Building large dams for its own sake was counter-productive and only served to benefit contractors, Union Minister for Water Resources, Nitin Gadkari said at a conference of irrigation-engineers and Water-Ministry officials.

“There are several dams but in many instances the farmers aren’t able to access water. Along with big dams there should be smaller dams, check dams and barrages,” he said as the key-note speaker at a day-long conference on Command Area Development (CAD), an initiative under the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP), “Else the only beneficiaries of dam projects will be contractors and middlemen.”

The Command Area Development (CAD) Programme was launched by Government of India in 1974-75. It was restructured and renamed as Command Area Development and Water Management (CADWM) Programme in 2004.

The programme was being implemented under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) as a component of Har Khet Ko Pani.

From July, 2016 onwards, the CADWM implementation was focused on completing 99 priority irrigation projects through NABARD funding.

“All are very interested in constructing dams,” Mr. Gadkari said. “I am sorry to say, but the issue of CAD is of no interest (to them). What is the use of the scheme then?”