

ACFI NEWSLETTER

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2026

NEWS

Maharashtra govt to frame SoP to curb sale of spurious seeds

Our Bureau

Pune

The Maharashtra government has decided to prepare a standard operating procedure (SoP) to curb the sale of bogus seeds and has appointed a high-level committee to draft it.

The SoP will lay down measures to fix accountability of seed companies and distributors and outline a clear plan of action against those involved in the production and sale of bogus seeds.

Recently, several elected representatives raised the issue of bogus seeds in the State legislature, alleging that manufacturers of spurious seeds have expanded their operations across Maharashtra, causing heavy

losses to farmers. In response, a high-level committee comprising the State Agriculture Minister and other elected representatives has been formed, and a SoP is expected to be finalised within a month.

Seed companies will be required to comply with the SoP once it is notified.

GOVERNOR'S APPEAL

Meanwhile, the Governor and Chancellor of State Universities, Acharya Devvrat, has called upon agricultural universities in the State to improve and refine traditional indigenous seeds.

He said that seeds should be developed in such a way that farmers can earn an income even under adverse conditions, and urged agricultural universities to contribute to bringing about a

revolution in natural farming in the State.

The Governor was speaking while interacting through an audio-visual conference with senior officials of the Agriculture Department and Vice-Chancellors of agricultural and animal science universities in the State from Raj Bhavan, Mumbai.

He said that hybrid seeds have become a problem for farmers and are also expensive. Their use requires higher quantities of chemical fertilisers.

The food grains produced using such seeds lack taste and have lower nutritional value.

Therefore, he emphasised that agricultural universities should conduct research on traditional seeds and upgrade them.

Govt likely to introduce Seed Bill in Budget session

SANDIP DAS

New Delhi, January 4

TO ENSURE QUALITY and traceability while curbing spurious sales, the government is likely to introduce the Seed Bill in Parliament in the forthcoming budget session, an agriculture ministry official said on Sunday. "We have received over 9,500 inputs or comments on the draft seed bill and we are analysing these comments. The target is to introduce it in the forthcoming season of parliament," Devesh Chaturvedi, secretary ministry of agriculture and farmers welfare, told *FE*.

The seed industry is currently valued at an estimated \$3.82 billion

The draft Bill, 2025 was put for public consultation till December 11, 2025.

The proposed legislation unveiled in November, last year was aimed at incentivising investment in research and development (R&D) by 'genuine' players while bringing in much-needed regulation in the sector, major seed associations have stated.

The new legislation will

replace decades old Seed Act, 1966 and the Seed (control) order, 1983.

"Our key focus is that farmers get quality and high yielding seed at remunerative prices, we will be bringing the proposed legislation in the parliament soon," Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said in a briefing on Sunday. Currently India's seed industry is estimated at \$ 3.82 billion.

The draft bill aims to regulate seed quality while ensuring farmers have access to affordable, high-quality planting material.

Centre pushes states to speed up spending on agricultural schemes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, January 3

UNION AGRICULTURE MINISTER Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday urged states to adopt a strategic approach to budget utilisation, warning that delays in spending allocated funds result in losses for states and hamper the timely release of subsequent central instalments.

Addressing a review meeting with state agriculture ministers, Chouhan said states must ensure funds earmarked for various schemes are spent before March to avoid administrative bottlenecks that delay



Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said states must ensure funds earmarked for various schemes are spent before March

the effective implementation of programmes.

"If states are unable to

spend their budgets on time, it only results in losses for them," the minister said, adding that budget allocations are often held up due to minor administrative and procedural issues.

The meeting reviewed the progress and budget utilisation of central agriculture schemes, including the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (PM-RKVY) and Krishonnati Yojana (KY).

Chouhan stressed the need for prompt verification of eligible farmers under the PM-KISAN scheme, expanding coverage under the crop insurance scheme, and ensuring

timely settlement of claims. He also emphasised the importance of seed and fertiliser availability, their balanced use, and strengthening central-state coordination.

The meeting was attended by agriculture ministers from Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, and Mizoram, along with Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi, and senior ministry officials.

Chouhan assured states that the Centre will continue to provide support to strengthen the agriculture sector and safeguard farmers' interests, an official statement said.

France to Prohibit Agri Imports Having Traces of EU-banned Pesticides

France plans to prohibit food imports from South America or elsewhere that contain pesticides banned for use in the European Union.

Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu said a decree will be issued in the coming days to suspend the import of products containing residues of substances such as mancozeb, glufosinate, thiophanate-methyl, and carbendazim.

“Avocados, mangoes, guavas, citrus fruits, grapes, and apples from South America or elsewhere will no longer be allowed to enter the national territory,” Lecornu said in a post on X on Sunday.

Farmers have tried to block the signing of a free-trade deal with Mercosur countries in South America, citing concerns over cheaper imports and their compliance with the European Union’s health and environmental

standards. After some safeguard measures were introduced to the text, European officials are now aiming for a mid-January ratification.

Lecornu said the new decree is a “first step” meant to protect consumers and supply chains while combating



unfair competition. “Reinforced inspections will be carried out by a specialised

unit to ensure compliance with our health standards,” he said.

Farmers in France have also been blocking roads to protest the culling of cattle as part of strict measures to battle animal diseases. The protests have added to France’s mounting political turmoil following three governmental collapses over the past year. —**Bloomberg**

India surpasses China, emerges as world's largest rice producer

Punjab lessons loom large, experts warn of consequences

RINKU BEHERA &
MANAV MANDER
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI/LUDHIANA, JANUARY 4

India has overtaken China as the world's largest rice producer, reaching 150.18 million tonnes in 2025 as compared to China's 145.28 million tonnes, marking a historic milestone in the nation's agricultural journey, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said at New Delhi on Sunday.

Meanwhile, experts emphasise that emerging rice-producing states should draw lessons from Punjab's experience.

"Surpassing China is a remarkable achievement. We have filled our granaries to capacity, and are no longer a nation dependent on others for sustenance. Today, we are a country that supplies rice to the world," Chouhan said after unveiling 184 new crop varieties spanning 25 field crops at a function.

Addressing scientists and agricultural experts, the minister said, "It is our duty to contribute our utmost to building an Aatmanirbhar and Viksit Bharat."

Meanwhile in an exclusive interview with *The Tribune*, Vice-Chancellor of Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Dr Satbir Singh Gosal, offered a complex perspective — celebrating the achievement, while cautioning against its ecological costs.

Gosal noted that the gov-



India's rice production reached 150.18 million tonnes in 2025. FILE

ernment had been working to replicate Punjab's success in eastern India and had even launched a movement the 'Green Revolution in Eastern India', targeting states like Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, eastern Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

"The government has given a push to agriculture in these states with incentives, subsidies and high-quality manures," he said, adding that the effort aims to overcome constraints limiting rice-based cropping systems.

Calling Punjab, the "national laboratory for agriculture", Gosal emphasised that innovations were tested in the state first. "Punjab has already suffered the loss in the form of depleting watertables. Now the same pattern will be repeated in other states, with stubble

burning cases also being reported there," he warned.

Another factor driving India's record output is the adoption of short-duration, high-yielding rice varieties. For instance, PB126 matures in 123 days, and is disease-resistant and also requires less water. PR131 and PB121 are also gaining popularity in Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

"These varieties have boosted yields while reducing water demand, making them attractive to farmers across northern states," Gosal explained.

The PAU is now working on developing flood-tolerant rice varieties, aimed at supporting cultivation in eastern India's flood-prone regions. "These innovations will help sustain productivity while addressing climate-related challenges," Gosal added.

Centre will check fertiliser misuse: Nadda

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, January 3

UNION FERTILISERS MINISTER J P Nadda on Saturday said the government will address issues relating to balanced fertiliser use and diversion of fertilisers for non-agricultural purposes in coordination with various departments.

Speaking at a day-long Chintan Shivir in the national capital, Nadda said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has consistently placed farmers at the core of governance, and policies must aim to ease their lives.

"Despite various challenging circumstances, the department has successfully met the fertiliser requirements of farmers," he said, highlighting record production and necessary imports this year due to farmer-friendly measures.

Minister of State for Fertilisers Anupriya Patel said the brainstorming session will generate ideas to aid in making India a developed nation by 2047, an official statement said.

Fertiliser Secretary Rajat Kumar Mishra said the government, PSUs and the private sector have all placed farmers at the centre of deliberations.

"We have kept this Shivir so interactive that every idea can find a place on the table for deliberation and we expect better outcomes from the collective wisdom," he said.

