

## Agriculture and Farmers Well Being: Present Scenario

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**A**griculture remains the largest sector of the Indian economy. The sector contributed 16.1 per cent to the overall Gross Value Added in 2014-15 (based on 2011-12 prices under new series). Apart from the economic indicators, the sector is the most vital for social security in terms of the food and nutrition and the employment that it provides to the large population and rural work force. The share of workforce employed in the sector has declined from 64.8 per cent in 1993-94 to 48.9 per cent 2011-12, but it still employs the largest work force, although, the earnings are much lower than the workers employed in other economic sectors like industries and services. The farmers and the farm sector are often confronted with productivity shocks and price volatility. The climate change induced weather aberrations are on the rise and extreme weather related events often make normal institutional support inadequate and meagre. In India, such extreme events are on the rise and have made a strong case for vigorous efforts for the welfare of the millions of farm families. There are several facets that are required to be addressed while

pursuing the case for the wellbeing of the farmers. While measures for farmer's wellbeing would be on course, these should go along with the measures on institutional reforms and technology generation and its transfer to provide higher income to farmers as well as meeting the rising demands for food grains and other commodities. It is noteworthy that the projected demand for food grains is 277 million tonnes by 2020-21 and 71 million tonnes for oilseeds. While with the current trend of growth in cereals, the food grains demand is likely to be met except for some deficiency in pulses, a major deficiency is likely to occur in the case of vegetable/ edible oils where about 60 per cent of the domestic consumption requirement is met from imports.

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as an alternate food grain bowl along with supporting the farmers for risk mitigation and adaptation and income enhancement through diversified activities. The farmers' well-being has been the cornerstone of the policies and programmes of the Government. The Government has started several innovative and out of the box solutions for addressing the farmers' problems and their well-being. While they do include support for better production avenues with more area under irrigation and availability of quality inputs, the larger focus has been to empower the farmers against risks of crop failure and price volatility with more incentives for crop insurance and national agricultural market and price stabilization. The diversification of farming with high value organic farming, traditional farming and livestock and fishing is also on the top of the agenda of the Government. Besides, better information to farmers on all aspects of agriculture to enrich his/her productivity with latest technologies and marketing avenues has been initiated through a dedicated TV channel 'Kisan Channel'. During the last two years, a host of schemes and programmes have been initiated by the Government to address several challenges and bring well being to millions of farmers of the country. The important ones are mentioned below:

**Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY):** In a country where 55 per cent of cropped area is water distressed, the farmers' well-being could only be achieved through *Har Khet Ko Pani* and *More Crop Per Drop*. The recently launched Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana has put this in a right perspective with larger emphasis on low hanging fruits and last mile connectivity along with augmentation of water storage and efficient use of water. The PMKSY is to be implemented in a mission mode and 28.5 lakh ha will be brought under irrigation. The funds provided for the PMKSY was Rs. 4510 crore including supplementary

grant of Rs. 2510 crore for AIBP and PMKSY-*Har Khet Ko Pani* for 2015-16. In the Union Budget 2016-17, the priorities have been set for the PMKSY. Implementation of 89 irrigation projects under AIBP, which have been languishing, are to be fast tracked to help irrigate 80.6 lakh hectares of agricultural land. The projected funds requirement has been estimated at Rs. 17000 crore for next year and Rs. 86500 crore in the next five years. It has been targeted to complete 23 of these projects before 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2017. A dedicated Long Term Irrigation Fund has been envisaged in NABARD with an initial corpus of about Rs. 20000 crore. To achieve all these, a total

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provision of Rs. 12517 crore has been made through budgetary support and market borrowings in 2016-17.

