

AGRICULTURE MECHANIZATION AND TECHNOLOGY DIVISION TAKES VARIOUS INITIATIVES FOR FARMERS' WELFARE UNDER ATMA NIRBHAR BHARAT ABHIYAAN/KRISHI

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Agriculture Issues and related constraints

Agricultural Mechanization is one of the key drivers for sustainable development of agriculture sector which helps in increasing production by timely farm operations, reducing losses, reducing the cost of operations by ensuring better management of costly inputs. Mechanization also enhances the productivity of natural resources and reduces drudgery associated with various farm operations. Under the hash-tag **#AtmaNirbharKrishi**, created by Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Government of India, initiatives taken by Agriculture Mechanization and Technology Division are:

In order to lay special emphasis towards promotion of agricultural mechanization in the country and to bring more inclusiveness, Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM) had been initiated since April 2014. In the year 2020-21, budget of Rs. 1033 crores have been provided for the scheme, out of which Rs. 553 crores have been released to the State Governments.

Paddy straw burning is one of the major problems in the Northern Region of the country causing environmental pollution. Paddy straw burning is currently practiced on a large scale in Punjab & Haryana to clear the fields for Rabi Crop sowing because the time window available between the harvesting of paddy crop and the sowing of next crops is very short (2-3 weeks). With an objective to wean away farmers of this region from Crop Residue Burning, the scheme of CRM (Crop Residue Management) was initiated since 2018 by Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, wherein, farmers are provided machinery for in-situ management of crop residue through establishment of CHCs (Custom Hiring Centres). Individual farmers are also provided subsidy for procurement of machinery. Total funds of Rs. 1178.47 crores were provided in the year 2018-19 & 2019-20 to the States of Punjab, Haryana, UP and NCT. In the year 2020-21, Rs. 600 crores has been provided in the budget for the Scheme and Rs.548.20 crores have been released to the states well before time to ensure they can take up the activities in advance.

Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has also developed a Multi lingual Mobile App "CHC- Farm Machinery" which connects the farmers with Custom Hiring Service Centers situated in their locality. This app is facilitating agricultural mechanization in the country by encouraging small & marginal farmers to take machines on rental basis for agriculture practices without them having to purchase the high priced such machines. The App has been further modified and now has been given the acronym of "FARMS-app" (Farm Machinery Solutions-app). The revised version is more user friendly and the scope of the app has also been enhanced.

Pandemic of COVID has influenced the lives of people across the globe and India is no exception to that. Farming activities and farmers also experienced the impact of this pandemic as the COVID resulted in lock-down thereby influenced the movement of farm inputs including farm machinery from one location to other. Lock-down came as a sudden shock for the farming community when harvesting season for Rabi crops had just commenced. Migration of agricultural labourers to their native places during the lockdown, suddenly created a shortage of farm labourers. To mitigate the effect of shortage of farm labourers and to ensure the timely harvesting of Rabi crops and uninterrupted supply of Farm implements and machinery, Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Ministry in coordination with Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, relaxed the following activities in Agricultural Machinery sector:

Pandemic of COVID has ramifying effects even in the lives of migrant labourers who basically migrate temporarily to urban agglomerates in search of jobs. Migrant labourers in large numbers migrated back to their native places due to lock-down and also due to the fear of future uncertainties. Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare rose to the occasion to help such migrant workers. With an objective to enhance their employment opportunities in their local areas, a special drive for Skilling the Migrant Labourers in the field of agricultural machinery under “**Aatm Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan/Krishi**” has been initiated. Under this campaign, in-house Skilling training programmes in 8 identified job roles/Qualification packs is being organized at Farm Machinery Training and testing Institutes (FMTTIs) at Budni in Madhya Pradesh and Hisar in Haryana. The first batch of the Training has already been started with 56 trainees from Madhya Pradesh at CFMTTI, Budni and 68 trainees from Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh at NRFMTTI, in Hisar. It was also crucial to institutionalize such initiative, therefore, necessary guidelines for Skilling Programmes of migrant labourers have also been incorporated in the operational Guidelines of Sub Mission On Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM). The copy of Operational Guideline is available on the web portal <http://farmech.dac.gov.in/>

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