Ignoring soil beneath: Farmers reluctant to test soil health

Soil testing is conducted free of cost or at nominal fee

MALLIKARJUN NALWAR
YADGIR, DHNS

Most farmers are not showing interest in soil testing, which helps assess soil health by analysing its physical, chemical, and biological properties.

In the agriculture-dependent Yadgir district, lakhs of farmers cultivate a variety of crops over 4.16 lakh hectares during the monsoon (Kharif) and 49,909 hectares during rabi. However, the number of farmers who voluntarily come forward for soil testing has not even crossed two digits.

Under various schemes such as the National Agriculture Development Programme, State-level Soil Health Campaign, and the Soil Health and Fertility Programme, soil testing is conducted free of cost or at a nominal fee. Even when agriculture officials themselves

collect soil samples, conduct tests, and hand over reports to farmers, there is such negligence that many farmers do not even look at what the report contains.

For 2025-26, the Agriculture Department had set a target of collecting 8,250 soil samples to assess soil health. Exceeding this target by 2,292 samples, the department collected and analysed 10,542 samples. However, according to agriculture department officials, only 23 farmers voluntarily approached the department requesting soil testing for their own land.

Soil testing should be conducted every year in horticulture fields, and at least once every three years in dry and irrigated lands. This helps farmers understand the overall health of the soil, the exact quantity of nutrients present, and the soil's water-holding



Soil Health Centre in Yadgir city. DH PHOTO

Taluk-wise soil testing in 2025-26

Taluk	Target	Achievement
Shahapur	1,625	2,429
Wadagera	1,070	1,156
Surpur	1,535	2,128
Hunasagi	1,016	1,379
Yadgir	2,020	2,330
Gurumitkal	984	1,120
Total	8,250	10,542

capacity.

"Farmers who are concerned and aware about soil health themselves bring samples for testing. Such farmers number only 23. We select lands in gram panchayats

where fewer samples have been collected and conduct tests there. Even when we hand over soil health cards to farmers, they do not bother to look at what is written in them or follow the recommendations,"

'Controlling unnecessary expenditure'

"For a crop to grow well and give good yield, the soil should contain 16 to 17 types of nutrients. Through soil testing, the farmers can identify which nutrients are deficient and apply fertilisers and chemicals according to the soil's requirement, thereby controlling unnecessary expenses," said Assistant Agriculture Director Rajkumar.

"Without soil testing, most farmers do not know how much fertiliser is needed for a particular crop. Instead of spending Rs 2,000, they end up spending Rs 10,000 and suffer financial burden. The farmers should realise that soil is a living entity and focus on maintaining its health," he added.

said Ravikumar from the Agriculture Department office.

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DRI

Centre unveils 184 climate resilient seed varieties

Our Bureau
New Delhi

In a significant boost to India's agricultural research and seed development ecosystem, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday dedicated 184 improved climate-resilient varieties of 25 crops to the nation.

Addressing a gathering of scientists and government staff, Chouhan said India has achieved "unprecedented success" in the development of high-yielding seeds. Since the initiation of the gazette notification process in 1969, a total of 7,205 crop varieties have been notified across cereals, pulses, oilseeds, fiber and other crops. Of these, 3,236 varieties have

been approved in the past 11-12 years alone, reflecting a sharp acceleration in varietal development under the current dispensation, he said.

The 184 varieties released on Sunday are expected to offer farmers higher yields, improved quality and better tolerance to climatic stresses. Developed under ICAR's All India Coordinated Research Projects, the new portfolio includes varieties with traits such as drought, flood, salinity and alkalinity tolerance, along with resistance to major pests and diseases.

CEREAL CROPS

Chouhan described the initiative as a successful example of the "lab to land" approach, noting that institutions un-



PATH OF GROWTH. Chouhan said India has achieved "unprecedented success" in developing high-yielding seeds

der ICAR, agricultural universities (both State and Central) and private seed companies had contributed almost equally to the effort — 60, 62 and 62 varieties respectively. He said such collaboration was crucial to

building a resilient and competitive agriculture sector.

Cereal crops account for the bulk of the new releases, with 122 improved varieties, including 60 varieties of rice and 50 varieties of maize, apart from sorghum, pearl

millet, finger millet and other minor millets. Six new pulse varieties, 13 oilseed varieties and 11 fodder crop varieties were also released, aimed at strengthening protein security, crop diversification and livestock productivity.

In addition, six sugarcane varieties, 24 cotton varieties — 22 of them Bt cotton — and one variety each of jute and tobacco were unveiled.

