1. Discuss the factors influencing cropping pattern. What are its emerging trends?

**Ans:** Factors Affecting Cropping Pattern in India –

Cropping pattern of any region depends upon many factors e.g. physical and technical factors, economic factors as well as on the government policies and actions.

1. Physical and Technical Factors:

These include the physical characteristic as soil, climate, weather rainfall etc. In the dry regions where the rainfall is scanty and where there is high uncertainty of monsoons, the dependence is on jowar and bajra. Water logging areas cultivate rice.

Cropping pattern also depend upon irrigation facilities. Where ever water is available, not only can a different crop be grown but even double or triple cropping will be possible. When new irrigation facilities are provided, the whole method of cultivation may change. It is possible that because of lack of capital, agricultural pre-requisites, better implementation, improved seeds and finance for getting fertilisers, it might not have been the right crop that was being grown; but given these facilities, the cropping pattern may change.

2. Economic Factors:

Economic motivation is the most important in determining the cropping pattern of the country. Among the various economic factors affecting crop pattern, the following are important:

(i) Price and Income Maximisation:

Price variations exert an important influence on acreage shifts. The variation in the inter-crop prices led to shifts in acreage as between the crops. The maintenance of a stable level of prices for a crop provides a better incentive to the producer to increase the output than what a very high level of price does, if there is no uncertainty of this level being maintained over a number of years.

(ii) Farm Size:

There is a relationship between the farm size and the cropping pattern. The small farmers are first interested in producing food grain for their requirements. Small holder therefore devotes relatively small acreage to cash crops than large holders.

(iii) Insurance against Risk:

The need to minimise the risk of crop failures not only explains diversification but also some specific features of crop patterns.

(iv) Availability of Inputs:

Seeds, fertilizers, water storage, marketing, transport etc. also affect the cropping pattern.

(v) Tenure:

Under the crop sharing system, the landlord has a dominant voice in the choice of the cropping pattern and this helps in the adoption of income maximising crop adjustments.

3. Government Policies:

The legislative and administrative policies of the government may also affect the cropping pattern. Food Crops Acts, Land Use Acts, intensive schemes for paddy, for cotton and oilseeds, subsidies affect the cropping pattern.

The real difficulty in adopting a better cropping pattern is that the farmer may not have the requisite capital to invest now or posses the know-how for better procurements.

Emerging Trends in Cropping Pattern: India is a major producer of agricultural goods in the world and we are the second largest producer of crops in the world, our cropping pattern does show a very welcome trend. The following are certain features noticed in our cropping pattern:

Majority of our farmers are engaged in growing subsistence crops like food grains, cereals, pulses, etc. which are basic crops, not very lucrative from the point of view of earnings. Cereals re demanded by the poor and the farmers growing hem too remain poor. Most are marginal farmers having holdings of 0-5 acres and they are. So we see that the people undertaking agricultural activities are very poor who produce only for self-consumption. So they are not in a condition to produce non food cash crops that are far more lucrative. Again, the reverse is also true that in order to grow cash crops, the cost of the inputs is also higher. This again has led to increase in farm loans and grants, which is not a good trend.

Our farm productivity over the past few decades has increased, but it is still less than the global average, being just 30-40% of the global average. The fact of low productivity can also be understood with the help of ratio of employment to GDP. We have 500 million people engaged in agriculture, whose contribution to GDP is just 15%.

The number of people engaged in agriculture has reduced from 70% at independence to 50% presently, but it is more than the developed economies, where only 5% people work in the agricultural sector on an average. This means that we are still using primitive techniques of production which use a big number of labour force, and the use of machinery and equipment’s in agriculture is much less because of farmer’s poverty.