
'GROW MORE FOOD' CAMPAIGN IN THE MADRAS PRESIDENCY

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ABSTRACT

The impact of the 'Grow More Food' campaign in the Madras Presidency during the immediate post-second world war period is analysed. The eruption of the Second World War, failure of monsoons, famines and other natural calamities were the grounds behind the origin of this campaign. The food policy and administration of the then British Government in the Madras Presidency were also the causes for its genesis. The British Government to drive for increased food production was in two directions – extensive cultivation by bringing new areas under food crops, and diverting areas under non-food crops to food crops, increasing double - crop cultivation and

cultivation during the off - season and intensive cultivation by the use of improved seeds and better manuring. All possible efforts were made to induce people to grow vegetables and fruits on unused lands in the Madras Presidency. The impact of the 'Grow More Food' campaign on the economic history of the Presidency is also explored in this research paper.

KEYWORDS : Madras Presidency, Food policy, Food crops, Food campaign.

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this paper is to analyse the impact of the 'Grow More Food' campaign in the Madras Presidency during the immediate post-second world war period. The outbreak of the second World War, failure of monsoons, famines and other natural calamities and the food policy and administration of the then British Government in the Madras Presidency were the causes for the genesis of this campaign. The impact of the Grow More Food campaign on the economic history of the Presidency is also examined in this research paper.

The Madras Presidency was not self-sufficient even in normal times in regard to rice and had to supplement its own production by importing rice from Burma, Siam and Indo-China¹. On account of the cessation of these imports, Madras had to make up the deficit and had also to meet demands from either neighbouring provinces or states which had depended on Burma etc., for their requirements wholly or in part.² The main problem was one of short-term planning to meet the immediate shortage, but it was also imperative to aim at making the province self-sufficient as a long range policy. The government had considered possible ways of filling the gap between home supplies and

consumption.³

The drive for increased food production was in two directions – extensive cultivation by bringing new areas under food crops, and diverting areas under non-food crops to food crops, increasing double - crop cultivation and cultivation during the off - season and intensive cultivation by the use of improved seeds and better manuring. All possible efforts were made to induce people to grow vegetables and fruits on unused lands. With a view to making the existing supplies of rice to further and securing a more balanced diet, the government had advised the use of hand-pounded and under-milled rice and of millets in place of highly milled rice. They had also issued the Madras Rice Mills Licensing Order, 1943, to prevent over polishing of rice.⁴

Government servants occupying government quarters had been permitted to break up the ground of the compound of their residences and grow food crops or vegetables thereon. Collectors had been authorised to permit the cultivation of vegetables and other food crops on vacant lands included in the compounds of institutions such as churches, schools, hospitals, orphanages, sanatorium, etc.⁵

MADRAS ESTATES LAND ACT

Difficulty was experienced in bringing under cultivation many of the lands in estates governed by the Madras Estates Land Act, 1908,⁶ which were not in the possession of ryots or tenants as the landholders were generally reluctant to permit cultivation of waste lands in estates without payment of rent for the reason that the person so permitted would acquire occupancy rights when they were admitted to possession.⁷ This difficulty had been removed by the Madras Estates Land Act, 1944.⁸ This act helped in the temporary allocation of lands sited in an estate which was not in the custody of ryot or tenant earlier for the phase ranging from three to five years without conceding occupancy rights on the assignee with the intent of raising food crops.⁹

The Madras Irrigation Works Act was introduced in 1942¹⁰ to govern the estates which were governed by the Madras Estates Lands Act, 1908.¹¹ This Act Empowered the government to acquire the land necessary for the construction of the work, and to charge fees for the water supplied from the irrigation work.¹²

The government had prohibited the cultivation of commercial crops under the Madras Essential Articles Control and Requisitioning Act of 1946.¹³ It was from 15th June 1943, with less than two rows of food crop to one row of cotton, the Cultivation of Mungeri cotton as a pure crop or as a mixed crop came to effect in the districts of Bellary, Ananthapur, Cuddapah and Kurnool.¹⁴ Rupees four per acre of land was also sanctioned by the government in which normally pure cotton would be grown.¹⁵

The government had also ordered that with effect from 1st July 1944, no person should cultivate Kakinada cotton in the Guntur district except as a mixed crop in the proportion of 1 line of this cotton to at least 2 lines of food crops.¹⁶ They had sanctioned the payment of bonus per acre, in which pure cotton would have normally been grown in that district.¹⁷

The government of Madras sanctioned a comprehensive scheme for the multiplication and distribution of improved seeds of paddy, millets, pulses, groundnut and green manure crops in all the districts.¹⁸ The total cost was Rs.35,86,194.¹⁹ This scheme was continued up to 1948 and later abolished by the Congress government, headed by C. Rajagopalachariar in 1954.²⁰

Loans for cultivation of assessed, unassessed and poramboke lands were granted by the Agriculturists Reform Acts in 1946.²¹ Though the Madras Presidency had produced the bulk of the rice consumed in the province, it had never been self sufficient during the course of the second World War, in regard to her rice requirements. Rice was imported mainly from Burma, Thailand and Indo-China.²²

The stoppage of normal imports from these areas had seriously affected due to the outbreak of the war. The war necessities had increased exports from the presidency to Ceylon and other places which had suffered from the cessations of imports from Burma and increased supplies for the use of the army.²³

CONCLUSION

Though, the Madras Presidency had produced the bulk of the rice consumed in the province, it had never been self sufficient during the course of the second World War, in regard to her rice requirements. Later the government of Madras sanctioned a comprehensive scheme for the multiplication and distribution of improved seeds of paddy, millets, pulses, groundnut and green manure crops in all the districts. The 'Grow More Food' campaign though was severely criticised by the Congress and the Communist members in the Madras Legislative Council and Assembly, its results proved worthy of satisfying the needs of the starving millions temporarily. The food policy that was adopted by the then British government was the outcoming of the food policy of Great Britain and America during the war time.

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