To

The Principal Secretary
Department of Rural Development
All States and UTS

Sub: Convergence of MGNREGA and Programmes of Ministry of Agriculture

This is with reference to Mahatma Gandhi NREGA and Agriculture convergence guidelines issued in 2009 (Available on www.mgnrega.nic.in under the icon “convergence”). Rural poor are most vulnerable to climate change, as their livelihood is directly dependent on environmental resources. As extreme events increase, the potentiality of longer and more severe drought, and increased water stress would be greater. These will have an adverse impact on agriculture, water sources, forest and coastal areas. Several studies have indicated that, as the surface temperature of earth rises, climate change will reduce crop productivity; this will be more pronounced in rainfed areas, and would further increase the vulnerability of the rural poor.

A study on Environmental Benefits and Climate Change Vulnerability Reduction through MGNREGA has been conducted by Indian Institute of Science (IISc, Bangalore) and GIZ across 5 states, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Sikkim. The study showed that wherever MGNREGA is being implemented effectively it is generating multiple environmental benefits, leading to improved water availability, soil fertility and increased crop production. MGNREGA works are also helping reduce soil erosion and increase area under plantations. Overall the study concludes that MGNREGA works have contributed to improving the adaptive capacity of rural people and reducing their vulnerability to climate risks.

MGNREGA with its intersectoral approach opens up opportunities for convergence. The planning and execution of works under MGNREGA can be done in conjunction with Schemes of Ministry of agriculture. The new permissible works under MGNREGA reflected in the expanded list issued in May 2012, can strengthen the synergy with agriculture.

The new agriculture and rural livelihood related works permissible under MGNREGA are:

- NADEP composting
- Vermi composting
- Liquid Bio Manures
MGNREGA Operational Guidelines issued in February 2013 stipulate the formulation of a Development Plan to identify works that should be taken up in the District to generate employment and promote sustainable development. In a similar way the agriculture department usually prepares an annual plan for all districts to identify activities to be carried out in a financial year. To ensure that both plans are not implemented in a standalone manner, it is necessary that the agriculture related works in agriculture annual plan and MGNREGA development plan complement each other. It would be ideal if both Plans should clearly indicate Panchayat-wise action plan of agriculture related works to be undertaken through convergence with the approval of Gram Sabha. This can be facilitated in each district by Collector/District Programme Coordinator for MGNREGA by closely coordinating with agriculture department authorities.

GP wise action plans identified for execution under MGNREGA including convergence work should be included in the annual shelf of works for MGNREGA and will be part of Labour Budget of MGNREGA. Further, provisions in MGNREGA stipulate that wage material ratio should be maintained as 60:40 at the GP level for works to be taken up by a GP and for works to be taken up by all other agencies it should be maintained at the block/intermediate Panchayat level. Therefore, works to be taken up under MGNREGA should be identified in such a manner that these conditions are met. Similarly the agriculture annual plan should clearly indicate the works that would be executed in convergence with MGNREGA. This would facilitate convergence at planning, works execution and management levels.

The ATMA, KVK, agriculture extension centres may also be approached to obtain necessary technical expertise for the Gram Sabha and potential beneficiaries for preparing the GP-wise plan so that convergence takes place in a complementary manner and the activities are dovetailed to maximize outcome of the investments under these programmes.

Yours faithfully

Rajesh Bhushan

Joint Secretary (MGNREGA)