

**Analysis of Agriculture Policy 2004 and  
Agriculture Component in PRSP II**  
– *Najma Sadeque*

The Pakistan government's many plans, past and present, have claimed to seek to reduce poverty. Yet, most conspicuous by its absence is the facing up to poverty in its harshest and most widespread reality. Poverty tends to be treated as an inconvenience that is expected to be automatically addressed with job-creation through routine investment and industrialisation.

The question does not strike as to how poverty (or any other problem for that matter) can be tackled unless one knows its nature and manifestations. Poverty is seen as a situation to be taken as unavoidable and acceptable, having always existed, instead of being acknowledged as a direct effect of appropriation and control of key resources by the few and powerful, or bad or undemocratic planning.

The Agricultural Perspective & Policy of 2004, although published by the Government, takes care to state that the views expressed "are personal and of the authors and do not make an official policy of the Government of Pakistan". Nevertheless, the views do not vary significantly with previous or subsequent official documents. In all fairness, being a report on an outlook of and prospects for the economy in the traditional mould, the authors would not have been expected to include a gender perspective and would probably have been unfamiliar with the idea.

A generalised suggestion is made for supporting destitute farmers but is quite unable to distinguish between the practices and capacities of big and small farmers -- *"A comprehensive programme should be launched to support destitute farmers under which farmers may be provided agricultural inputs on delayed payment in kind with a package of technology..... need to be based on cost-sharing and a completely participatory approach."*

The agricultural component of the PRSP-II proceeds in the same vein. Both look at the economy, but do not look at the human face or from the point of view of aspirations of the wider masses – they are excluded altogether, although they are deprived and exploited at will for economic gain by stronger elements. Economic planning continues to be a purely top-down, investment, export and corporate-oriented exercise.

**A plan for the reduction of poverty in an agricultural country would have been expected to envisage:**

- one, bench-marks, identifying numbers and geographical spread of the poor and their social and occupational profiles and specific local/regional issues/problems;
- two, the perceived reasons of their poverty;
- three, the existing infrastructure and services and their level and outreach;
- four, the basic infrastructure and services (roads, water and sanitation, electricity, health services) lacking or augmenting required in their districts;

- five, the amount of development funds and projects provided in the past half-decade, if any, in the poverty-stricken areas;
- six, the existing level of education and skills and educational institutions by gender, and transport and communication linkages with main town/s or city;
- seven, identifying crop varieties that are more suitable on small-scale for peasants, especially women;
- and eight, making smallholdings available to landless women peasants with sole (possibly usufruct) control suited for organic self-cultivated farming, family food security and small entrepreneurship.

None of these are reflected in the two documents. All poor in the country are lumped together, undifferentiated, generically, as they are in overall economic plans.

A national economy can be high-performing with impressive GDP and GNP, but that does not necessarily make it an economy that serves all its citizens, particularly the poor. Most economies in the world except tiny, city-sized nations, maintain appreciable degrees of agricultural activities to ensure food security and livelihoods.

A well-functioning economy arises from a foundation of tens of thousands or millions of smallholder family farms, and grassroots and small entrepreneurs meshing together, supported and linked together by an infrastructure of roads, railway and other transportation and communications serving the many local populations and economies. Without these as the very basic, an economy cannot expect to build on itself and grow, which is the unfortunate story of so many sub-economies of Pakistan.

Even if an economy has not fully developed its outreach to comprehensively cover all populated areas, it is understood that new plans will seek to further develop or install minimal infrastructure to enable the establishment of linkages to the wider economy or at least local or district markets. When the same geographical area is left largely neglected indefinitely, for decades, it can only be surmised that this is so by design.

**All government interventions listed in both documents simply endeavour to convert all production into commercial enterprises, preferably for export, carried out by those who have the wherewithal (such as the business middle-class). They do not look at the nature's local foundation and the human factor that are basic to these activities, namely, ensuring food and shelter security, the support of the poor in getting better returns for their labour, the upgradation of their skills, and support to the smallholder's land and the overall eco-environment so that they may remain fertile and productive indefinitely.**

Unfortunate statements include *"the world can't wait for our surpluses"* because of our slowness in boosting productivity, since they have other markets to draw from; and that therefore *"We should come up with export-led production system and should initiate to grow for export programme, meeting requirements and*

*consumer tastes overseas.* "While exports are certainly necessary, no room is made for the first priority to fulfil citizens' needs (in terms of both food security and jobs) to then make surplus production possible. As far as is known, export-orientation has been long built into Pakistan's economic activities over four decades already.

It is stated as a given that, "*The private sector has been given a lead role primarily based on market economy.*" But it fails to recognise that the role of the public sector has been confined more or less to a minimum – the wheat crop, which has been made the basis of Pakistan's food security or to address an emergency situation. It explains why malnutrition is rampant since the poor survive mainly on wheat, and very little vegetables and fruit, so that diet leaves much to be desired.