Highlighting India's production achievements, the Minister said the country has surpassed China in rice output, reaching a record 150.18 million tonnes, and has firmly ensured food security while emerging as a food supplier to the world.

He reiterated the government's focus on pulses and oilseeds, price stability, pro-

cessing infrastructure and convergence of agricultural schemes to build a "Viksit Bharat".

DIVIDEND CHEQUE

In the same event, Maninder Kaur Dwivedi, CMD of public sector National Seeds Corporation, presented a dividend cheque of ₹33.26 crore to the Minister, reflecting the growing commercial strength of the public seed sector. NSC had announced a net profit of ₹110.88 crore in FY25, a 50.6 per cent jump from ₹73.64 crore in the previous fiscal.

The dividend is as per finance ministry guidelines which prescribes PSU's dividend calculation as either 4 per cent of net worth or 30 per cent of net profit, whichever is higher.

ADM, Bayer to scale up Maharashtra sustainable soybean farming programme

Our Bureau
Bengaluru

ADM and Bayer have extended by three years their partnership to support farmers in Maharashtra, building on the success of the programme launched in 2022 to strengthen sustainable soybean farming practices.

With the extension, the programme will now scale four-fold to 1 lakh farmers through FPOs and expand its coverage from 35,000 hectares to 2 lakh hectares.

The expansion will cover seven districts in Maharashtra, adding Nanded, Parbhani, Hingoli and Solapur to its original footprint of Latur, Dharashiv and Beed, as per a statement.

The partnership, launched in June 2022 to strengthen

sustainable soybean farming practices in Maharashtra, successfully reached 25,000 farmers by May 2025, achieving its targets.

5 CRITICAL AREAS

The partnership also draws from a credible sustainability framework, the ProTerra Foundation, with a focus on five critical areas of supply chain sustainability—customised production management, tailored spray programmes that emphasise pre-harvest intervals and biodiversity protection, professional implementation guidance, detailed crop-management documentation, and collaborative post-harvest pest management expertise.

Complementing these efforts, Bayer led extensive in-person and digital training

programmes to strengthen farmer's capacity in Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), biodiversity, and sustainability practices.

Through a combination of model demonstration plots and large-scale outreach, the company has engaged thousands of growers, including connecting with over 58,000 farmers through audio bridge calls on Integrated Pest Management (IPM)-based crop management. Across project districts, Bayer has also delivered hundreds of pre-sowing and crop-management camps.

In parallel, ADM's cluster agronomist team receives regular training on comprehensive crop cultivation practices.

This equips them to guide farmers effectively in implementing sustainable prac-

tices. Building on this groundwork, ADM has leveraged its extensive network in India, which spans origination, oilseed processing, commodities trading, and animal and human nutrition, to deepen support for farming communities.

Amrendra Mishra, MD of Ag Services & Oilseeds and Country Manager India, ADM, said "Our extended partnership with Bayer reflects a long-term vision to safeguard food systems and foster a resilient future."

Simon Wiebusch, Country Divisional Head – Crop Science Division of Bayer for India, Bangladesh & Sri Lanka, said "By scaling proven solutions across Maharashtra, we aim to help farmers improve yields sustainably while building a more resilient, future-ready agri-ecosystem."

FTA with India to boost exports, open doors for farmers, says NZ PM



WELLINGTON, Jan 6: New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon has said that the free trade agree-

ment with India will boost exports and open doors for farmers, growers, and businesses.

India and New Zealand have recently finalised the FTA, expected to take effect in 7 to 8 months. The deal aims to enhance market access and promote investment flows, including a FDI commitment of USD 20 billion over a period of 15 years.

"We've concluded a Free Trade Agreement with India. This will open doors for New Zealand farmers, growers, and businesses – boosting exports, creating jobs, and

lifting incomes to help all Kiwis get ahead," Luxon said in a post on social media on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Luxon held a telephone conversation last month before announcing the successful conclusion of the trade deal.

This is India's third such free-trade agreement in months, following a similar pact with the UK in July and another with Oman in December, which will give India more temporary employment visas, easier access for pharmaceuticals and medical

devices.

Describing the FTA as a "landmark deal" with the world's fastest-growing big economy, Luxon said it would create opportunities for jobs, exports and growth for all New Zealanders.

