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Doubling the farmer's income through innovative approaches and agronomic interventions

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Past strategy for development of the agriculture sector in India has focused primarily on raising agricultural output and improving food security. The net result has been a 45 per cent increase in per person food production, which has made India not only food self-sufficient at aggregate level, but also a net food exporting country.

The strategy did not explicitly recognise the need to raise farmers' income and did not mention any direct measure to promote farmers welfare. The net result has been that farmers income remained low, which is evident from the incidence of poverty among farm households.

To achieve doubling farmer's income might require novel strategies and some change in the policy stance. One could be identification and targeting of the poor or low-income farmers. Unless it is known who within agricultural sector have low income and/or are disadvantaged in terms of access to technology, markets, credit, information and infrastructure, it would be difficult to accomplish the target of doubling farmers' income in such a short period.

RAISING PRODUCTIVITY

Since Indian agriculture is dominated by small-and marginal farmers who have small holdings, raising productivity is likely the single most important factor, if incomes of this group are to be doubled. The imminent challenges herein lies, (i) resources like water and land are limited and over exploited; and (ii). land holding is getting fragmented. The problem is further compounded by rising input costs. To overcome the problem, here is need for substantive investment in irrigation, seeds and fertilizers and

new technology coupled with a shift into high-value commodities such as horticulture, poultry and dairying to double incomes. The modernization of farms and adoption of new technologies like adopting GM crops and using new farm equipment (develop a rental market for farm equipments) could be the new thinking.

- ✓ Two sources to increase in agricultural output are area and productivity.
- ✓ In present scenario, agricultural output has to be increased through improvement in productivity per unit of land.
- ✓ Enhancing access to irrigation and technological advancement are the most potent instruments to raise agricultural productivity and production in the country.
- ✓ Biotechnology can also play an important role in increasing crop and livestock production.

IMPROVEMENT IN TOTAL FACTOR PRODUCTIVITY

- ❖ Improvement in TFP is an important source of output growth which directly contributes to cost saving and thus increase in income.
- ❖ TFP growth represents effect of technological change, skill, infrastructure etc, which are not counted in the set of production inputs.
- ❖ Improvement in farm services such as Agri-clinics also adds to the TFP.

DIVERSIFICATION TOWARDS HIGH VALUE CROPS

- ✓ Staple crops (cereals , pulses, oilseeds) occupy 77 per cent of the total or gross cropped area (GSA) but contribute only 44 per cent of total output of the crop sector.
- ✓ HVC's (fruits, vegetables, fibre, condiments and spices and sugarcane) occupy just 19 per cent of gross cropped area (GSA) and contribute the same 44 per cent of total output of the crop sector.

INCREASE IN CROP INTENSITY

- It includes raising of short duration crops after the main *kharif* and *rabi* season with the availability of irrigation and new technologies.

LIST OF VARIOUS INTERVENTIONS AND SCHEMES LAUNCHED FOR THE BENEFIT OF FARMERS

(i) With a view to provide income support to all farmers' families across the country, to enable them to take care of expenses related to agriculture and allied activities as well as domestic needs, the Central Government started a new Central Sector Scheme, namely, the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN). The scheme aims to provide a payment of Rs. 6000/- per year, in three 4-monthly installments of Rs. 2000/- to the farmers families, subject to certain exclusions relating to higher income groups.

(ii) Further with a view to provide social security net for Small and Marginal Farmers (SMF) as they have minimal or no savings to provide for old age and to support them in

the event of consequent loss of livelihood, the Government has decided to implement another new Central Sector Scheme i.e. Pradhan Mantri Kisan MaanDhan Yojana (PM-KMY) for providing old age pension to these farmers. Under this Scheme, a minimum fixed pension of Rs. 3000/- will be provided to the eligible small and marginal farmers, subject to certain exclusion clauses, on attaining the age of 60 years.

(iii) With a view to provide better insurance coverage to crops for risk mitigation, a crop insurance scheme namely Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) was launched from Kharif 2016 season. This scheme provides insurance cover for all stages of the crop cycle including post-harvest risks in specified instances, with low premium contribution by farmers.

(iv) Giving a major boost for the farmer's income, the Government has approved the increase in the Minimum Support Price (MSPs) for all Kharif and Rabi crops for 2018-19 season at a level of at least 150 percent of the cost of production.

(v) Implementation of flagship scheme of distribution of Soil Health Cards to farmers so that the use of fertilizers can be rationalized.

(vi) "Per drop more crop" initiative under which drip/sprinkler irrigation is being encouraged for optimal utilization of water, reducing cost of inputs and increasing productivity.

(vii) "Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)" for promoting organic farming.

(viii) Launch of e-NAM initiative to provide farmers an electronic transparent and competitive online trading platform.

(ix) Under "Har Medh Par Ped", agro forestry is being promoted for additional income. With the amendment of Indian Forest Act, 1927, Bamboo has been removed from the definition of trees. A restructured National Bamboo Mission has been launched in the year 2018 to promote bamboo plantation on non forest government as well as private land and emphasis on value addition, product development and markets.

(x) Giving a major boost to the pro-farmer initiatives, the Government has approved a new Umbrella Scheme 'Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA)'. The Scheme is aimed at ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce as announced in the Union Budget for 2018. This is an unprecedented step taken by Govt. of India to protect the farmers' income which is expected to go a long way towards the welfare of farmers.

(xi) Bee keeping has been promoted under Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) to increase the productivity of crops through pollination and increase the honey production as an additional source of income of farmers.