Many of the promised projects would produce limited, if any, jobs suited to the abilities of the rural poor, and their situation would be unlikely to be any better than that derived from working on an uncertain basis for a landlord. For example, the government seeks undefined Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs), which would purportedly bring about a range of jobs that would include some (but not exclusively) for the less-skilled poor. But it is clarified at the outset that these would be profit and "efficiency"-based, suggesting potential rural workers would have to fit a criteria they are unaccustomed to and therefore probably require training, the availability of which is uncertain.

While official statements and data never deny the sorry state of affairs, nor do they translate into actions to change the situation for the better.

The potential and problems of agriculture are thoroughly explored in both the documents, but not in terms of gender or class opportunities and benefits. Among the socio-economically advantaged class, this may not matter so much, as education and superior financial status enables many, even if not all women, to assert their due. Among the masses, however, and especially among the peasantry, gender is a highly-revealing determinant of quality of life, since economic plans of rural upliftment should be closing the opportunity and income gaps between men and women instead of widening them as the case has been.

On the one hand it is conceded that soil degradation and other damage such as waterlogging, loss of biodiversity and indigenous seed, soil degradation and erosion is taking place because of chemical use, and that these should be rectified. Yet it is not supported by a sense of seriousness and urgency that translates into action to effectively ban or phase out undesirable farming practices, nor strongly calls for environmentally-damaging production methods to be substituted for ecologically sustainable ones.

The 2004 Policy draft document states that agriculture is the single largest sector of economy, accounting for almost one-fourth of the GDP, and employing almost half the country's workforce. But while it finds 68% of the population is in the rural areas, it does not provide the percentages of rural workers by gender. This could be because statistics on rural women workers are poor and

not comprehensively maintained, although disaggregated data could expose the extreme degree of their exploitation. This is necessary, because in vast areas, farm families often constitute labour or home-based production units, overseen by a non-working male family member or contractor, who collects the single salary or lump payment.

It points out that the result of high investment in the 70s became visible in the 80s which was also the period of government interventions during which an Agricultural Prices Commission was set up to institutionalize support prices for major crops; massive procurement operations carried out by the public sector during this decade, the problems of crashing prices during glut periods addressed to an extent, giving more security and protection were given to farmers. The term 'farmers', however, is used loosely and is rather misleading as it fails to distinguish between farm landlords who dominate at the receiving end of government incentives, credit and other assistance, and the small, self-cultivating peasants who do not.

Without giving reasons why it happened, the Policy document refers to the heavy losses incurred by the public sector for procurement of agricultural commodities which led to the reconsideration of public sector intervention policies and the closing down in the 90s of public sector institutions involved, followed by the now-familiar process of deregulation, privatization, restructuring size of government, and re-fixing of policies. The reasons for this creating "*uncertainty again*" despite curtailing both the frequency of intervention and size of procurement, are not explained.

Yet, viewing the experiences of three decades including in the social and political contexts, could have provided valuable insights and lessons for the future, such as non-accountability or weak governance or technical or financial inadequacies or non-addressing of grassroots issues.

### **Subsistence farmers for 'bridging the gap'**

Because water is a limiting factor and big farms are believed to have reached their optimum productivity, increased agricultural output is now sought by raising the productivity of subsistence farmers – "to bridge the gap between national yields and progressive growers". At first glance this appears to be intended to draw the peasantry into the mainstream, but it is a double-edge sword; with constantly-raised export targets and with the kind of official advice given, the male peasantry would be more likely to produce for the wider market before attending to household or local food security.

It also overlooks the fact that even in bridging the gap, increased agricultural productivity would still require more water, which would have to be obtained by stemming wastage that averages 50% of what flows out. Yet there is less emphasis on including lining of all canals, not just selected ones, and fixing responsibility for maintaining the path from the canal branch to the village farm, to the village co-operative or farmers, but with the necessary, manageable loans and technical support.

### **Grain reserves and storage**

Sizeable grain reserves need to be maintained at all time at both at the local, as well as provincial and national, for which state services are required of the nature that has been disbanded in favour of privatisation. The public benefit, after all, is not the concern nor can be expected to be the first priority of private, profit-oriented enterprise. Grain reserves not only make rapid transfers during shortages possible, they help maintain price stability.

Storage (including refrigerated) for cash crops are similarly desirable when gluts threaten prices to crash, so that excess can be withheld – not the same as hoarding which can be avoided when the state maintains control -- until the market can absorb more at reasonable rates.

But individual farmers at almost all levels can also lose despite bumper crops, if they lack adequate and reliable storage. The smallest farmers also need to be supported in building smaller, modernised silos sized to their farmholdings, through easy credit and technical advice. Economic plans are yet to ‘trickle down’ that far.

Comparative figures are provided to show that the output of subsistence farmers in five crops (wheat, cotton, sugarcane, Basmati rice and Irri rice) are very low -- approximately half to a third of what ‘progressive’ farmers produce. ‘Progressive growers’ are presumably big landowners who grow high-yielding crops on large scale for which they are able to afford the cost of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, purchased seed and farm machinery which subsistence farmers are not. The strong suggestion is that subsistence farmers be facilitated to adopt such “progressive” methods which refer to the same, increasingly discredited farming methods.