Noting that the engagement with India was "intensive", he said that his government has worked extremely hard to prioritise and invest in a relationship with India, since day one.

The result of this engagement is a "high-quality" trade agreement, he said in a video posted on his social

media handle.

Describing India as a "trusted partner", he said the trade deal will deliver deep and lasting benefits for New Zealand.

Negotiations for a trade deal was initiated during Luxon's visit to India in March 2025. The two leaders agreed on the conclusion of the FTA.

The pact would help Indian exporters, reeling under the impact of 50 per cent tariffs imposed by the Trump administration on Indian goods, diversify shipments in the Oceania region. – PTI

Experts stress on natural and organic farming

PNS ■ Hyderabad

State Planning Commission Vice-Chairman Dr G Chinna Reddy opined that natural and organic farming is the best, as it improves people's health, makes the land fertile and benefits the farmers.

Chinna Reddy stated that dairy farming, sheep-rearing, poultry industry and vegetable cultivation are profitable for farmers in addition to agriculture.

On Tuesday, at the FAPCCI Conference Hall in Lakdikapul, Chinna Reddy, along with Agriculture and Farmers Commission Chairman M Kodanda Reddy, TGO State President and Secretary Yeluri Srinivas Rao and Shyam, and State Chairman of the Agriculture Officers Association Bommireddy Krupakar Reddy, unveiled the State Agriculture Officers Association's diary, wall and table calendars and pocket telephone diaries.

Speaking on this occasion, Chinna Reddy said that farmers who depend on the land, or anyone else for that matter, will not be cheated. He said that modern methods should be adopted in agriculture



and that farming practices should change according to market conditions.

Chinna Reddy explained that organic fertilisers should be used in paddy cultivation and that chemical fertilisers harm both health and soil fertility. He said there is a need to develop an accessible marketing system for farmers to sell the crops they cultivate in the State.

He stated that the agriculture department, which is contributing to the country's food production, is great. Chinna Reddy emphasised

the need to utilise the Rythu Vedikas (farmers' platforms) effectively and that skill development is necessary, not just training.

Agricultural and Farmers Commission Chairman M Kodanda Reddy said, "If the farmer is the backbone of the country, then the agricultural department officials are the backbone of the farmer. Telangana State is the seed bank of the country, but currently, agriculture in the country has gone off track and we must protect the agricultural sector."

'Govt. promoting smart, tech-driven agriculture to boost farmers' income'

The objective is to convert every drop of water into income through automation-based micro-irrigation systems, says Agriculture Minister after inaugurating the automation facility under State Horticulture Department at Governorpet

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh is moving decisively towards smart, technology-driven and sustainable agriculture to enhance farmers' incomes, says Agriculture Minister K. Atchannaidu.

"The government's objective is to convert every drop of water into income for farmers through automation-based micro-irrigation



Automation-based micro irrigation system is being implemented State-wide under the PM Krishi Sinchayee Yojana. FILE PHOTO

systems," Mr. Atchannaidu said on Tuesday. He was speaking after inaugurating the automation facility

under State Horticulture Department at the Integrated Water Resources Management and Farm-

er Training Centre at Governorpet in Vijayawada.

Mr. Atchannaidu said with depleting water resources, climate change impacts and rising input costs, the transition had become unavoidable. Through the use of sensors, data analytics, and automation, irrigation and fertiliser application will be based on precision rather than guesswork," he said.

The automation-based micro irrigation system

would be beneficial for horticulture crops, plantations, greenhouses, shade net cultivation and other high-value crops. The scheme was being implemented State-wide under the PM Krishi Sinchayee Yojana, with financial assistance of up to ₹40,000 per hectare.

Small and marginal farmers, along with SC/ST farmers, would get 55% subsidy, while other farmers were eligible for a 45%.

Farmers' body urges Centre to keep agriculture, dairy out of India-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

The Hindu Bureau

ERODE

Thalavady Farmers Association on Monday urged the Union government to keep agriculture and the dairy sector out of the proposed India-United States Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

In a petition submitted to Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Shivraj Singh Chouhan in Erode, Association president S. Kannaiyan expressed concern over reports and official indications that the United States was pressing India

to open its markets to American agricultural and dairy imports, including wheat, soybean, canola, milk, and other dairy products.

Import of crops

He warned that any import of crops for ethanol production would depress domestic prices. Indian maize farmers were already struggling to recover the cost of cultivation, and imports would further aggravate agrarian distress, he said.

