

**'Move out, move up' approach could ease India's farm crisis: IFPRI chief Shenggen Fan**

Indians must adopt policies that facilitate sections of farmers to 'move out' of rural areas to urban areas and the remaining ones to 'move up' in the farming sector to tackle the current agrarian crisis, the head of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) said.

"India needs a 'move out, move up' approach to deal with the agriculture crisis," Shenggen Fan, Director General, IFPRI told *The Hindu* in an interview ahead of the release of the annual global food policy report.

"It is important to address farmers' problems. Most of the hungry people in the world are farmers. The first response is to increase productivity and production. But there is a problem there. When every one is producing more, the prices will go down and we have seen that in India, China and everywhere... For India, some farmers have to move to cities and urban centres. Those who stay behind will be able to increase the holding and move to producing high value food, that will create new opportunities. That is the 'move out, move up' approach," he said.

Mr. Fan said non-farm opportunities in rural areas must also increase if farmers have to come out of poverty.

"We have statistics showing that the higher the non-farm income, the lower the poverty rate," he said, naming food processing, input supplies, trade and marketing, making construction materials for urban centres etc. as such non-farm opportunities that are possible in rural areas, where farmers could work part-time or seasonally.

Mr. Fan, who grew up in China said the Chinese transformation was based on this approach of 'move out and move up' but there is more resistance to this approach in India.

"Policy makers in India do not appreciate this much, it appears to me. They want to keep people in rural areas. This is not fair to them as they would continue to struggle. The policies should facilitate move out and move up," he said. He said India has been investing in rural and urban projects separately, but investment in the linkage between urban and rural economy is inadequate.

Talking about the future of agriculture, he said as urban people get prosperous they will demand better, more nutritious food in the future. This would encourage agriculture that is now grain focused, to shift to vegetables, fruits, good dairy products and meat.

"It is a great opportunity for small holders. Some agriculture entrepreneurs may come to rural areas from cities and use GPS, drones, laser technology etc. to produce healthier food in more efficient ways, from relatively smaller holdings," said Mr. Fan.

Pointing out that the ownership of future agriculture technologies will have implications for the future of farmers, Mr. Fan said India must increase its investment in research. "Indian agriculture scientists must work hard to develop and own new technologies. The country should own them rather than multinationals, so that your farmers will benefit. You should invest more in this research," he said. According to Mr. Fan, the spread of the Internet has led to a "lot of misinformation on GMOs" in countries like India and China, and the "governments and the researchers have the responsibility to spread accurate information" to help farmers.

Mr. Fan said anti-globalism could be detrimental to food security and countries such as India and China must continue to argue for "free and fair trade" and the free movement of people around the world.

The yield, however, has declined due to water shortage

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