

VICE-PRESIDENT PERCEIVES



The sugar industry is reeling under the impact of the sugar cycle. The buoyancy in sugar production during 2006-07 and 2007-08 is over shadowed by shortage of cane in 2008-09. The rise in sugar price during the period under report will boost sugarcane planting the produce of which will be available only during 2010-11. The economic crisis and global sugar deficit will continue to influence sugarcane supplies and prices. The competition from alternative cash crops is also a matter of concern. Sugarcane production has a tendency to respond strongly to rise in prices but the present surge came late in the year to have a favourable impact on additional sugarcane planting that could be used for crushing in 2009-10 season.

The cyclic character of the industry is the main constraint for steady growth of the sugar sector and a mechanism is needed to ensure that sufficient own cane is available for every mill. The country requires around 23.5 million tonnes sugar and any shortfall therein calls for import. It has been observed that India exported sugar when there is a bumper crop but such instances are far and few. A strategic planning for enhancing cane yield using modern scientific agronomical practices of cane cultivation is the key area.

The quantum of the loan available under Sugar Development Fund has been increased to facilitate the sugar mills to undertake cane development activities such as seed nursery, irrigation schemes, ratoon management and incentives to farmers for planting improved sugarcane varieties. Short-term cane development loan from SDF is also available for procurement of seeds of improved varieties, fertilizers and pesticides for increasing the productivity and

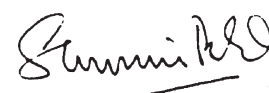
sucrose content by better crop management and efficient use of inputs.

Soil testing is an important tool for evaluating the fertility status. It is, therefore, necessary that each sugar mill establishes its own soil-testing laboratory. VSI has assisted in establishing 19 such laboratories. Inadequate use of organic manure results in deterioration of soil fertility and productivity and ultimately affects the soil health. VSI strongly advocates green manuring with crops like *sunhemp*, *dhaincha* for increasing organic matter in the soil.

Use of nitrogen fixing organisms like *Azotobacter*, *Acetobacter* and use of phosphate solubilizing biofertilizers significantly increase the cane yield. It has been demonstrated by VSI that the use of *Acetobacter* saves 50% inorganic nitrogen while phosphate solubilizing biofertilizers help in saving phosphorus to the extent of 25% of the recommended dose. Sugar mills should establish biofertilizer production units of their own.

It is imperative to educate sugarcane growers about ratoon management which is totally neglected area. VSI has effectively demonstrated that better and effective ratoon management reduces the cost of cultivation and ensures better productivity. If farmers are convinced about benefits of sugarcane cultivation and encouraged, they may not switch over to other alternatives.

I am confident that under the able and dynamic leadership of the VSI President, Shri Sharadchandraji Pawar, with his dedication and vision, this Institute will continue to make path breaking progress in all its activities.



Shivajirao Patil
Vice-President