Stressing that India's dairy sector needed maximum protection, Mr. Kan-

naiyan said the country's position as the world's largest milk producer was built on a decentralised, household-based model involving small and marginal farmers.

Any import of subsidised dairy products would severely affect domestic milk production and threaten the livelihoods of nearly 15 crore families dependent on the sector, he added.

He urged the Government of India to exclude agriculture and dairy from all free trade agreements, including the proposed India-U.S. FTA.

Centre releases new draft of Pesticides Management Bill 2025 to check spurious sale

Industry says absence of regulatory data protection in new draft could hamper research

SANJEEB MUKHERJEE
New Delhi, 7 January

The government on Wednesday released another draft of the Pesticides Management Bill to replace the Insecticides Act, 1968, and, under it, the Insecticides Rules, 1971.

According to an official statement, the basic thrust of the draft is to use technology and digital methods for stricter control over spurious pesticides through imposing higher penalties. Since 2000-01, there have been several attempts to amend the 1968 Act and the Rules under it but none succeeded.

There is concern in the plant-protection industry over inspector- and licence-driven regimes hindering research on new molecules in the absence of adequate regulatory data protection. The comments on the draft have to be submitted by February 4.

The draft, according to the initial reading, does not mention pricing, leaving it to the companies concerned to determine that. This was a major concern of companies.

The new draft, according to the official statement, also incorporates provisions such as transparency and traceability to ensure better service to farmers, thereby promoting ease of living. The statement also says amendments have been introduced to strengthen administrative control and management of pesticides, striking a balance between ease of life and ease of doing business.

Kalyan Goswami, director general, Agro Chem Federation of India (ACFI), said: "The Bill is a significant attempt to modernise India's regulatory framework on pesticides. But there are many lacunae, which need to be addressed. In the past, registrations were granted to entities

Govt aims to table Seeds Bill in Parliament in Feb: Agri secy

The government is targeting to introduce the Seeds Bill 2025 in Parliament during the first phase of the Budget session in February, Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi has said. "We have received 9,000 applications with suggestions for the Seeds Bill 2025. We will

process them and put a cabinet note. Our target is to bring it in the first phase of the Budget session," he said. The ministry plans to table the Pesticides Management Bill 2020 after the Parliament recess, he added.

The Seeds Bill will replace the 1966 Seeds Act. PTI

hardly having the required infrastructure to manufacture pesticides. The Bill should recommend granting registration to bona fide applicants with the required and verified manufacturing facilities. This will ensure that pesticides are produced without compromising on quality, safety, or efficacy."

He said to improve the stan-

dards of laboratories testing the quality of pesticides, all the laboratories established, notified, or recognised must be accredited either by National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories or be certified under "good lab practices". The Bill is somehow silent on this matter.

The Bill should decriminal-

ise minor procedural violations like labelling or documentation errors and address them through monetary penalties or administrative sanctions, reserving criminal punishment only for serious offences such as manufacturing or selling unregistered, counterfeit, or adulterated pesticides.

This proportionate enforcement framework will reduce litigation, support compliant units, and enable stronger action against deliberate violators.

"Looking at the need for new pesticides, an earlier draft (2008) recognised the necessity of regulatory data protection for five years. In the present draft regulatory data protection is missing. The ACFI urges the government to introduce and implement regulatory data protection to encourage the industry to invest in new molecules which are off patent," Goswami said.

Govt targets to present Seeds Bill in Parl in Feb

NEW DELHI: The government is targeting to introduce the Seeds Bill 2025 in Parliament during the first phase of the Budget session in February, Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi has said.

“We have received 9,000 applications with suggestions for the Seeds Bill 2025. We will process them and put a cabinet note. Our target is to first bring this bill in the first phase of the Budget session,” he said.

The ministry plans to table the Pesticides Management Bill 2020 after the Parliament recess, he added.

The Seeds Bill, which will replace the 1966 Seeds Act, has provisions of mandatory registration for seed varieties, dealers, and producers to ensure quality and traceability with modern standards like QR codes on packets. It seeks the establishment of central and state seed committees for oversight, while allowing farmers to save and exchange farm-saved seeds without registration.

Penalties for individual violations range from fines of Rs 1-30 lakh to imprisonment, graded by severity, with jail terms up to three years.

