

State agriculture performance dismal, finds Assocham study



Secretary general of Assocham DS Rawat (centre) releases a study titled 'Agri Business Outlook in Uttarakhand' in Dehradun on Thursday.

VINAY SANTOSH KUMAR/HT PHOTO

Prithviraj Singh
prithviraj.singh@hindustantimes.com

DEHRADUN: Even as investment in food processing industry of Uttarakhand has gone up manifold in the last decade, share of agriculture in the gross state domestic product (GSDP) has declined from 22% to 9%, a study by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Assocham) has found.

The report, 'Agri Business Outlook in Uttarakhand' that was released by the association in Dehradun on Thursday, made a strong pitch for a separate hill-centric agricultural policy.

The report highlighted the state has been persistently recording dismal agricultural growth, slipping from its 22% contribution to GSDP in 2004-05 to just 9% in 2014-15.

The study also claimed that the agriculture sector showed less than 3% crop productivity

Performance of Uttarakhand in agriculture and allied activities has not been up to the mark as its share in GSDP had declined sharply and there is need to promote a separate hill farming policy

DS RAWAT, secy gen, Assocham

between 2004-05 and 2014-15. Only 14% of the state's land is covered under net sown area.

Assocham secretary general DS Rawat said: "Performance of Uttarakhand in agriculture and allied activities has not been up to the mark as its share in GSDP had declined sharply and there is need to promote a separate hill farming policy."

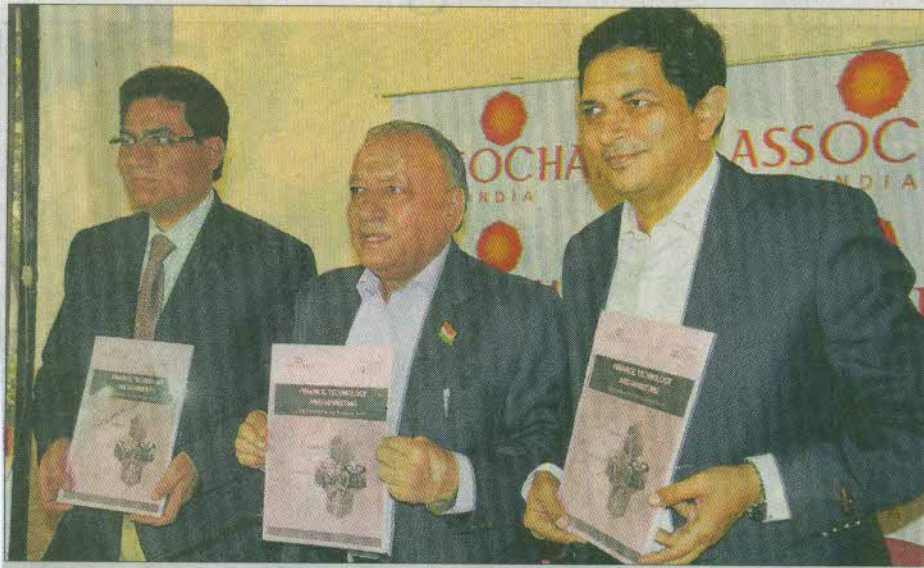
Rawat said the state holds a vast potential in medicinal, herbal and horticulture cropping.

"Local and traditional hill crops should be promoted. Farmers must also be given adequate cover in terms of welfare schemes, besides adequate technical and financial support for water conservation with priority to developing irrigation infrastructure, including canal network and also lift canal tube well, pump sets and other," he added.

The report also highlighted that the state had received a whopping investment in Uttarakhand food and agro-based sector, worth over ₹1600 crore till 2015-16 fiscal, a net increase of nearly ₹1150 crore as against ₹450 crore up to 2010-11.

It suggested the state government should promote dairy, poultry, fisheries, food processing and horticulture-based farms to boost rural economy.

State needs to focus on agriculture in hills: Study



DS Rawat, Secretary-General of ASSOCHAM, releases the study report on agriculture and allied activities in Dehradun on Thursday. TRIBUNE PHOTO

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Uttarakhand needs to promote a separate hill farming policy as it has little agriculture productivity despite the fact that three-fourths of its population is engaged in the agriculture sector.

This was revealed in a ASSOCHAM-RNCOS joint study released today.

"The performance of Uttarakhand in agriculture and allied activities has not been up to the mark as its share in the gross state domestic product (GSDP) had declined sharply from over 22 per cent in 2004-05 to just over nine per cent in 2014-15," the study says.

ASSOCHAM secretary general DS Rawat released the report in Dehradun here today. He said the ASSOCHAM-RNCOS study revealed that the low level of land holdings was a key chal-

lenge as over 70 per cent of the state's farmers held less than one hectare of land.

He said the absence of moisture in the sandy soils of Uttarakhand due to its topography had caused the state to record poor crop productivity. The agriculture sector in the state clocked just about three per cent Compound Annual Growth Rate between 2004-05 and 2014-15, Rawat said.

"Priority must be given to further develop the irrigation infrastructure, including the canal network, and also lift canals, tube wells, pump sets and others in order to promote agriculture," he said.

The study suggests that the state needs to strengthen the rural economy by focusing more on the dairy sector by imparting technical assistance for dairy development, more so as milk production in the state grew by just about one per cent between 2013-14

and 2014-15.