This, and a range of other industrial mechanisms and somewhat contradictory approaches, feature in both the 2004 Perspective & Policy document and the PRSP-II on Agriculture, revealing unfamiliarity with traditional, natural methods in contrast to chemical agriculture; namely, the results that occur when both are taken to their optimum levels, and the continuation of the dangers of chemical monoculture all over the world being resisted and fought against, particularly in Europe, parts of Latin America and Africa, and the rest of the Asian sub-continent. Even less is known about the corrective qualities and higher potential of organic/natural farming in simultaneously resolving hunger, creating livelihoods en masse, and the resurgence of biodiversity and sustainability in agriculture.

### **Artificial fertilizers**

In addressing factors for increasing productivity, artificial fertilizers are assumed to be “*the biggest factor in increasing productivity by 40-50%.*” The ‘diminishing returns’ of hybrid monoculture and pesticides that invariably follows within a few years, requiring constant change in genetically-modified seed and the formulae of chemical fertilizers, and soil degradation that ultimately leads to abandoning toxic farmland, are not taken into account.

**Silo construction** is being allowed to the private sector and viewed selectively at ports and up-country. But without state support, it would be difficult or impossible for small and many medium farmers to install appropriately-sized on-farm silos.

### **Seeds**

'Quality seeds' are assumed to be able to be sourced only from registered companies that produce uniform seed. These may give high yield in the short-term, but reproduce poorly, and ultimately need recourse to wild seed for reviving genetic health and ensuring their continuity. Indigenous saved-seed availability and desirability are not discussed.

### **Integrated Pest Management**

Integrated Pest Management is basically a biological approach that combines the ancient and proven with the updated, environmentally-friendly organic methods with mechanical means, and/or minimal use of chemicals only when there is no other alternative to resolve a problem. It is an ecologically based pest-control strategy that relies on natural mortality factors, such as natural enemies, weather, cultural control methods, and carefully applied doses of pesticides.

Because it is a highly sophisticated method, it is yet another reason that peasants need to have at least a school education to understand and use it better. Planners tend to see practical agriculture as only requiring physical labour with no need for literacy. For narrower vested interests, lack of education serves to prevent rural labour from developing greater self-reliance and more marketable skills, and therefore demands for higher compensation.

### **Peasants and organic farming**

While most organic farming knowledge was orally handed down from generation to generation, their range was vast and complex, and memories were prodigious because of constant use. But the knowledge was also documented by the educated. This was disrupted by the encroachment of simplistic, uniform, chemical monocultural practices which require no memory, so that considerable oral knowledge has died with the older generations, unlike in other countries of the sub-continent, where much has been carefully recorded and preserved, and more is being searched out. Planners appear to be unaware of these facts or consider them unimportant.

It is imperative that peasants also have education to be able to maintain records and descriptions of the organic practices that determine output, as well as to document improvement or damage to soil and environment as a consequence of specific farming practices. Organic farming is an art as well as a science, and peasants do constant experimentation and make new discoveries and improvements, which research needs to be simultaneously documented.

Organic methods and chemical consequences are still not widely understood by most people outside day-to-day agriculture (fluctuation in output is said to occur "*primarily because of the behaviour of mother nature*"), and considerable misunderstanding exists. The conventional mindset remains largely unchanged

with the assertion that, *“Both (chemical) fertilizers and HYVs go hand in hand and are the major players in increasing productivity of crops.”*

There are no incentives to boost farming of organics, best suited for smallholders, which would draw them away from partial experiments with chemicals, and improve household food security. Nor its organised marketing without which income cannot be increased and surplus would go to waste, although it is also stated that 25% of the country's livestock dung is not collected and goes to waste.

There is vast scope for fulfilling domestic needs through smallholder organic farming which includes women. The policy document state that 70% of edible oil is being met through imports costing the country Rs. 25 billion, while almost half a million tons of pulses are being imported to make up for the shortfall of the annual consumption of one million tons. 70% of local needs of the main pulse crop – gram - are being met by being “grown mainly in *barani* areas on marginal lands with limited management.” How much more then could be achieved with the kind of support that goes to more advantaged farmers?

### **Confused information**

Again and again, considerable confusion or ignorance emerges about agricultural knowledge and processes. The assumption that there is only one kind of farming is betrayed in reference to the **Benazir Zarai Credit Card** which is offered for inputs such as seed, fertilizer, pesticide, etc. according to a prescribed list that excludes tractors or farm implements. The poorest peasants practice natural agriculture because they cannot afford industrial inputs, which is just as well as it saves their small holdings from needless poisoning. But they do need some credit for organic inputs such as increasingly hard-to-find indigenous seed; even for manure when they lack livestock.

Recommendations are made for the maximisation of soil efficiency. This has different meaning for different types of practitioners. For chemical monoculturists it means optimising the package of artificials which may boost yields in the short-run, but will begin to degrade the soil and the entire environment thereafter. For organic farmers it means polyculture that is completely free of chemicals and hybrid/genetically-modified seeds.