Many states have started innovative practices for water conservation and harvesting. Maharashtra started *Jalyukta Shivar Scheme* which channelizes the funds of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for the creation and restoration of water bodies. Karnataka Government has enhanced the subsidy on micro-irrigation by topping up the central subsidy to make it 100 per cent for drip and sprinkler systems. Gujarat has institutionalized a unique system of hand holding with the farmers for Micro-Irrigation. Gujarat Green Revolution Corporation receives the

central fund and then implements the micro-irrigation schemes with hand holding for maintenance for initial three years. Rajasthan has implemented diggi-cum-sprinkler system in canal command areas, where canal closure and breakage and under supply of water is a common phenomenon. Other states have also implemented very innovative water-positive and convergence practices for water conservation, water harvesting and efficient use of water.

**Pradhan Mantri Krishi Bima Yojana :** The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana has been implemented from Kharif, 2016 replacing National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) and Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS). The salient changes to provide which have been made over NAIS/MNAIS are (a) Share of the farmer in actuarial premium has been rationalized for crops/ areas throughout the country and reduced to a lower level subject to a maximum ceiling of 2 per cent of sum insured for Kharif foodgrains, pulses and oilseed crops, 1.5 per cent for Rabi foodgrains, pulses and oilseed crops and 5 per cent for Kharif and Rabi annual commercial/annual horticultural crops. An outlay of Rs. 5,500 crore is provided for 2016-17. The states have been requested to implement this scheme beginning kharif 2016. The scheme will bring great relief to farmers whose crop production is often at risk due to natural calamities.

**Soil Health Card Scheme:** With the launch of the Green Revolution, fertilizer use in India has steadily grown but it has been disproportionately tilted in favour of urea, the source of nitrogen. In the early 1970s, the average proportions across N, P and K were 6:1.9:1, they shifted in favour of nitrogen over time reaching 10:2.9:1 in 1996. There was a minor shift in the reverse direction subsequently but in 2012-13, the proportions still stood at 8.2:3.2:1. There is a common belief that Indian farmers use too much urea. But the

facts presented above suggest that this is too simplistic a view. More nuanced analysis is required taking into account soil and crop type and irrigated versus rain-fed regions. The soil health card scheme is now being implemented to inform the farmers about nutrient level of his/her field so as to enable him/her to make judicious use of fertilizers. The scheme targets to cover all 14 crore farm holdings by March 2017. Rs 368 crore have been provided for National Project on Soil Health and fertility. Besides, 2,000 model retail outlets of fertilizer companies will be provided with soil and seed testing facilities during the next three years.

**Parmparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana and Organic Farming in NE India:** To increase crop yields in rain fed areas, which account for nearly 55 per cent of the country's arable land, organic farming is being promoted. The Government has launched two important schemes. First, the 'Parmparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana' which will bring 5 lakh acres under organic farming over a three year period. Second, the Government has launched a value chain based organic farming scheme called "Organic Value Chain Development in North East Region". The emphasis is on value addition so that organic produce grown in these parts finds domestic and export markets. A total provision of Rs. 412 crore has been made for these schemes.

**National Agricultural Market (NAM):** The agricultural produce marketing systems suffer from major distortions and multiplicities of levies and mandi taxes. These are neither transparent, nor uniform across the states and are a major barrier to farmers realizing remunerative prices. There remain some serious restrictions on the movement of agricultural commodities even within states. A model has been developed by Karnataka which has integrated a number of markets into a single licensing system with a joint venture of state government agency and NCDEX spot exchange,

which offers automated auction and post auction facilities. Taking this model as a base, the Government has recently approved new schemes on National Agricultural Market (NAM) through Agri-Tech Infrastructure Fund (ATIF) for implementation during 2015-16 to 2017-18 with a budget of Rs. 200.00 crore. The scheme envisages implementation of NAM through Small Farmers Agri-business Consortium (SFAC), which is an autonomous organization under the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare. The NAM provides the scope for a Pan-India Electronic Trading Portal which will network selected

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Agricultural Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs) market yards to create a Unified National Market for Agricultural Commodities. The e-platform will be deployed in selected 585 regulated whole sale markets across the country based on the states having carried out prior reforms in their marketing laws in respect of (i) a single license to be valid across the state, (ii) single point levy of market fee and (iii) provision for electronic auction as a mode for price discovery.

