

Report of the Inception Workshop in Mumbai
GRANITE Phase – 2
Mumbai, November 30, 2007

Samarthan organised an inception workshop under GRANITE Phase – 2, in collaboration with the World Trade Centre, in Mumbai, on November 30, 2007. The workshop was attended by farmers, exporters, economists and members of the professional bodies related to international trade in agricultural produce. The total number of participants was 65.

Vivek Pandit, Chairman, Samarthan, welcomed the participants and spoke about Samarthan's activities and its association with the GRANITE project. JP Ghate, Director of the World Trade Centre, welcomed the participants on behalf of the World Trade Centre, emphasising the role of agricultural exports in rural development. Milind Murugkar spoke about the implementation of GRANITE's Phase I in Maharashtra and explained GRANITE Phase II.

B D Pawar, Director, Centre for Trade in Agriculture and Agro-based Industries (CITA), gave the keynote address. He spoke at length about the domestic agricultural policies *vis-a-vis* international trade. He highlighted the urgency of Indian quality norm at par with the international quality standards, like European System Related to Good Agricultural Practice (EurepGAP).

Arun Goyal's speech was largely focused on the relationship between domestic policies and international trade in agriculture. By citing examples like export ban on milk powder and rice, he highlighted the contradiction between the stated objective of the National Foreign Trade Policies and domestic policies. He also emphasised the need of liberal import policy for agricultural technologies, seed and plant material.

Raj Bhandari, Former Principal Adviser, International Trade Centre (ITC), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development/World Trade Organisation (UNCTAD/WTO), briefed the audience on the state of play in the WTO. He explained the ongoing trade negotiations. Drawing from his international experience, he spoke at length on the export opportunities offered by the process of globalisation.

Prof. Pradeep Apte highlighted the inconsistencies in the quality requirements in the domestic and international markets. The production by the Indian farmers by and large is not export-oriented. The best portion of the production is generally exported. There is a qualitative difference in production for export and export of quality production. Unless farmers start thinking about export, the potential for export will remain far from being realised. He opined that quality norms set up by the supermarket chains in the west are unrelated to the SPS agreement in the WTO. Domestically, lack of implementation of laws related to food quality is a major problem in the way of enhancing exportable production capabilities. He was critical of government policies of export ban on onion, skimmed milk

powder and rice. He observed that the otherwise highly inefficient government shows super efficiency on such occasions. These hurdles created by the state irreversibly damage the credibility of Indian exporters as a reliable exporter.

Rajaram Sangale grower/exporter of fruits spoke about his experiences in cultivation and export of grapes. He criticised the government's policy of banning the exports of onion. He observed that the cultivation practices are not standardised and this hampers the production of export quality production. Lack of infrastructure facilities like testing labs and technical manpower thwart the export potential. Sangale was critical of Agricultural & Processed Food Product Export Development Authority's (APEDA) interventions in the areas unrelated to them. He was particularly critical of the new trace ability norms formulated by APEDA. Citing his experiences in the exhibition of fruits logistics in Berlin, he said APEDA's representation in the international markets is generally very poor. He expressed the need for insurance policy for perishable agricultural produce. He said one reason for very low export is lack of organisation of exporters, which, he said, is also the result of low exports.

Shivajirao Bhosale, prawn producer from Satara, shared his experiences in prawn cultivation. His speech threw light on the ground realities and the problems faced by new entrants in prawn production.

Dalbir Singh, General Manager, National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD) spoke about government's credit policy for agriculture. He briefed the audience of the NABARD's schemes for agricultural lending.

The programme was concluded after open discussion on the presentations made by the speakers. The participants were from various parts of Maharashtra, including farmers involved in the production of grapes, pomegranates, floriculture and vegetables.