In the same vein, it is emphasised that, *“Crop productivity will be enhanced through development of HYVs, use of improved and hybrid seed, balanced use of fertilizers and micro-nutrients, integrated pest management.”*

It rightly recommends the use of bio-pesticides, but is unaware of the limits or non-existence of efficacy when applied to chemical monoculture.

It elaborates on the facilitation of access to such inputs : *“Budget 2008/9 has measures to help farmer with subsidised fertilizers. Rs. 35 billion allocated to subsidise cost of urea and enhance subsidy on DAP from Rs. 470 to Rs. 100 per bag; availability of agri-credit will be ensured; fertilizers and pesticides exempted from sales tax.”*

The improvement of water management by introducing efficient water-use technologies, and constructing small dams, ponds and reservoirs, are all recommended in passing. But these do not match the ways of large-scale industrial monoculture which both documents focus on.

### **Pesticides and chemicals**

While a sensible recommendation is made to prohibit drum packing to eliminate adulteration, and therefore encourages small packages for small farmers, the confidence in chemicals remains strong enough for the “*quality control of pesticides*”. Training in pest management is suggested for local dealers, assuming that they will adequately advise unlettered farmers (which does not generally happen). This directly contradicts the basis of Integrated Pest Management which takes recourse to chemicals only as a last resort, something that dealers would not advocate as it would affect their sales, and requires training of farmers.

Furthermore, under WTO, Pakistan is required to adopt the standards of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), Codex Alimentarius Commission) (CAC) and the Office of the International des Epizooties (OIE), which, among other things, call for “absence of undesirable pesticide residues in crop produce and food made thereof, pest freedom and disinfections.” It raises the question as to how pesticide residues can be avoided if chemical farming is practiced, encouraged and supported by the government as well.

### **Seeds**

There are 4 public companies, 6 multinational corporations, and 425 national seed companies in the private sector involved in providing seed to the market. Subsidies were earlier withdrawn and the market determines seed prices. This explains the difficulty, especially of organic growers, in finding indigenous seeds. There is no mention of the status of or the existence of any government support for indigenous seeds whether for local usage or for companies; and whether the latter at all source indigenous seed to maintain the strength of their hybrids. The desirability of incentives to rediscover ‘lost’ plant varieties displaced by monoculture, and support for indigenous seeds for an organic system that is better suited for smallholders, needs to be raised, also for ecological and sustainability reasons.

### **Farm mechanization**

Agricultural credit continues to be extended to big and medium farmers, but smallholders still have no access. There is now an over-emphasis on mechanisation through tractors which may have their uses for initial land-leveilling and breaking up newly-acquired hard soils. But tractors and accompanying heavy farm machinery cause soil compaction that collapse air and water tunnels and spaces created by earthworms and other microorganisms.

It is important to apply the traditional forms of agriculture, through using and involving the indigenous knowledge of women which is simply encroached by simplistic, uniform, chemical monoculture, use of hazardous pesticides, genetically modified seeds etc. etc.

There is vast scope for fulfilling domestic needs through smallholder organic farming which includes women.

A recent programme by the Punjab government has been taken to help “smaller farmers” by granting a heavy subsidy on the purchase of locally-manufactured tractors. But these ‘smaller farmers’ do not include the smallest who cannot afford (nor need) subsidised tractors, but require credit and other services that their smallness does not entitle them to under the criteria.

The average cost of a local tractor is Rs. 450,000 to Rs. 500,000/- of which Rs. 200,000/- is offered as subsidy. While it may temporarily strengthen the smaller farmers, it creates disincentives for chemical-free farming and encourages increased industrial methods, widening the gap between them and the smallholders and sharecroppers who would be left even further behind.

### **Support Price Systems**

Farmers always have a choice between growing cash crops and foodcrops. The prospect of a certain market and money earnings draws most men farmers to choose cashcrops, often sacrificing even the minimal land previously set aside for growing food, which affects women peasants at once. Support price systems are meant to ensure sufficient output of desired crops, including essential food for the population. But in an uneven social setup especially, price systems can be manipulated. The report points out that agro-based mills, factories as well as village and town commission agents usually form cartels, hurting growers’ interests. It therefore needs to be separate outreach for small growers, including preferential purchasing to cover the maximum number of small farmers, as well as placing a cap on purchases from big farmers.

It is pointed out that *“Programmes providing for guaranteed producer prices aimed at correcting the deficiencies of the market system still in vogue in many countries, such as USA, EC, India, Japan, Turkey, Egypt, Brazil, Argentina, CIS states, Russia, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Canada, and Indonesia.”* The first four countries - USA, EC, Japan, India, - have been in fact protecting their growers since the 1940s. In 1968, India set up Agricultural Costs and Prices Commission to ensure growers a minimum guaranteed price.

