

Merging of VAAs in to the Department of Agriculture

Sub:-APASSR -Estt - Village Agricultural Assistants (VAA's) integration with the regular cadre strength of the Agriculture Department-Proposal-Submitted - Req-Regarding.

In View of the above the Concept note on Reorganisation of Village Agriculture Assistant is submitted as follows:

- 6758 Village Agricultural Assistants (VAAs) were sanctioned and 6218 were recruited and the VAAs are performing their functions from Rythu Seva Kendram in all Grama panchayats having potential areas and agriculture activities as a novel, effective, efficient and unified platform for knowledge dissemination and assimilation to provide farmers with quality inputs and extension services.

The VAAs were given the powers of identification of beneficiaries for state schemes including Annadata Sukhibava and PM-Kisan and forwarding the applications to the higher authorities and other duties as per the job chart of G.O.RT.No.628 AGRICULTURE & COOPERATION (AGRI-IV) DEPARTMENT dated 30-09-2019.

The department has the mandate to control & regulate these functions and to cater the needs of all the stakeholders in the state for welfare and overall sustainable development of the agricultural sector.

Hence there is a need of field functionaries at village level to monitor the various sub sectors for implementing the Government policies/programmes efficiently and leverage the development of agriculture sector.

Agriculture sector includes mainly 7 core functions viz., general, data collection, extension, supply of quality inputs, Alerts & Enumeration, implementation of schemes and other governmental functions.

General Functions: Village Agricultural Assistant should reside in the respective head quarters of the village and should work under the administrative supervision of Agriculture department officials and attend the meetings conducted by the department of Agriculture with relevant information and maintain the departmental records promptly and accurately and conduct field visits forenoon as per needs of the farmers.

Data Collection: A Village Agricultural Assistant shall collect Farmer Socio Economic Survey, Land Use Pattern, Sources of Irrigation, Cropping Area, Yield & Production, Farm Equipment etc. and prepare integrated Village Action Plan for agriculture and allied sectors and also conduct survey on soil and water conservation activities. He/She shall take up e-Panta booking

of all crops in the respective village & monitor the demand and supply of quality seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. He will also identify the tenant farmers, non-loanee farmers etc. of the respective rythu seva kendram.

Extension Functions: Village Agricultural Assistant shall collect soil samples and distribute soil health cards to farmers and motivate them to apply manures and fertilizers based on soil health card report. He shall also disseminate latest or improved technologies to farmers and conducts regular meetings & training programmes with farmers to discuss the present crop and weather conditions. He shall implement different departmental schemes and mobilize farmers for Grama sabhas/Rythu Sadassus/Kisan Melas etc. He shall organize model demonstrations on crop productivity enhancement and cost reduction on principal crops and assists to the department officials in identification of scope for processing, value addition and market linkages. He writes the latest agricultural information on the black boards of respective villages and also ensure leadership in extension activities conducted in the jurisdiction of respective villages and recommends departmental assistance to eligible farmers in coordination with other departmental village level officers. A Village Agricultural Assistant apprise the Mandal Agricultural officer (MAO) about the occurrence/outbreak of special agriculture problems in time. He / She shall also apprise the MAO about the need of Pest & Disease Management and take leadership at Secretariat for Pest & Disease Management Activities and shall make availability of Farm Implements at the owners/ agencies/CHCs. He / She shall ensure the effective functioning of Village Level Groups like SHGs, FIGs and FPOs and development of their business plan.

Supply of Quality In-puts: He/ She shall actively involve in distribution of available subsidized inputs to farmers through D-Krishi including contingency seed in the relevant seasons and ensure timely availability of all farm inputs and shall motivate the farmers to utilize the services available at "Agri Testing Labs" and shall be vigilant and alert with regard to flow of spurious Agriculture inputs in his/ her jurisdiction and the same should be intimated to MAO concerned immediately after notice.

Alerts and Enumeration related functions: He/ She shall closely monitor the weather, weather forecast to guide the farmers to take up appropriate field operations through mobile alerts and vigilant about the Pest & Diseases incidence to guide the farmers in judicious use of agricultural inputs also assess the crop damage due to Natural Calamities in a time bound manner and report to the Mandal Agriculture Officer/ Village Secretariat with propose recommendations and implement the Natural Calamity Assistance Program on war foot basis. He/ She assists the departmental officials in render of services such as disbursement of input subsidy, distribution of contingency seed etc, during the prevalence of Natural Calamities.

Implementation of Schemes: He/ She shall assist the departmental officials in implementation of various schemes and programs in the respective village secretariat area and Mobilize Non-Loanee / Tenant farmers (Actual cultivator) to avail crop insurance, institutional credit and other benefits of the departmental schemes. He/ She shall assist the departmental officials concerned in Value Addition & Post Harvest Management of Agricultural Products.

Other governmental functions: A Village Agricultural Assistant shall perform such of the duties as may be assigned by the competent authorities of the Government.

