

Doubling Farmers' Income by 2022

Agriculture continues to be one of the largest livelihood and employment generating sectors in the country, with more than 50% of the population deployed in this sector¹. Its contribution to India's 2017-18 GDP however was less than proportionate at 17-18%². In a bid to remedy this situation, the Government has set itself the target of **Doubling Farmers' Income by 2022**. Some of the key levers for achieving this include the following:

- (a) Diversifying towards high value crops,
- (b) Increasing productivity through adoption of technology,
- (c) Increasing cropping intensity,
- (d) Securing better trade terms for farmers, and
- (e) Redeployment of surplus manpower engaged in farming to non-farm and subsidiary activities.

The Annual Budget 2019-20 attempts to provide further impetus to this initiative by supporting alternate livelihood options at the village / cluster level through the following:

- Announcing the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana with focus on fishing & fisheries in terms of harvesting & quality management practices, upgrading cold storage & other farm to market infrastructure
- Setting up 100 new clusters with common service centers under the SFURTI scheme covering over 50,000 people, with focus on products like honey, bamboo and khadi;
- Combining the ASPIRE scheme to set up 80 livelihood business incubators and 20 technology business incubators focusing on adoption of technology in the agro-rural sector, with a target of developing 75,000 entrepreneurs.

To enable farmer to get remunerative prices and minimize the role of intermediaries, the Government has also announced a number of other measures for further streamlining of the farm to market linkage by:

- upgrading over 120,000 Km of roads connecting villages to market hubs over the next 5 years as part of PMGSY Phase 3 and
- ensuring connectivity of farmers and farmer producer organizations to the National Agriculture Marketing portal for price discovery and selling their produce, while working with the concerned States to address any restrictive provisions in the APMC Act

An initiative for setting up another 10,000 farmer producer organizations has also been taken up to enable farmers to benefit from increased purchasing power and enable higher economies of scale. **However, current SFAC guidelines for supporting FPOs through grants are limited to those adopting a corporate structure and having a minimum membership of 500. With the need for financial support being most acute during the initial stages of FPO formation and many FPOs preferring a cooperative structure, it remains to be seen how FPO support mechanisms are fine-tuned to address this anomaly.**

The other area which is receiving a lot of focus is Zero Budget Natural Farming, which essentially involves practices around using (a) natural inputs for soil & seed treatment; (b) particular patterns of inter-cropping to minimize need for water / irrigation; (c) rain water harvesting etc. thereby reducing costs and dependence on commercial inputs, has been adapted in parts of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh etc. **If this technique is to be adopted on a larger scale across the**

¹ Source: Economic Survey, 2017-18

² Source: Economic Survey, 2017-18

country, Zero Budget Natural Farming should be made an integral component of existing Green Revolution schemes like the National Krishi Vikas Yojana, National Project on Soil Health & Fertility etc.