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Vice President's Secretariat

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Addresses Scientists, Scholars, Farm Experts and Farmers at CRIDA

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The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that we need to adopt a multi-pronged strategy to make Agriculture viable and profitable and the farm income must be supplemented by non-farm occupations and value addition through food processing. He was addressing Scientists, Farm Experts and Farmers at the Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture (CRIDA), in Hyderabad today. The Deputy Chief Minister of Telangana, Shri Mohammad Mahmood Ali and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Observing that agriculture is the backbone of our economy, The Vice President said unless this sector performs well consistently, the trajectory of the country's progress will not be smooth. He further said that change is required in Agriculture as there is a change in climate, change in market conditions, change in world order and change in food habits. Allied services like fisheries, poultry, horticulture, food processing and packaging need to be promoted to improve farmers' income, he added.

The Vice President said that the need of the hour is to make agriculture profitable and sustainable with consistent increase in its growth rate. All the stakeholders involved in agriculture must come to the rescue of the Annadata or else we will be failing in our moral duty, he added.

The Vice President said that vagaries of weather - from high intensity rainfall events to prolonged dry spells have drastically impacted agriculture. He further said that hailstorms, heat waves and perennial droughts are some of the causes for agrarian distress. The uncertainties are driving farmers' into debt traps and also leading to their suicides, he added.

The Vice President stressed on the need to address the agrarian crisis in a systematic way so that the farmers become prosperous. He further said that creating awareness among the farmers on traditional and modern methods of water conservation will help in effective water budgeting for

agricultural activities. Protection of cattle health is important to increase farmers' income, he added.

Highlighting the need to have homegrown food security, he said that no country which was dependent on others for its food security has been successful. Let us rise to occasion and pledge to sustain farmers' livelihoods so that they can live with their heads held high, he added.

The Vice President suggested the following measures to double the income of farmers in Telangana and adjoining areas in a sustained manner:

1. There is a need to exploit the digital technologies to map the natural resources vis-à-vis compatible agricultural systems. Indian space research revolution has provided us with enormous opportunities to achieve this goal to develop spatial and temporal maps. This will help agri-enterprise planning with minimized risk. Based on the matrix of natural resource base and socio-economic status of the farmers, clusters of the farmers could be identified as target clientele and tailor-made solutions could be provided to them for enhanced livelihood opportunities.
2. Establishment of agri-infrastructure at clusters of villages for primary and secondary value addition will help the farmers earn more returns for their produce. It would be a worthwhile proposition to rope in the industry to procure the produce at MSP, process at the cluster level and market them. If the appropriate crop planning is followed, then the processing industry can also be sustained with constant supply of raw material. Even farmers could be made stakeholders in these processing industries to make them responsible for proper running of the units.
3. The government on its part has launched several flagship schemes like Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bhima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayi Yojana and Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (to improve the organic farming practices). There is a vast scope for organic agri-produce as more and more people globally are becoming health conscious. These opportunities also could be utilized.
4. There are many success stories of farmers who have excelled and become role models for others. But, these are in isolated pockets and often go undocumented. The livelihoods of the farmers could be enhanced substantially if these success stories are shared and the practices replicated in similar environments through knowledge dissemination.
5. The Government has been constantly addressing the marketing related issues and one of the innovative schemes has been 'eNational Agricultural Market (eNAM)'. Under the e-NAM project, the turnover has reached Rs.100 crore and it is being operated in 585 markets in 16 states and two union territories. There are 90 approved commodities for the farmers to trade and the prices of commodities are available online.
6. There is also vast scope for enhancing the profits of farmers through horticultural produce such as vegetables, fruits and flowers. However, due to their perishable nature, there is a need for establishment of cold-storage chain. Turmeric and ginger farmers in Northern Telangana region could benefit from cold storage chain systems and reduce distress sale of these produce. The extension agencies too must adopt the novel communication methods and ensure successful translation of research knowledge to the farm. In this effort, not only State and Central Departments but also voluntary organizations have a major role to play.
7. Despite all the efforts in agriculture sector, if corresponding improvements are not brought in agri-enterprises sector, the benefits may not be sustainable. Hence, supporting industrial policies are also required at both the State and Central levels so that both agriculture and industry go hand in hand. Like IT parks and Pharma parks, Agri-parks should be promoted to address the deep-

rooted agrarian crisis in a holistic manner. Startups in agriculture sector also should be promoted.

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