If major and wealthier countries see the need to protect their farmers, big and small, the need is even greater in less-affluent countries such as ours. In fact, the Agricultural Prices Commission recommends support prices initially of 8 crops. - Wheat, cotton, rice, sugarcane (which should be dropped or substituted for beet as sugarcane consumes too much water), non-traditional oilseeds (sunflower, soybean, safflower and canola), gram, onions and potatoes.

Support price programmes are not prohibited under WTO as long as total support does not exceed 10% of agricultural GDP. “But in Pakistan, support is negative, less than zero ! Under IMF/WB, support price to 4 main crops were cut in 2001 - wheat, cotton, rice and sugarcane.” The most glaring injustice has been that smallholders have never been beneficiaries.

And Cotton Export Corporation, Rice Export Corporation, Agricultural Marketing and Services Ltd. and the Ghee Corporation were closed down on doubtful grounding including pretext of losses, but essentially done under pressure of international donor organisations (not identified). So growers of essentials such as potatoes, onions and oilseed crops suffered.

The 1990 Agricultural Census makes the amazing claim that “small farmers are given high priority”, although the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Bank, and Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) have a criteria that excludes the smallest.

### **Corporate Agriculture privileges**

State land can be purchased, or leased for 50 years, extendable for another 49 years. Local or foreign, private or public limited companies may invest in corporate farming. This makes it easy for foreign investors to partner with locals to benefit on many counts, including tax exemption on imported equipment, exemption of dividends from tax, and much more, that is bound to ruin purely local producers who do not even receive price support.

Privileges to corporate agriculture by policy include modernisation and development of irrigation facilities and water management; land development or reclamation of barren land, desert and hilly areas for crops, and processing of agricultural products, and on-farm construction of grain silos. The same has never been conceived for Pakistan’s own peasant community which would bring far more and ongoing benefits.

It appears that foreign investors are being tempted by a huge one-off payment that will not be reflected in development in exchange for a free ride for the next 50 to 99 years. But it will take less than half-century to destroy Pakistan’s soils and agriculture through industrial methods. The profiteers will be long gone before that.

The 2004 Policy document identifies the key crops (wheat cotton, sugarcane, sugarbeet, rice, pulses, oilseeds) with the highest output that most add to the GDP, create exports, profits or national income, but does not correlate them with the grassroots producers either as a whole or by gender. Such an exercise would have revealingly brought out at each stage and process, the labour months and hours taken up, skills involved, and output and payment to each.

These details continue to remain hidden after over six decades to the disadvantage of rural labour who thereby lack hard evidence of earnings far below the rate of minimum wages, or of women forced to provide free labour routinely for a non-working male family head or contractor.

Ever since the first Beijing Conference, and the introduction of the Millennium Development Goals, the focus on gender in Pakistan has been more on paper and in lip-service than on the ground. Poverty and hunger have been escalating, and women’s more so. Well over two-thirds of the country’s labour force is in the rural areas where poverty is most concentrated; but they also carry poverty

to the urban areas where the desperate landless and displaced, migrate to in search of jobs.

### **Initiatives and programmes**

The listing of major federal agri-initiatives taken from the Planning Commission, Annual Plan FY 2008/09 provide no explanatory details as to the mechanism by which the poor will benefit or poverty will be reduced. Many benefits are generalised and are common to all categories of people, but such benefits generally accrue first to the better-off, and later to less and less privileged, if there is anything left for them.

The following programmes need to be elaborated on for the mechanism and extent for poverty reduction :-

- Special Programme for Food Security and productivity Enhancement of Small Farmers in 1012 Villages (Rs. 80135.5 million – over 8 billion)
- Establishment of Facilitation Unit for Participatory Vegetable Seed and Nursery Programme (Rs. 497.5 million – almost half a billion)
- Land and Water Resources Development Project for Poverty Reduction (Rs. 3400 million – 3.4 billion)

### **Dairy**

Pakistan is already one of the top milk-producers in the world, but planners wish to go further with a 'White Revolution/Doodh Darya' (Rs. 2656.4 million – over 2.65 billion as federal share). There is the Prime Minister's Special Initiative for Livestock (Rs. 1696.4 million – almost 1.7 billion) – 2005/6 to 2010/11 aimed at increasing productivity through extension at the farmer's doorstep, **targeting 13 million rural poor in 1963 union councils in 80 districts**. But this will be through the employment and training of 290 veterinarians and 29 District Livestock officers.

A highly industrialised plan for Milk Collection, Processing and Dairy production (Rs. 1600 million – 1.6 billion) is to improve Reproductive Efficiency of Cattle and Buffaloes in Smallholders Production System (Rs. 489.9 million). It seeks 'pocket areas' for dairy production, with linkages to agro-industry for marketing service delivery.

The goal is to add 12 million more litres of milk and 200,000 tons of meat per annum and to this end it plans to initiate/facilitate 7250 **self-employed Community Livestock Extension Workers** (CLEWS). Overall, the performance of Extension Workers has not been impressive in these past years, who have increasingly become desk-bound functionaries rather than fieldworkers. It appears that this shortcoming is sought to be overcome by self-employed workers from among the targeted population, but no financial promises are evident of how they will be financially assisted to start up their entrepreneurship.

