CHAPTER - VII

C O N C L U S I O N

The transitional location of Panchaganga basin between Konkan coastal lowland to the west and Deccan plateau to the east presents a variety in the geographical environment. The region is not uniformly endowed with the natural resources also. The western zone is subjected to severe handicapes on account of rough terrain, high hills, excessively heavy rainfall, high rate of erosion, and poor quality of soils. The remaining part of the region is endowed with favourable natural setup, like plain region, fertile soils, and well developed drainage system. The soils in the river valleys are deep and highly fertile. The density of population decreases from east to west with changing topography and soil. The transportation facilities are also poor in the western part.

Agriculture plays very important role in the economic development of the study region. The proportion of cultivated land is relatively low in the western part of the region than that of the eastern part. In case of landuse pattern, cultivated area comprises about half of the total geographical area ranks first in the region, whereas non-agricultural land comprising forests and area not available for cultivation ranks second. The region is well known for the lift irrigation schemes in Maharashtra. The development of irrigation enabled the farmers to accept the modern innovations in farming. The predominance

of food grains in the cropping pattern is notable in the region. Rice is a leading cereal crop and its share is relatively higher in the western part than the eastern part. Most of the crops are grown in Kharif season. Jowar comes as a major food crop from the eastern parts. The sugarcane is the major cash crops of the region and has a concentration along river banks and around sugar factories. The region ranks third in the state for adoption of tractors for agricultural purposes. The high concentration of tractors is found in the central and north eastern part of the region. On the contrary the traditional implements particularly wooden ploughs are highly practiced in the western hilly region. In short central and eastern part of the region is relatively more developed than the western hilly parts.

A systematic study of Agro services is a recent phenomena even in the developed countries. The identification of agro service centres is based on general observation. In the present study author has evolved a method, for the identification of agro service centres, which is suitable in underdeveloped area.

The study of agro service centres in the region indicates that, the physical, social, economic and political factors play important role in the distribution and growth of

agro service centres. Recent development of agriculture and irrigation, growth of population, development of transport, industries and communication have also played very dominant role in developing several agro service centres.

In the hilly areas the spacing between agro service centres is more and the size is small as compared to plain fertile areas. The study also reveals that small size agro service centres are dominated by very few facilities and less agricultural impliments score, medium size agro service centres by various facilities and more agricultural impliments score. Whereas, the large size agro service centres show a dominance of number of facilities and high agricultural impliments score.

The centrality of agro service centres and their hierarchic distribution clearly indicates that Kolhapur is the largest centre with maximum number of services rendered. Other places like Jaisingpur, Kodoli, Ichalkaranji, Shirol, Kurundwad have less number of services rendered as compared to that of Kolhapur. Most of the agro service centres in hilly area are of lower order. The concentration of higher order agro service centres is observed in the plain fertile region covering Karveer, Hatkangale and Shirol tahsils. In short agro service centres located in urban areas have high centrality which provides more services to the peasants. On the contrary the

agro service centres located in rural areas are more in number but low in centrality. They provide only minimum facilities to the farmers. The hierarchical class system is very important part of the spatial model of agro service centres and it is useful in the regional planning.

It is observed that the economically prosperous areas have more number of agro service centres of higher order while economically poor areas have less number of agro service centres of lower order. The service areas of the agro service centres for the different orders of hierarchy indicate that, lower order agro service centres of hilly region serve more area, more settlements and less population while the lower order centres in plain fertile area serve less settlements, less area and more population. Kolhapur and Jaisingpur centres serve very high proportion of the area, population and settlements as compared to other higher order centres. Inshort most of the higher order centres with large sphere of influence are found in central and northeastern part of the study region.

In the present study it is proposed to Maharashtra Agro Industries Development Corporation, Bombay, to sponsored additional 14 new agro service centres in the different part of the study region. More attention has been given to hilly areas which are poorely served in the existing sponsored pattern.

The proposed agro service centres in the region are namely :- Hatkangale, Bid, Kumbhoj, Sarawade, Shirdhon, Satave, Pargaon, Radhanagari, Bajar Bhogaon, Rashivade (BK.), Bhuye, Sadoli (Khalsa), Malkapur and Salwan.

The scheme for setting up of agro service centres was formulated by the Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture, in 24th July,1971 with twin objectives of providing self-employment opportunities to the technical personnel and providing the much needed technical services to the farming community. The agro service centres are aimed at providing integrated services and supplies in the rural areas depending upon the local needs. The agro service centres can play a very important role in accelerating the pace of agricultural production by providing the farmers farm machinery, implements and other essential inputs. The expansion of the activities of agro service centres would also provide greater employment to the people. The agro service entrepreneurs can help to educate the farmers about the new farm technology and its use to increase agricultural production as they come in close contact with the farmers. The centres should be well equipped not only for sharing out machinery and implements to save the farmers from moving from pillar to post for various inputs. The agro service centre should also pay greater attention to small and marginal

farmers whose holding account for nearly 70 percent of the total.

The agro service centres are playing very important role of transfering the advanced technology to the farmers and are providing the services and inputs to their doors. Besides, custome services and supply of inputs they are educating the farmers and performing the role of an agricultural extension worker in rural areas. Within a very short time these centres have become an infrastructure in the development of agriculture and rural welfare. The State Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Universities, Rural Banks, Agro Industries should encourage these centres for expanding their activities. It is realised that by introducing such schemes in rural areas the technically qualified personnel can be retained in rural areas, besides generating job opportunities to the unemployed persons from the countryside. This would solve the problem of migration of educated masses from rural areas to the urban centres at least to some extent.

The agro service centres located in the key communities are unique institutions in the rural landscape of Maharashtra. Being run by college graduates, mostly with degrees from an agricultural college, they are performing an important function of arranging for the supplies of agricultural inputs to the

farmers. Most of the graduates running the agro service centres are young, dynamic, energetic, fairly well-versed in the art and science of farming and most important of all hailing from farm families and rural areas (personal observations). After receiving their college education they have returned to the villages. They signify the call of 'back to the villages' given by the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi.

Some of the agro service centres have introduced the idea of "Hire purchase scheme" and "Easy purchase facilities scheme" as they realised that although a common farmer wish to purchase certain agricultural inputs, he does not always have a ready cash to pay for them. The author feels that it is necessary to identify a service area for each agro service centre which should be small enough to be managed efficiently and yet should be big enough to stand the test of economic viability and potential for development. On an average each centre may have to serve an area of 6 to 8 thousand hectares within a radius of 4 to 5 kilometres. Further by linking up these centres with the credit institutions dispensing the production and distribution credit, one can hope to achieve a remarkable success in increasing the agricultural production through a cordinated agri-inputs promotion programme which would also improve the national economy of the country.

There is no doubt that the Department of Agriculture, Zilla Parishads and the Agricultural Universities are playing an important role in the agricultural modernization process. However, these are Government or Semi-Government organizations. Considering the stupendous task at hand and considering the limited resources at the command of the Government, we cannot expect the Government to bear the full and complete burden of developing agriculture. Therefore, the role of Maharashtra Agro Industries Development Corporation sponsored private entrepreneurs like those who manage the agro service centres is of crucial importance in our villages.

In our study region, Maharashtra Agro Industries Development Corporation Bombay, has already sponsored fourteen Agro Service Centres namely Kolhapur, Jaisingpur, Kodoli, Ichalkaranji, Shirol, Kurundwad, Hupari, Parite, Kuditre, Kasaba Vadagaon, Mangaon, Kale, Haldi and Bambawade. In the context of agro services in study region we may say that the proposed agro service centres plus existing agro service centres will certainly serve the entire region effectively.