

Editorial

The term, resource efficiency in agriculture' can be broadly defined to include the concepts of technical skills, allocation skills and environmental skills. Logically all innovative farmers will try to maximize their farm income by allocating resources in an efficient manner. But as resources and managerial efficiency of different farmers vary broadly, the net returns per unit of inputs used also vary significantly from farm to farm and region to region. A farmer knowingly or unknowingly may over-exploit his land and water resources for maximising farm income in the short run, thereby resulting in soil and water degradation and rapid depletion of ground water, and also posing a problem of sustainability of agriculture in the long run. Several research studies have shown that factor productivity in agriculture has considerably decelerated over time. A more disaggregated analysis of changes in factor productivity of irrigated crops reveals more or less a similar trend with minor variation as between states. While a short term fluctuation in factor productivity due to either weather or price variability, need not be a cause for concern, any secular declining trend over a long period should certainly be a matter of concern, especially in a situation where still there are large yield gaps. It is often said that low irrigation charges encourage farmers not to bother about water use efficiency and also cause the problem of rapid depletion of ground water in many areas. It thus appears that with further optimizing of the growing conditions an increasing number of inputs gradually lose their variable character and the number of fixed operations on the farm increase. This makes more and more inputs not a variable cost element, but a complementary cost element of the decision to farm a piece of land. Therefore, planned research that is to serve both agriculture and its environment should not be so much directed towards the search for marginal returns of variable resources, as towards the search for the minimum of each production resource that is needed to allow maximum utilization of all other resources.

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