There is the suggestion that since women traditionally care for livestock, their skills should be upgraded so that they can improve and expand their activities and help bring in more income. But the matter of choice is not questioned; in

fact, the task of livestock care is generally imposed on them. In private, women have often expressed reluctance over this task, but lack voice and choice.

Women's opinions are therefore needed as to whether individuals want to be involved in the working with large livestock such as buffaloes, as this is a physically demanding task, sometimes risky, that is more suitable for men. Furthermore, women do not necessarily benefit personally from livestock activities; the earnings may go to the family men or other male members who exert no effort in livestock. This also needs to be taken into consideration so that the livestock sector does not turn into another form of female enslavement.

The goal of boosting the number of women livestock workers is complemented with the effort to involve women in service-delivery by increasing the number of female livestock extension workers. Women are certainly needed in service-delivery, but among the poor and for poverty-reduction they are much more needed in health, child-health, and reproductive health services.

## **PRSP - II**

The PRSP contends that *“more food and agricultural products are directly needed by rurals’, so that value-adding is not possible”*; while the first statement is true, it does not follow that surplus which can obtain value-addition, is not possible when the wherewithal is provided. Nor does it recognise that the inadequacy of food and agricultural products that most rurals' suffer is not so much due to lack of availability but lack of buying power, including of the basic services that urbanites and better-off rural people take for granted.

The PRSP states that the “current agricultural development based on “19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century” models built on the natural resource base are no longer tenable because of the increasing depletion of natural resources and increasing population.” But it does not identify which models are being referred to, or what new 'model' is being forwarded. In fact, what became the trend in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century was the plantation system (monoculture) for selected export crops under colonialism which exploitative terms caused impoverishment on mass scale. In essence, this approach has not been altered to this day.

Monoculture was exacerbated in the mid-60s with the introduction of the so-called Green Revolution technology. While the original HYV seeds may not be the same in use since they lose vigour in a few years, they are constantly replaced by new varieties, which system keeps farmers in a state of dependency in their struggle to prevent falling output. The basic approach of large-scale monoculture and chemicals with which to combat pests and short-term fertility, remains unchanged.

The PRSP concedes that the existing situation demands that farming and rural communities *“be facilitated with financial and other resources through supply of rural credit as well as setting up of associations around income-generation activities.”* But it avoids addressing the fundamentals that form the foundation of an agricultural economy -- enabling the harnessing of all able-bodied, adult citizens for making the most rudimentary rural economic activity possible,

including the very basic and indispensable, such as minimal and secured plots of land that provide both shelter and space for food production, access to water, facilities for obtaining manure, and designated local commons to ensure nature's (free) ecological services.

As in the past six decades, despite massive land misuse and degradation, the very foundation of any economy – land, water, and the poorest agricultural workers for whom development is equally purported to be – are taken for granted and left to their own devices.

According to the PRSP, the government has taken a vast number of 'major initiatives' towards the objective of raising productivity, especially for export, through which it is claimed, much employment would be generated and therefore poverty would be reduced. There is indeed a plethora of initiatives including considerable overlapping, but they have little to do with poverty reduction except incidentally. In fact, the strategy smacks of the old, discredited "trickle-down" claim that seldom that has historically failed all those at the bottom of the ladder.

It is heartening that horticulture projects will be launched during PRSP-II targeting small farmers and women. But the reasons are less encouraging when it is noted that low-tech (fresh fruit) exports, declined or stagnated, because of WTO regulations and standards and other increasingly stringent standards in developed markets.

The PRSP appears to have been written by those who have never dealt with poverty or with its human faces. The following simply did not belong to the PRSP as it had little or nothing to offer for poverty reduction, except incidentally:-

Agribusiness support service provision – includes a component towards increasing access to Business Development Services (BDS) through agribusiness enterprises by financing eligible services for capacity building, skills, etc. For this the project has set up an Agribusiness Support Fund (ASF) as a not-for-profit company under PPPs that is providing matching grants to eligible agribusiness enterprises, farmers, research and extension service providers, and BDS providers.

Agribusiness finance development – Project will also support development of financial services, particularly credit and other agri-enterprises not having ready access. Through the State Bank, project has identified 6 participating financial institutions (PFIs). Agreement signed with an international consultancy firm for their capacity building. These banks would be in a position to launch their financial products within 20-24 months.

Agribusiness capacity building: focus on horticulture, hortibusiness, livestock and dairy sub-sectors. To facilitate agribusiness development and international compliance, the Project will support the rationalization, restructuring, and co-ordination of relevant MINFAL agencies and offices concerned in alignment with WTO regulations and international product standards.

Market information services : to improve availability; current constraint.

Info through outsourcing. To be executed by the Dept of Agriculture and Livestock Products marketing and Grading (DALPMG) under which an 'appropriate' private sector provider will be supported to develop a system that will initially focus on 11 major wholesale markets and fruit and vegetable exports.

Horticulture Project Unit – to develop more effective linkages between the public sector and private agribusiness.

