

COVID 19: AGRICULTURE FIGHTS BATTLE

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The COVID-19 horror is blowing dark waves across the globe; its effect has wreaked havoc in our nation's everyday life. All sectors are struggling to stand their ground, the community of agriculture to confronts the jeopardy. The agrarian pillar is the backbone of the Indian economy which contributes 17.3% to our country's GDP, provides bread and butter to more than 60% of the rural population, and also helps in the growth of manufacturing and industrial infrastructures. India owns the status as one of the top producers, consumers and exporters in the world agriculture. Numerous products seal a top place in the list of export, trading, and commercial activities that supply significant revenue to the government. The COVID-19 impact on agriculture is as serious as feared to be highly tangled and diversified. Even among the different segments, its effect varies widely in various regions, among producers, and agricultural wage labourers. Being the second most populated country with 1.37 billion population, the sector possesses the herculean task to feed the booming population. The agriculture world has always been challenged by vagaries of monsoon, farmer's suicide, and now this pandemic is adding fuel to the fire. This disrupted hit arises a question will the yield convert into foods and serve our stomach, despite bumper production and high market demand the plight of farmers hangs in the balance.

Multiple constraints amid COVID 19

The major operational activities in agriculture are labour inducive, which is presently challenged by a shortage of available workers and labourers. The Kharif season preparations which are commencing will face the heat equally, as the absence of sufficient labours will distort crop transplanting. The emerging issue has thrown a tough war to workers working in risk-prone areas, with more exposure to health hazards, coupled with a lack of awareness, information and improper social connectivity. India is the abode for more than 75% marginal and small where poverty and destitution are in a state of exponential rise, which wrecks the smooth functioning of the sector and arises a big question on food supply and food security in

the present hour. The biggest issue is constraints in transportation, on the other hand, workers connected in horticulture & floriculture trade are bearing heavy losses as their products are facing hurdles to reach mandis, with fewer or no buyers to buy. Nearly one in nine people in the world are going hungry, with the coronavirus pandemic exacerbating already worsening trends this year, according to a United Nations report. The lockdown has led to abolish and return of many migrant workers home leaving harvest operations incomplete. Losses to farmers are beyond measures; their earning and feeding are at a sluggish pace. Buyers are not available to buy products; restriction in shipping facilities is making things difficult. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) warns world "food crisis" if countries do not protect vulnerable people from hunger and malnourishment, and de-clog food supply chains. The graph of nations economy was sinking much prior this pandemic, though the situation is worse now the farming sector will grow by 3 per cent this year despite adverse conditions and it would add at least 0.5 percent to India's GDP growth in 2020-21 as per reports which is a ray of hope in the dark hours. Niti Aayog member Ramesh Chand has pointed to this silver lining in the dark clouds hovering over the Indian economy. In reports, Chand has been quoted as saying, "The farm sector will grow by 3 percent this year despite adverse conditions and it would add at least 0.5 percent to India's GDP growth in 2020-21". This 0.5 percent additional contribution by agriculture may prevent the Indian economy from contracting this fiscal.

Conclusion

Relaxations for the farming sector in agriculture, special bonus above minimum support price, disburse of funds, food, relief packages, and financial assistance will beat the blazing heat in this critical time aiding the situation to revive back to a normal state. Safe travel and trade corridors should be designed to evade interference's to food supply chains, alongside market chain incentives, guarantees and reassuring messages for all market-chain actors (FAO, 2016). Coordinated policy responses are needed to support agribusiness and the livelihoods and working conditions of millions of agricultural workers in line with relevant international labour standards. Meanwhile, undertaking proper precautions and adopting awareness this crisis has to be converted into an opportunity, we can fight the pandemic ensuring that food gets transferred from the field to kitchen catering the requirement of fellow citizens to have the nutritious food they need. The administration must bridge gaps by facilitating farmers with urban consumers, paying more attention to digital marketing and e-

NAM. Social distancing induced multiple restraints won't bring a smile in the agriculture arena if such a situation continues for a long run. In need of the hour, the enlisted and enforced management practices by the government are playing a decisive role to ensure that each indispensable piece of information of COVID-19 is disseminated well to the right place at the right time. Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention organization implemented protocols may curb the threat by preventing occupational contamination, the spread of diseases and improve the working farming ambience in continuation. These measures will enable the robust agriculture sector from staring at a dark and bleak future. In this crisis, agriculture could be in the driver's seat for reviving our economy. A universal truth states "the world can stop but agriculture cannot".

References

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