**Price Stabilization Fund (PSF):** Price volatility is the major shock

that farmers receive while farming. Often, it is too low to fetch any remuneration at the season of sale of the produce while at the time of purchase, it becomes too high, beyond the farmers' normal capacity to afford. The PSF has been established for procurement and distribution of perishable agriculture and horticultural commodities. The Fund aims to provide working capital and other expenses for procurement and distribution of perishable agricultural and horticultural commodities and to protect the interests of farmers as well as consumers.

**Rashtriya Gokul Mission** Livestock contributes 25 per cent of Gross Value added in the agriculture sector and provides self-employment to about 21 million people. It is one of the fast growing sectors of agriculture and offers great resilience against any distress and additional income to farmers. Rashtriya Gokul Mission has been launched in 2014-15 for conservation of indigenous breeds. The mission also envisages establishment of Integrated Cattle Development Centres (Gokul Grams) to develop indigenous breeds including 40 per cent non-descript breeds. The fund outlay for the Mission is Rs 500 crore for 2013-4-15 to 2016-17. Besides, for the development of indigenous breeds an allocation of Rs 50.00 crore has been made available for 2015-16.

**National Kamdhenu Breeding Centre:** National Kamdhenu Breeding Centres for development, conservation and preservation of indigenous breeds are being set up - one in north and one in south India, as a Centre of Excellence to develop and conserve indigenous breeds in a holistic and scientific manner. A nucleus herd of all the indigenous bovine breeds (39 cattle and 13 buffaloes), Mithun and Yak will be conserved and developed with the aim of enhancing their productivity and upgrading genetic merit. The Centre, besides being a repository of indigenous germ-plasm, will also be a source of certified germ-plasm in the

country. Elite certified germ-plasm - in the form of bulls for artificial insemination and natural service, heifers, male and female calves, semen doses and embryos - will be made available to farmers, breeders and breeding organizations maintaining indigenous breeds. An amount of Rs 25.00 crore each has been released to Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh for establishment of National Kamdhenu Breeding Centres for Northern Region and Southern Region of the country respectively.

**Blue Revolution:** Realizing a great scope for development in fisheries and well being of the fishing community, the scheme on integrated development of fisheries has been initiated under the banner of Blue Revolution. The allocation for the next five years has been put at Rs. 3000 crore for implementation of various intended fisheries schemes towards realizing the objectives of Blue Revolution.

**Budgetary Support:** To support all these activities, the Government has provided adequate budgetary support during 2016-17. The huge budgetary support of Rs. 35984 crore has been earmarked for the Ministry of Agriculture during 2016-17. Besides, the credit support of Rs. 9.0 lakh crore is also envisaged to farmers in the year 2016-17. On the top of that, the investment in rural roads, rural electrification and other social sector initiatives will help in rural transformation. All these measures will be helpful to farmers' well-being and will bring long term prosperity to rural India. □

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### Development Projects approved under Namami Gange Programme

Giving a major fillip to Namami Gange Programme, projects worth Rs 2446 crore have been approved by the ESC for development of Ghats and crematoria in the stretch from Haridwar to Uttarakhand Border in Uttarakhand, Garhmukteshwar in UP, Buxar, Hajipur and Sonepur of Bihar, Sahibganj, Rajmahal and Kanhaiya Ghat of Jharkhand and Delhi and afforestation along the banks of river Ganga. These projects will help to improve the facilities of Ghats and crematoria for reduction of pollution load into river Ganga.

The Detailed Project Report on 'Forestry Intervention in River Ganga' was also appraised by the ESC. The project will focus on augmenting water flow together with abating the pollutants loads of river Ganga through appropriate forestry intervention along the banks of river Ganga. The major project components are implementation of Forestry Interventions in Five States at the banks of River Ganga; Strengthening Knowledge Management and National Capacity for Forestry Interventions and National Rivers and scaling up and replication of successful models of Forestry interventions and Riverscape. The estimated cost of the project is Rs. 2294 crore for the duration of five years.

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