

A sketchy roadmap

Last month, the NITI Aayog released the Three Year Action Agenda (TYAA) for the government, a roadmap for reforming the various sectors of the economy. Here we look at its agenda for the agriculture sector, and how best it can rescue the sector whose growth has plunged to just 1.8 per cent annually in the first three years of the NDA government.

In doing so, we also touch upon the recommendations of some important committees constituted by the current government in the realm of agri-food. These are the High Level Committee (HLC) on Management of Foodgrains and Restructuring FCI (headed by Shanta Kumar, January 2015), the Task Force on Agriculture headed by the Vice-Chairman of the NITI Aayog (May 2016) and the four volumes (out of 14) of the Committee on Doubling of Farmers' Income (August 2017). The government, thus, has ample reference points for reforming the food and agriculture sector.

The TYAA basically talks of action pertaining, first, to increasing productivity of land and water, second to reforming agri-markets on the lines of e-NAM, third, reforming tenancy laws, and finally, relief measures during natural disasters. There is nothing new - and nothing wrong - in these recommendations; they have been made by the committees cited above. The TYAA, however, does not prioritise policy actions, nor does it talk about the role of trade policy in agriculture, or reforming the massive system of food and fertiliser subsidies. Nevertheless, the hard question is whether the government is ready to bite the bullet.

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