In case an offence is com-



FILE PIC

INSIGHT

- » The Seeds Bill, which will replace the 1966 Seeds Act, has provisions of mandatory registration for seed varieties, dealers, and producers
- » It aims to ensure quality and traceability with modern standards like QR codes on packets
- » It seeks to establish panels for oversight

mitted by a company, the person who is in charge of the company at the time the offence is committed, and is responsible for the conduct of the business, will face actions.

The deadline for public comments on the draft Seeds Bill, 2025, was December 11, 2024.

AGENCIES

Odisha looking at healthier rice varieties : IRRI

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

Bhubaneswar, 12 January:

With paddy production of 11 million tonnes, Odisha is now looking at transition to healthier, speciality rice in partnership with IRRI and other institutions.

This was in focus at the workshop organised here by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment (DA&FE), Government of Odisha.

The workshop brought together policymakers, scientists, seed system experts, private-sector leaders, farmer organizations, and development partners to chart a clear, actionable roadmap for mainstreaming specialty rice, including high-zinc, iron-rich, protein-rich, and low-glycemic-index (GI) varieties, across Odisha and India.

With growing consumer demand for nutritious and



health-supportive staple foods, specialty rice varieties have emerged as a powerful solution combining better nutrition, climate resilience, and enhanced farmer incomes.

The inaugural session featured senior leaders from IRRI, ICAR institutions, Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT), and the Government of Odisha. Over two days, participants engaged in high-level panel discussions and technical sessions covering recent advances in biofortified and low-GI rice, seed scaling strategies, branding and market integration, and

embedding healthier rice into public food, nutrition, and procurement programs.

According to Dr Swati Nayak, Scientist and South Asia Lead for Seed Systems at IRRI, the workshop delivered a practical roadmap for scaling specialty rice, along with policy recommendations, a seed scaling plan, and a market development framework to support sustainable adoption.

Strengthened collaboration among government agencies, research institutions, seed corporations, private players, and farmer institutions was identified as a key outcome.

Budget should renew R&D support: RG Aggarwal

SOURAV SHEKHAR/UNI
New Delhi, 9 January

Dr RG Aggarwal, Chair-Agri-business committee of PHDCCI, on Friday said that India often speaks about building a strong innovation ecosystem, but on the ground, spending on Research and Development remains at just 0.7 per cent.

In an interview with UNI, Aggarwal said, he hoped that the government will give significant support to research and development in order to spur innovation and economic growth, especially in the fields of agriculture and agro-based industries.

"The current spending on research is much lower than the spending seen in countries

like China, Israel, US and the European economy. If India wants to seriously compete at the global level and push scientific investment, then higher investment in R&D is unavoidable," Aggarwal added.

"We hope the forthcoming budget renews meaningful support for R&D, covering both public institutions and industry," the industrialist who is also Chairman Emeritus, Dhanuka Agritech Pvt Ltd, a agri-chemicals company.

Speaking of taxation in the agri industry, Aggarwal said: "Pesticides should not be viewed as luxury goods; they are essentially plant medicines and provide a critical safety net for farmers. However, they currently attract 18 per cent GST that places them

in non-essential items."

He said there was a need to rationalise taxes on pesticides and other inputs for farming to make the sector cost-effective. "Just as GST on essential human medicine was rationalised, we request a reduction in GST on pesticides to 5 per cent to ease the cost burden on farmers."

He said it is also important to recognise that some of the commitments made in previous budgets "are now moving into the implementation phase". Several other initiatives too are in progress, reflecting a positive intent on the part of the government.

"Going forward, the emphasis must be on execution and ensuring real, on-ground support for farmers," he added.

Echoing this, Ajay Kakra, leader of Food and Agriculture, GIDAS, Forvis Mazars in India, said: "Budget 2026 must move Indian agriculture beyond volume and subsidies toward quality, exports, innovation, and industry participation. Strategic investments across infrastructure, R&D, and large-scale programmes can position the sector as both globally competitive and domestically resilient."

Kakra said adopting innovation as the driver of agricultural growth, "is a significant step forward" and that Budget 2026 needs to place "emerging sources of funding in agri-R&D, start-ups and private sector innovation on a sound footing."

Last year's Budget allocated

Kharif crops sold 9-30% below MSP

Prabhudatta Mishra
New Delhi

Barring paddy, all other kharif crops ruled 9-30 per cent below their respective minimum support prices (MSPs) during the key harvesting period October-December, according to official data. Even as low prices contributed to lower GVA of the agri sector, this has not deterred farmers, who expanded the area under rabi crops by 3 per cent this season mostly under wheat.

