

PM-KISAN, MANDI REFORMS STEAL THE AGRICULTURE SHOW IN 2019

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

A farmer working at his field in Keesara village outskirts of Hyderabad. File | Photo Credit: [G. Ramakrishna](#)

Good monsoon may have laid the foundation for record foodgrain production, but it was the launch of schemes like PM-Kisan that has set the ball rolling for structural reforms in the agriculture sector to achieve the target of doubling farmers' income.

The Centre's focus in 2019, continued to be 'kisan kalyan' (farmers' welfare) in the second term of the Modi administration and the policy changes were as per the recommendations by the Dalwai Committee for doubling farmers' 2015-16 income level, in real terms, by 2022.

Not only the budget allocation for the sector was hiked over 78% to 1.39 lakh crore for the current fiscal, the government persuaded states to adopt long pending agri-marketing reforms as per the Model Agriculture Produce and Livestock Market Committee (APML) Act.

Besides, it tweaked some existing schemes for promoting quick transfer of new farm technology and facilitate agri-exports by allowing treatment of Methylcyclopropene (MCP) for enhancing the shelf life of fresh fruits and vegetables among others.

To mitigate severe agrarian distress, the government launched a new agri-scheme the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-Kisan), just before the Lok Sabha polls, with an aim to provide direct cash benefit of 6,000 annually to each of 14 crore farmers. Later it also unveiled an old age pension scheme the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maan-Dhan Yojana.

"By and large the government's priority was on improving the farmers' income and accordingly the schemes were framed and some existing ones were tweaked to achieve this objective," Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar told *PTI* in an interview.

Asserting that several of the Dalwai Committee's recommendations are being implemented, the Minister said, "the work is in progress, the results will be visible soon."

On foodgrain production, the Minister said despite delayed but good monsoon, untimely rains in some states like Maharashtra and Karnataka affected some kharif (summer) crops, the country's overall foodgrain output is expected to be better and most likely will surpass 281.37 million tonne achieved in 2018-19 crop year (July-June).

The prospect of rabi (winter) crops like wheat are "extremely" good because of better soil moisture and good weather conditions, he said.

Mr. Tomar, however, noted that the country is self-sufficient in many commodities and the government's policy has shifted from production-centric to farmers' income centric.

The government has set a production target of 291.1 million tonnes of foodgrain in 2019-20 crop year (July-June). Already kharif (summer) crops have been harvested, the sowing of rabi (winter) crops is coming to end soon.

According to experts, the year was no doubt “better” in terms of prices that farmers got for their produce when compared to last two years even though the rising food inflation was a concern with retail onion prices touching the peak of 200/kg last month due to estimated 25% fall in kharif output of the key kitchen staple, they said.

On export front, India — which exports nearly 14% of the total marketable surplus — faced problem in shipping basmati rice due to new pesticide residue level set by the European Union. Non-basmati rice and sugar shipments were also hit as global prices were lower than the domestic support price, they added.

Asserting that much awaited agri-market reforms are underway finally in the country, government think-tank Niti Aayog member Ramesh Chand said, “the trend has begun now. Many states have started adopting mandi reforms which is a real game changer in the agriculture sector.”

North eastern states have adopted fully the new Model APLM Act, while some states like Uttar Pradesh have adopted it partially even as the Centre is pursuing with the state governments to implement all the provisions of the law, he said.

Tamil Nadu has become the first state to adopt fully the model contract farming law that will pave way for food processing and better post harvesting. The government has kept the contract farming out of the ambit of Essential Commodities Act.

Besides these reforms, the government this year allowed inter-state trade on the electronic National Agriculture Market (eNAM) platform in 12 states.

However, the efforts to plug the holes in the procurement system and address the gaps in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) scheme through the new program Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) could not give desired results owing to lack of state government’s support, experts observed.

The government also banned KCC loan against gold, plugged duplication and linked the KCC with aadhar number. With these changes, the government is aiming to bring additional 2 crore farmers under the KCC by June 2020. At present, 7 crore farmers are enrolled.

The overall farm sector growth stood at 2.90% in the 2018-19 fiscal. It was 2% and 2.1% in the first and second quarter of the 2019-20 fiscal, respectively, he added.

Next year, the government has mega plans to leverage farmers’ data collected under the PM-Kisan scheme for providing better facilities to farmers. The data will be linked with land records, Kisan Credit Card (KCC), crop insurance, soil health card, and other important schemes.

The government is also likely to launch few more schemes in the forthcoming budget that would bring a major shift in the agriculture sector.

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The contribution of agriculturist Nammalwar in propagating organic farming was recalled at a meeting held here on Monday. At a meeting presided by

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