

**A STUDY ON PRESENT STATUS AND DEVELOPMENT OF
UNNICHCHAI IRRIGATION COMMAND AREA OF THE
BATTICALOA DISTRICT**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Irrigation is a big part in the development of command area. Command area is the area which is irrigated by a particular irrigation scheme. Efficient utilization of water usage can be achieved through command area development. Understanding and analysing the irrigation related problems in a broader context of both technical and social realities is necessary for an irrigation scheme development and management.

The present study was carried out to assess the status of the agricultural production, socio-economic and livelihood condition of farmers in Unnichchai command area and also to measure the perception level of the farmers on drinking water scheme through the Unnichchai tank. The survey covered 180 farmers of Unnichchai command area from head, mid and tail regions. Stratified random sampling method was used in this survey and data was analysed using descriptive statistics.

Present status of agricultural development assessed in the context of cultivation per year, scale and extend of farming, constrains for production, perception of future advancement in production and also the results were compared with different regions of Unnichchai command area. From the study, it was revealed that about 93% of farmers from head are doing twice a year production and also most of the farmers (92%) are using tank water as major source. The availability of grazing lands at different seasons is the major constraint for livestock development that the farmers face. In crop development, the major constraints are threat of wild animals, unpredictable rainfall pattern, water scarcity in tail region etc. Crop and livestock development in command area are growing exponentially after the end of the war through increasing the extent of cultivation land.

Further, from the study it was clear that there is a range of variations in socioeconomic and livelihood of the farmers among the head, mid and tail area that determined the involvement of farming activities. Most of the farmers (80%) are having a moderate level of socioeconomic status because of the irrigation scheme. Only a low amount of farmers (14%) are engaged in large scale farming. Others (86%) are involved in moderate or low scale farming. As far as considering the livelihood of the farmers from command area, they depend on other sources of food as well as alternative sources of income such as inland fishing, which is a major alternate source of income in Unnichchai tank command area.

Perception level of farmers regarding drinking water scheme of the Unnichchai tank showed that almost 100% of the people from command area are aware about the drinking water scheme development. Though the people are aware of the drinking water scheme, there are some issues and controversies about it. Only a very small percentage (12%) of people believed that the scheme won't affect the crop cultivation during the season. Others (82%) are in doubt over this and they believe that this drinking water scheme could affect in the long run for their crop cultivation. Therefore, the Irrigation Department should take corrective actions to clear these doubts of the farmers in the area by providing reliable data through some awareness as well as preventive actions, so that production won't be affected in future by the drinking water scheme. Awareness programs related to community participation in command area development, efficient water use, water allocation, etc will help to the further improvement of the command area.

Key words: *Command area, irrigation scheme, community participation, cultivation*

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