

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

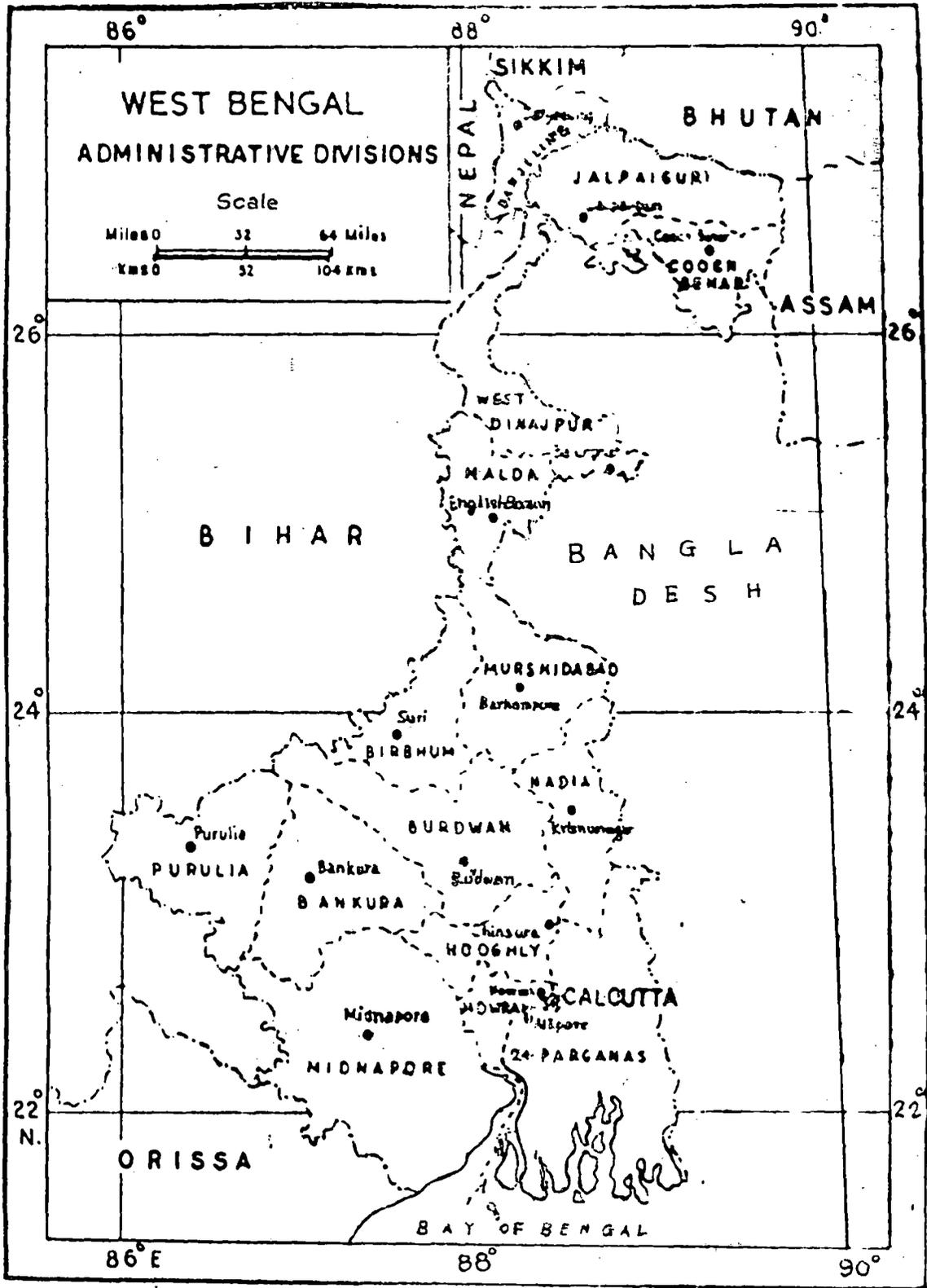
India is one of the major producers of oilseeds in the world. Yet our vegetable oil economy is to be set with the problems of shortage. The demand-supply gap in vegetable oils, once developed to a frightening level necessitating massive imports of edible oils. During 1986-87 and 1987-88, the country imported edible oils to the extent of 15 lakh tonnes and 18 lakh tonnes respectively, while in 1988-89 and 1989-90 it came down to 3.70 lakh tonnes and 6.90 lakh tonnes respectively.

During the current oil year 1990-91, the availability of edible oils in India has been estimated at 49 lakh tonnes, which is higher than the estimate of 47.45 lakh tonnes in 1989-90. If the per-capita consumption is assumed at 6.5 kgs, (including 5.3 kgs. of liquid oils and 1.2 kgs of vanaspati) the total requirement of edible oils would be around 54.60 lakh tonnes in 1990-91 to feed about 850 millions of people. The per-capita consumption if however, taken at 7 kgs, the total requirement of edible oils would be of the order of 58.80 lakh tonnes.

A recent exercise conducted at Krishi Bhavan reveals that the aggregate production of oilseeds during 1989-90 crop year would be in the neighbourhood of 186.6 lakh tonnes (88.6 lakh tonnes kharif and 80 lakh tonnes rabi) which indicates that the deficit in edible oils would be anything between 6 and 9 lakh, tonnes in the current oil year.

The importance of oilseeds in our national economy can hardly be over emphasised. Oilseeds crops are the principal source of edible oils, forming an integral part of human diet. Besides, it constitutes important raw materials for a number of manufactured goods including soap, paint, lubricants and so on

Next to foodgrains, oilseeds contribute significantly to the agricultural economy of the country. In India, Oilseeds crops are cultivated



Map No. 1

in an area of 18 million hectarea, accounting for about 12% of the total land under cultivation. Oilseeds crops like groundnut, mustard/rapeseed, safflower, niger and sunflower are largely used for edible purposes while linseed and castor are pre-dominantly growth for industrial purposes. The production of cultivated oilseeds taken together touched a new peak of 179 lakh tonnes by the end of the Seventh plan as against the target of 180 lakh tonnes.

Among the major oilseeds crops, groundnut and mustard/rapeseed account for about 80% of the total production of oilseeds in the country. Gujarat contributes about 30% of the area and output of groundnut while U.P. accounts for about 60% of the area and production of Mustard/rape-seed in the country.

It is well-known that land is a limiting factor in West Bengal. The availability of cultivable land in the oilseeds sowing seasons is a problem of wide dimension as the farmers have a definite cropping pattern of their own. Extension of acreage for raising the production of oilseeds crop is almost ruled out, and as such, greater emphasis has to be laid on raising the productivity of oil seeds and also the introduction of new oilseeds crop and also explanation of non-conventional seeds of tree origine and other sources like rice bran etc. to make the state self-reliant in respect of edible oils as it is well known that West Bengal has a wide demand-supply gap in edible oils.