

Micro irrigation gains popularity in Gujarat

State Aims To Double Farm Area Under MIS In 2010-11 To 3 Lakh Hectares

Keyur Dhandeo
AHMEDABAD

WITH popularity of micro irrigation schemes (MIS) increasing significantly, the authorities want to double the area under MIS to 3 lakh hectares by the end of the current fiscal. In addition to government subsidies, the entry of corporates and voluntary organisations has given a boost to spread modern techniques aimed at increasing productivity.

Gujarat Green Revolution Company (GGRC), an SPV floated by the state government for implementation of MIS in the state, is also making efforts to strengthen the system by computerising registration process and monitoring and adopting a system of checks and balances to avoid duplication.

The system of third party inspection with random checks has also been strengthened for effective monitoring of activities.

"At the end of fiscal 2008-09, about 1.50 lakh hectares were covered under MIS (drip irrigation and sprinkler irrigation), which increased to 2.15-2.16 lakh hectares at the end of March 2010. We plan to add about 85 lakh hectares in the current fiscal, bringing the total area under MIS to 3 lakh hectares," said GGRC MD Shyamal Tekadar.

Gujarat being a drought-prone state, availability of water has been a major constraint for the farmers. MIS results in optimum utilisation of water resulting in 30-40% increase in production. Depending upon the crop and area of the field, the cost of installing an MIS ranges between Rs 35,000 to Rs 1.2 lakh. Central government provides 50% capital subsidy, while the rest has to be borne by the farmers. However, to promote MIS in tribal areas, the department of tribal affairs of state government provides 25% capital subsidy.

The use of MIS system depends on the crop and geographical condi-

tions. "Farmers opt for sprinkler irrigation for cultivation of cotton in Junagadh district. Similarly, farmers of Banaskantha district are using MIS for cultivation of potato. Drip irrigation is a hit in case of horticulture," he added. Although there has been significant growth in terms of adoption of MIS, it is hardly 3% of the total cultivable area of 90-91 lakh hectares in the state. But authorities feel that with Krishi Mahotsav and other extension activities, awareness regarding MIS is increasing.

Appreciating the relevance of MIS in a drought-prone state like Gujarat, a few voluntary organisations and corporates have also come forward for promotion of MIS. Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation (GMDC) is active in Kutch, while Valsad-based Anarde foundation and Sabarkantha-based Asha Niketan are also promoting MIS in tribal areas.

Talking to ET, GMDC MD VS Gadhvi said: "Kutch is severely drought prone. Agriculture is mainly rain fed. Abdasa and Lakhpat are the most backward talukas. So, we decided to give additional 25% subsidy and have convinced the vendors to give additional 5-10% subsidy. About 6,500 hectares here has the potential for MIS, of which more than half the area, involving 2,500 farmers, would be covered during the current fiscal, while the rest would be covered in the next fiscal. We have earmarked about Rs 7 crore."

Efforts are also on to ensure proper implementation of the schemes. "We are computerising the entire administration, whereby a farmer can apply online, track his entry and understand the designs of MIS. The survey's number-based tracking system would avoid duplication of efforts. For proper audit, we have hired two more firms under the third party inspection, which will involve random inspection as well," added Mr Tekedar.

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