Also components dealing with export quality certification, seed and planting material certification, and training and capacity building.

Agro-food Processing Facilities (Multan) – Small-Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA) in collaboration with Punjab Small Industries Corporation (PSIC), Mango Growers Association Multan (MGAM) and Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) is setting up Agro-food Processing Facilities. Expected to be operational by mid 2008.

Punjab AgriMarketing Company (PAMCO) – corporate entity formed by Punjab Government under public-private initiative. “PAMCO’s mandate is to attract private sector investment in agribusiness with special focus on: facilitating investors, providing advisory services, investing in projects, supporting entrepreneurs and promoting trading activities.”

PAMCO’s immediate concern is in increasing marketability period of perishable commodities in Punjab. Accomplished by encouraging private investment in (1) cold chain infrastructure – cold storage facilities at airports, urban and production areas, refrigerated transport via road, rail and air and (ii) food processing units – mango pulping, kinnow processing/concentrate, onion processing/dehydration, tomato preservation and potato processing.

### **Agriculture, globalization and international competitiveness**

Mandatory for Pak to introduce new regulatory rules and bring fundamental changes in its agricultural production regimes including –  
adoption of Sanitary & Phytosanitary (SPS) measures;  
good agricultural practices (GAP);  
Good Manufacturing Policies (GMP) in agri-production and processing;

### **High priority area**

Focus on capacity building on WTO issues, for which an Agricultural Policy Institute was set up in 2006 (API) to develop MINFAL’s capacity for improving negotiating strategies and to advise government, the object being to meet WTO agreements and requirements, so that easier and more exports can be expected.

### **Establishment of agro-based industries –**

After cursorily stating the purpose to be to create jobs and stem migration, it quickly clarifies a need to increase exports especially of horticulture and floriculture items. To this end, the government signed a loan agreement with ADB and approved Agribusiness Development and Diversification project, a 5 year (2006-2010) “to address constraints impeding development”, **exploiting domestic and export market opportunities.**

The project interventions include –

- improving the managerial; production and processing skill levels of entrepreneurs and farmers to ensure good quality raw material and uniform, high-standard products;

- supporting identified banks in increasing agribusiness lending to allow stakeholders exploit market opportunities;
- re-orienting govt institutions to become facilitators of agribusiness development using PPPs; etc.

The following, as wider, large-scale economic plans of the Planning Commission, do not belong primarily in the PRSP either :-

- National Agricultural Research programme (Rs. 2963 million – almost 3 billion)
- Agribusiness Development and Diversification Project (Rs. 4066 million – over 4 billion)
- National Programme for Improvement of Watercourses (Rs. 66373.5 million – over 66 billion)
- Water conservation and Productivity Enhancement through Efficiency Irrigation (Rs. 18000 million – 18 billion)
- Agricultural Sector Development Loan project (Phase II – Rs. 10029.5 million – over 10 billion)
- Monitoring of Crops through Satellite Technology (Phase II)
- Managing Burewala Strain of Cotton Leaf Virus and Upgradation of Cotton Research Institutes (Rs. 149.1 million)
- Restructuring and Strengthening of Agricultural Research System, Balochistan (Rs. 723.9 million)
- National Biosaline Agriculture Programme (Rs. 859 million)
- Production of Bioenergy from Plant Biomass (Rs. 260.3 million)
- National Pesticide Residues Monitoring System in Pakistan (????)
- Strengthening of Livestock Services for Livestock Disease Control in Pakistan (Rs. 714.8 million)
- Livestock Production and Development of Meat Production (1500 million) – 1.5 billion)
- Aquaculture and Shrimp Farming (Rs. 1887 million – almost 1.9 billion)
- Biological Control of Major Cotton Pests in Pakistan with emphasis on mealy Bug)
- National Programme for the Control and Prevention of Avian Influenza (Rs. 1184.1 million – over 1.18 billion).
- The Crop Insurance Plan can only apply only to medium and big farmers.

### **Special Programmes For Reducing Rural Poverty**

When it comes to addressing poverty with a ‘human face’, there are no specific programmes but merely recommendations. A large number of programmes are conditionally claimed to have ‘potential’ for job creation and agricultural-growth – *“provided they are coupled with the necessary package of technologies and strong implementation arrangements.”* Which is usually gender blind.

**Support to landless and other disadvantaged groups** suggests “a programme to include these groups in mainstream development would be initiated at grassroots level. ... would include income-generation activities, and schemes for training disadvantaged groups to be more vocal for their rights and wages, etc.

**Support to rural women** calls for a case study, with focus on women cotton-pickers, and initiation of programmes to improve their situation with the vague,

non-binding promise that: *“They will be provided with necessary knowledge support in efficient picking; informed of measures to protect them from environmental hazards caused by increased chemical spraying of the cotton crop; and providing training and information on income-generating activities.”*

The above uncertain support is the sum total of what state plans offer for poverty reduction. As with care of large livestock, there is seemingly no intention of letting women escape from cotton-picking or giving up chemicals in cotton which are causing skin and other diseases. The issue of fair or minimum wages is not raised at all, including the fact that wages have not been increased in the last 5 to 7 years despite high inflation, since this is treated as a non-formal sector. Yet the moment cotton-picking is completed (controlled and overseen by contractors, which makes it very much a business enterprise), the product becomes part of the formal sector. The poverty trap remains in place, as there is all-round collusion to maintain the status quo.

