the 1990, it is decreasing in the recent past. It is considered that the conversion of paddy cultivated area into rubber, coconut abdominal other money crop cultivating area and the construction of houses and other buildings are the major causes for the rapid decline of cultivable area in Kanyakumari district .

Conclusion

Massive changes are bringing in new Social and economic shifts, which include globalization of markets, technology democratization of information exponential increase in competition weather creation and the emergence of knowledge –world market. A lot of changes have taken Place over the last 55 years in the country both in the research and extension should result in happy farming system hunger and malnutrition, free India, environmental security, social and gender equity. Another reason for the decline in the area is labour shortage and in turn it leads to high wage rate. Hence steps should be taken to remove labour shortage. It can be attained by mechanising all the processes of cultivation and also by making the youth involve in agriculture. The conversion of land meant for food crops into housing plots and shopping complexes and other non-agricultural purposes should be curbed. Steps should also be taken to control the disturbance of wild animals.

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