"Strengthening dairy farms, genetic upgrade of cattle through induction of genetic variability in female germ plasma and establishment of goat units are some of the key initiatives that can help boost dairy production in the state", the report suggests.

Responding to queries, DS Rawat said the state should promote poultry, fisheries, food processing, horticulture, agro-based, medicinal and aromatic herbs as thrust industries by offering wide range of incentives and subsidies.

Besides, the government, in tandem with the private sector, should set up strong infrastructure backed by efficient supply chains in the food and agro processing sector to increase farmers' income and promote employment opportunities in rural areas, it states.

'Uttarakhand failed on agriculture front'

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Despite various schemes and efforts being undertaken by the authorities concerned, the performance of Uttarakhand in the sphere of agriculture and allied activities has been unable to meet the mark. The share of agriculture in the gross state domestic product (GSDP) has registered a sharp decline from more than 22 per cent in 2004-05 to about nine per cent in 2014-15. Uttarakhand needs to promote a separate mountain farming policy as the state has a meagre 14 per cent net sown area, more so as three-fifths of the state's total working population is engaged in agriculture. This and other aspects were revealed in a study conducted jointly by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) and research firm RNCOS, said the chamber's secretary gener-



al DS Rawat who along with founder and CEO of RNCOS, Shushmul Maheshwari released the report in Dehradun on Thursday.

Addressing media persons after releasing the report, Rawat said that regarding issues in Uttarakhand's agriculture sector the study highlighted that low level of land holdings is a major challenge as more than 70 per cent of the state's farmers hold less than one hectare

of land. He said that considering the state's topography characterised by sandy soils poor in retaining water and the absence of moisture in the soil, Uttarakhand has recorded poor crop productivity to such an extent that the agriculture sector registered only about three per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) between 2004-05 and 2014-15. In terms of year-on-year growth rate, Uttarakhand's agriculture and

allied sector has registered over five per cent growth in 2014-15 which is better than negative growth of 2.5 per cent recorded in the previous year.

"Priority must be accorded to further developing irrigation infrastructure in Uttarakhand including the canal network along with also lift canals, tube-well, pump sets and other aspects. While facilitating the promotion of local and traditional mountain crops, farmers must also be given adequate cover in terms of welfare schemes, besides which adequate technical and financial support for water conservation should also be extended by the state administration. Further, measures should also be taken to encourage improved agronomic practices for higher farm productivity, improved soil treatment, increased water holding capacity, judicious use of chemicals and enhanced soil carbon storage," said Rawat.

In Uttarakhand, the food and agro based sector has attracted investments worth more than Rs 1,600 crore as of financial year 2015-16 increasing from about Rs 450 crore a of FY 2010-11 thereby registering a CAGR of more than 25 per cent, according to analysis by ASSOCHAM Economic Research Bureau (AERB).

The joint study recommends that the State focus on strengthening rural economy by focusing more on dairy sector, imparting technical assistance for dairy development in Uttarakhand, where milk production grew by about one per cent between 2013-14 and 2014-15.

The state should aim to make agriculture more productive, sustainable, remunerative and climate resilient by promoting location-specific integrated/composite farming systems, suggests the study report.

Uttarakhand's agri output down from 22% to just 9%: Assocham

Shivani.Azad@timesgroup.com

Dehradun: Uttarakhand's agriculture sector, which contributed 22% in gross state domestic product (GSDP) in 2004-05, has nosedived to touch an abysmal 9% in one decade, a joint research carried out by industry body ASSOCHAM and RNCOS have said.

According to the study — 'Agri Business Outlook in Uttarakhand' — that was released on Thursday, the primary reason for the decline in agricultural output is shrinking of land holdings in the state. "Low level of land holdings is a key challenge as over 70% of the state's farmers hold less than one hectare of land," the report said. ASSOCHAM officials said while this was a major issue being faced by the farm sector, it had indirectly impacted migration too.

Secretary-general of ASSOCHAM Deepak Rawat said, "It is high time that Uttarakhand craft a separate hill farming policy to improve the agri sector. It will also mitigate migration. Land holdings as it are very tiny, and those are further being divided among chil-



The study also pointed out that the state has recorded poor crop productivity owing to a "sandy soil quality"

dren. Having such small farm land kills the interest of farmers as he/she is never sure of the profits from it."

The study also pointed out that the state has recorded poor crop productivity owing to a "sandy soil quality". It said there was urgent need to encourage better agronomic practices for higher farm productivity as there was to improve soil treatment, increase water holding capacity and employ

judicious use of chemicals. Another problem highlighted by the report pertained to lack of market and storage facility in Uttarakhand.

Rawat said, "Farmers in Uttarakhand don't have proper knowledge of technology to reap bigger gains from farming and horticulture. We have therefore decided to set up six food processing training centres for developing entrepreneurship skills in the hill state. The technolo-

gy will be imported from European and other foreign nations for this. At each centre, an investment of around Rs 8 lakh will be done by ASSOCHAM and experts from various countries would be called to impart training."

This, Rawat said, will be executed after the state assembly election sometime in February-March next year. ASSOCHAM has started identifying various locations for these centres to come up.