It is submitted that the Village Agricultural Assistants are functioning at the Mandal level and assists the Assistant Director of Agriculture and Mandal Agricultural Officer and reside at the headquarters of the village secretariat. Every Village Agricultural Assistant shall work under the administrative control of the Village Secretariat and supervision of the Department of Agriculture (Assistant Director of Agriculture/Mandal Agricultural Officer/District Agricultural Officer).The Village Agricultural Assistant work in co-ordination with the other departmental functionaries of the concerned Village Secretariat and attend the meeting convened by the Agriculture officials at village level and mandal level.

We are working with almost 11 departments (Agriculture, Horticulture, Sericulture, APSSDCLtd., APSCSCLtd., APMIP, APSOPCA, ANGRAU, DES-AP, MARKFED, Ministry of Agriculture, Panchayat Raj, Banks) in convergence mode like a mission work to make the farmers' service trouble-free. The department has become close-knit to the famers by performing the Government prescribed activities such as e-Panta booking, e-Panta ekyc, Annadata Sukhibava, PM-KISAN, Collection of soil samples, NPSS, Polam Pilustondi, Polam pilustondi magazine distribution, CCRC awareness, seed testing, baseline survey, CHC distribution and maintenance, Seed distribution, Fertilizer sale, Providing drip irrigation systems, Area expansion of horticultural crops followed by inspection of survival rate of plantation crops, Paddy procurement, identification of non-loanee farmers, identification of natural farming farmers, Conducting CC Experiments etc.

In this regard, we bring to your kind notice that we may be least bothered about technical aspects of what actually the Department of Agriculture is doing and on other hand the non-technical services which were prescribed above were also very essential to the farmers to go forward in a fine shape. It's really great to hear that the Government has invited a pilot project on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) to enhance the quality and to improve exports of agricultural produce in the International market and it may show a good impact on our GDP also. As our economy of State and Country is based on Agriculture exports, we need to upgrade more technologies to compete with the middle-east countries like Israel, Dubai, Oman etc., which are ahead in the adoption of new technologies in Agriculture.

Almost there are 1450 B.Sc.(Ag.) Graduates, Post Graduates and Ph.D. (Ag.) candidates serving as Village Agricultural Assistants at grassroot level who are from ICAR accredited Agricultural Colleges all over India professionalized in 52 technical subjects and obtained practical knowledge by AELP (Agricultural Experiential Learning Programme) and RAWEP (Rural Agricultural Work Experience Programme) stayed with farmers in their villages, sharing their ideas, skills, difficulties, possibilities and practical knowledge in different growing crops in different situations and gained practical knowledge in different production technologies which is neither having in less technically qualified people. So it is also a known fact that technical officers at various levels are the backbone of our department, and the lack of such technical officers may hamper the technology transfer to the farming community.

Now it is the time and necessary to streamline the grassroot level system in an efficient manner by use of technically qualified Village Agricultural Assistants in order to increase the extension efficacy among the farmers to make them as decision maker or scientist in adopting latest agricultural technologies in different growing crops in various agro-climatic situations.

It was noticed that the following non-departmental duties are being assigned to Village Agricultural Assistants hindering the departmental duties.

1. Caste Survey
2. Pensions Distribution
3. BLO
4. Property Tax Collection
5. Panchayat local works assigned by Panchayat Secretary
6. Irrigation Canal Duties
7. House Hold survey & Geo-tagging
8. And other non-departmental duties entrusted.

It is submitted that due to the above non-departmental activities entrusted to Village Agricultural Assistants, there will be severe disturbance in performing departmental activities and the Village Agricultural Assistants unable to focus on the Agriculture Department activities and other Agriculture related Welfare programmes which are essential for the Welfare of the farmers.

In this connection, it is submitted that the Government has identified Agriculture as a One of the major Growth Engines for development of the State. Further submitted that, there are large number of vacancies in the cadre strength at field level. The farmers shall need the extension services of the VAAs at the Village level continuously for getting better yields, which results in increase of various crops production thereby increasing the GDP of the State. Under Viksit Bharath and Viksit Andhra, three wings namely Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Husbandry are identified as growth drivers. To fulfil the Targets and Goals of 2030 and 2047, the role of

VAA's at field level is very vital for the Agriculture Sector. This needs continuous supervision and coordination with MAOs and ADAs for realisation of desired goals. Hence, the VAA may be brought to the total control of the Department of Agriculture.

In view of the circumstances explained above, request the Government that the services of Village Agricultural Assistants may be withdrawn from the Village Secretariat completely and may be kept at the disposal of the Agriculture Department so as to enable them to focus on the Agriculture Department activities on full time.

We solicit to have empathy on us and contemplate our request and propose the Government for merging of Village Agricultural Assistants (VAAs) into the Department of Agriculture as enclosed below.

Hoping for your favorable response to our request.

Thanking you Sir,

Yours Sincerely

President