

## Covid-19: Phase of Agro-Economy of India During Pandemic

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### SUMMARY

Covid-19, this pandemic hits the each and every sector of the country disbalances the economy within a month due to lockdown. In the difficult phase of country, here the basic and utmost requirement of life is depending on agriculture, people work for their bread-butter and shelter. The unawareness of the pandemic during starting phase and sudden lockdown haphazard the situation and affects the poor people a lot. Farmers faces many challenges as harvesting period already approaches and sowing of the next season crop, labors shortage, locked transportation system during the Covid-19 lockdown phase, as well with the monsoonal disturbance. With these circumstances some initiative steps taken by government to procure the situation to deal and fight against this pandemic.

### INTRODUCTION

Since 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2019 from the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission in Wuhan city, Hubei province China, there was arisen of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Novel Corona virus (COVID-19). In the history of pandemics Covid-19 virus surrounds the whole world with its frequent and massive spreading of infection. With the huge number of affected populations in the different countries all over the world, government forced to lockdown the country and only essential commodities are allow. The infected person is quarantine with medical care's and facilities till they fully recovered and suspected person are quarantine upto 14 days.

The disbalance growth of the economy which disrupted each sector of the infected countries at national level as well as globally. The rate of GDP was drastically fallen, poor people like daily wagers, labors in the country suffers a lot during this pandemic even they can't get a proper meal of one time in a day and the situation still not under control. Here, we can assume the dependency on food and agriculture sector today. The smooth supply chain of agriculture system is the backbone of our economy.

### Challenges due to Covid-19 on Agriculture

The cropping system of agriculture depends on the seasonal basis, there is a definite time of kharif, rabi and zaid seasonal crops on the basis of their proper sowing and harvesting. Mainly the irrigation of agriculture system in India depends on onset of monsoon periodically, but in the previous month there was monsoonal hindrance and unexpected uneven rainfall occurred which already disrupted the standing crop of rabi season. The rainfall recorded during this time was about 77% which was usually more than normal rainfall and it affected drastically the farmers field for their standing crops. This was already a huge problem for farmers field that erratic rain shed flowers due to which pollination was difficult creates trouble in fruiting of the crop which directly affects the crop yield and production rate. Due to western disturbances in northern India during winter, heavy rainfall was recorded with snow and hailstorm that was not good for rabi crops. These problems already face by the farmers then this pandemics take place in India and government lockdown the country overnight, the first phase of Covid-19 lockdown was end up in 14<sup>th</sup> April but situation are worsen and it continue till 3<sup>rd</sup> May again number of cases increases and it will continue till 17<sup>th</sup> May and now lockdown 4.0 till 31<sup>st</sup> May.

The harvesting of rabi season crop like wheat, mustard, corn and pulses etc approaches, the major issue occurred due to this lockdown phase was availability of labors, those who were working on the farmers field, cold storages, warehouses were fear and stay in their home for protecting themselves in this pandemic condition. This was really anxious situation to handle for the farmers for their standing crop harvesting as well as sowing of summer season crops. Delayed in the planting leads to improper growth of crop and changes in the whole cropping system. The southern states – Tamilnadu and Kerala are majorly affected due to COVID-19 spread as these states are highest in production of tea and it seems a declining of six months in tea industry. Due to unavailability of public conveyance, transportation system farmer faces trouble to access the market and further operational work of market. The flow between state borders was also interrupted farmers unable sold the crops, vegetables on its valuable amount and the prices were collapsed and most of food crop got rotten due to delay. Each sector get affected commercial crops, dairy production, inland fisheries, poultry, flower producers etc have seen sharp fallen in this phase. In Uttarakhand, a plant named Buransh famous for its flower juices and jam production during rabi season but due to lockdown its harvesting was delayed which was mainly done by female workers there which was the only earning option for them. This year production of buransh juice was nil their people unable to manage themselves for work due to lockdown and the source of earning was zero.

### Government Initiatives for Agriculture sector

Now, here are the government initiatives which benefitted the agriculture sector and farmers:

- The economy package of Rs. 20 lakh crores addressed by the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was declared that 8.19 crore beneficiary farmers of the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM- KISAN) have got an instalment of Rs. 2000 under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana. It has also announced the wages under MGNREGS will raised from Rs 182 to Rs. 202 per day.
- For strengthen the infrastructure, logistics government declared 1.63 lakh crore for agriculture and its allied sectors.
- In Agri Infrastructure Fund announces Rs.1 lakh crore that will financing the project at the farm-gate and for efficient post-harvest management of crops.
- Government will provide Rs. 1 lakh crore for aggregators, farmer's producers' organisations (FPOs), primary agri cooperative societies, agri entrepreneurs and startups under this fund.
- Rs.10,000 crore fund to support two lakh micro food enterprises (MFEs) for promoting organic and nutritional products.
- Under Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana for the development of marine and inland fisheries government announces Rs.20,000 crore for fisherman.
- For Animal husbandry infrastructure development fund Rs.15,000 crore announces for promoting dairy production, cattle feed infrastructure.
- For herbal and medicinal crop cultivation in about 10 lakh hectare area government announce fund of Rs.4000 crore.
- For supporting 2 lakh beekeepers government funds Rs. 500 crores for beekeeping initiatives for the production of honey.
- With the extension of 'Operation Green' for fruits and vegetables crop adding fund of Rs.500 crore.

### Mitigations

Seeing the present scenario, government taken some measures and exempted mandis farm operations, agriculture equipment, hiring centers as well as intra- inter country motion of

farm implements during the lockdown phase. Those farmers and labors who are working or fear to work due to this pandemic have to be aware, properly sanitize, hand wash, maintain cleanness and social distancing which is needed while operating the work in fields only this can be solution for farmers to work for our essential need of food. Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has also issued an agro-advisory to maintain hygiene and social distancing among farmers working on the fields.

## CONCLUSION

Agriculture system and its leading farmers are the backbone of the economy. India's major portion of growth rate contributed by agriculture sector. But with unpredictable weather, monsoonal changes and Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the agricultural sector. Now, with government interventions and relaxation given to farmers can procure the losses faced by the agriculture sector with maintaining social distance and proper hygiene among themselves.

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