Improvement of infrastructure does not necessarily mean benefits will reach the poorest of poor; for Pakistan’s entire history, especially under the feudal stranglehold, big landlords have always appropriated first use of public infrastructure and services, and are responsible for the massive waste of water and water-theft, depriving the smaller farmers and poorest smallholders.

The strategy calls for support for *“the shift from subsistence agriculture towards market-oriented production.”* This is however not possible unless small farmers which also constitute women would prefer to be first food self-sufficient, and are ensured the same basic services that others take for granted. It is because desperate small farmers have tried to imitate market-oriented monoculture of large-scale farmers, that they have invariably come to grief and fallen deeper into debt, because they did not enjoy a ‘level playing field’ through the range of services and advantages available to them.

To this market-oriented end, the conducting of *“adaptive research to support shift to market-oriented production”* is called for which amounts to putting the cart before the horse.

One of the most questionable proposals is that of *“adopting a ‘pocket area’ approach to designate zones where one specific crop with a comparative advantage”*; this will then be “promoted, providing necessary facilities, inputs and extension. Any ‘one specific crop’ means monoculture, and the ‘necessary facilities, inputs and extension services’ mean the standard industrial farming package. Since there are intentions of reclaiming cultivable wasteland

The availability of micro-credit is to be ensured, although the sources are not identified. The promotion of agro-forestry is recommended, which would be ideal for smallholders and women. But the smallest farmer would not be in a position to risk off-season vegetable-production and uncertain olive cultivation.

The recommendation to introduce new species of fodder with research institutions, farmers, tribes and herders without first conducting long-term research and pilot efforts invites the risk of invasive species, destruction of local

bio-diversity, and creating scope for theft of wild species that can be spirited away to have their genes patented by outside commercial interests.

### **Agricultural credit:**

Overall, this continues to benefit big and medium farmers only. But 85% of communities with landholdings up to 12.5 acres (conceals those with less), constituting the majority have no collateral. The loans scheme for small farmers' to borrow up to Rs. 200,000/- without collateral is based on the group-lending methodology introduced which is not always workable when the minimum number of participants is not available, or the risks and benefits to them are very uneven, or because of lack of trust.

**Who then do the Agriculture Policy Document 2004 and the PRSP - II address?** This has not been defined and has to be assumed. It appears only to address the bureaucracy and serve as reference for academia and parliamentarians. They do not speak to the people and have never been disseminated or discussed at the people's level or even among knowledgeable NGOs and concerned citizens. They simply state plans made and are self-justified merely by being on record.

### **Conclusion**

Neither the more recent PRSP-II on agriculture nor the government's Agriculture Perspective & Policy Draft of 2004 makes direct allocations for the development of the poor as a matter of right, nor reflects conscious readjustments or diversion of resources. It follows the familiar path of standardised "business-as-usual", export-oriented and industrially-ambitious planning that has also infiltrated agriculture and services.

The PRSP was expected to include focus on women who constitute the most downtrodden of the poor, but it fails to do more than skim over ground realities. It does not look at poverty full in the face to ascertain and acknowledge the sufferings and the practical solution required, and therefore lacks a human face.

A sense of involvement in gender issues does not exist, and women are clearly not envisaged in the overall structure, least of all in progressive terms. Without this integrated foundation, "human resource development" remains an abstraction, and *"major-reorientation of the macro-policy framework in favour of small farmers and other disadvantaged segments in rural communities,"* mere rhetoric.

While some worthwhile permanent jobs may be created, for the most part, the criteria do not create opportunities on scale, the inherent nature of technology being to minimise the need for human labour. Even otherwise, workers are not enabled to be independent, to be able to choose from the market rather than be forced to take the least that is available, while permanence of work is not guaranteed. Furthermore, the benefits to the poor are largely indirect and incidental ("trickle-down"), and these are able to go only to those who already possess some resource or skill that might be employable, even if grossly

underpaid. They are unlikely to include the poorest of the poor who constitute the majority.

**What is most significantly borne out by both the Policy 2004 and the PRSP-II is that they very consciously disallow the targeted rural poor from becoming self-reliant. No scope is permitted for them whatsoever to be autonomous, but to be entirely dependent on jobs created by the state or private-sector projects. Instead, an intermediate tier is created by the state, or is left open for private enterprise that are expected to lead to the creation of jobs, but not necessarily and seldom to self-employment and entrepreneurship**

Both policies do not consider the people's view point especially women belonging to the agriculture sector and have never been disseminated or discussed at the people's level or even among knowledgeable NGOs and concerned citizens. They simply state plans made and are self-justified merely by being on record.