According to official data compiled by the Agmarknet portal, all-India weighted average rate of paddy (common) was ₹2,407 per quintal during October-December 2025 — about 1 per cent higher from its MSP of ₹2,389/quintal.

But maize farmers on average received ₹1,684/quintal, which was 30 per cent less than the MSP of ₹2,400/quintal. Farmers in Madhya Pradesh got even less at ₹1,582 per quintal.

The average rate of jowar (sorghum) was ₹3,357/quintal, 9 per cent lower than the MSP and bajra (millet) was ₹2,318/quintal, down 16.5 per cent against MSP.

WEAK PULSE

Among pulses, the all-India average price of *moong* (green gram) was ₹6,575/

A grainy picture
(₹/quintal)

	MSP	Mandi rate*	% change
Urad	7,800	6,090	-21.9
Tur	8,000	6,599	-17.5
Moong	8,768	6,575	-25.0
Soyabean	5,328	4,197	-21.2
Groundnut	7,263	5,583	-23.1
Maize	2,400	1,684	-29.8
Bajra	2,775	2,318	-16.5
Jowar	3,699	3,357	-9.2
Paddy (common)	2,389	2,407	0.8
Cotton (long)	8,110	7,034	-13.3



*All India weighted average rate during Oct-Dec 2025, source: UPAG

quintal (25 per cent lower), *tur* (pigeon peas) ₹6,599/quintal (17.5 per cent lower) and *urad* (black gram) ₹6,090/quintal (22 per cent lower). Among the major pulses-producing States, *moong* was priced the lowest in Karnataka at ₹4,949/quintal, *tur* at ₹5,040/quintal in Rajasthan and *urad* at ₹4,804/quintal in Telangana.

Similarly, soyabean farmers received an average ₹4,197/quintal (21 per cent less) and groundnut for ₹5,583/quintal (23 per cent less) during the major harvesting period. Maharashtra farmers received the lowest for soyabean at ₹4,186/quintal.

Though groundnut prices were higher than the year-ago period, farmers in Haryana received ₹4,821/quintal,

the lowest among the producing States.

GROSS VALUE ADDED

Among cash crops, cotton (long staple) was sold at an average ₹7,034/quintal, down 13 per cent from its MSP of ₹8,110/quintal, data showed.

The agriculture sector's GVA at ₹24.77 lakh crore grew at 4.6 per cent in FY25. Real GVA (at current prices) of agri and allied sectors grew at 0.8 per cent to ₹54.28 lakh crore in FY26, from ₹53.85 lakh crore in FY25 — 10.4 per cent in FY25 at current prices.

Experts termed the marginal growth in GVA to higher production as there had been a substantial drop in prices of agricultural and horticulture crops this year.

'Indian groundnut entering Indonesia illegally'

DRAGON'S INFLUENCE. Consignments land in Malaysia's Port Klang and find their way to Jakarta; Thailand too bans Indian produce as China puts pressure

Subramani Ra Mancombu
Chennai

Though Indonesia has curtailed imports of groundnuts (peanuts) from India, the curbs are being overcome by illegal shipments via Port Klang in Malaysia. Such shipments are on the rise.

Global trade sources said that at least 90 per cent of groundnuts imported into Indonesia were carried out illegally after Jakarta lifted the suspension on Indian groundnut imports late in November.

In related developments, the sources said Thailand had banned groundnut imports from India (since June 2025) while China had issued a mandate to fellow ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) countries to tighten ground-

nut quality and buy more of its produce. With Indonesian buyers too feeling the pinch, the trade had resorted to the illegal imports.

"In November, over 825 containers, a huge volume, moved via Dumai illegally, and only 80 containers moved via the official port," said a Singapore-based trade source.

POPULAR ROUTE
According to sources, the popular route for illegal shipment of groundnuts is via Port Klang in Malaysia.

"Between India and Malaysia, there are no strict rules, especially when Port Klang is described as a transit port. From there, barges and small boat operators take the goods in shipments of 20 containers to different places, including Dumai port, which is a major

smuggling port of Indonesia," the trade source said. "The Port Klang-Dumai route is also accessed for illegal smuggling of rice exports from India. These are giving way to *hawalal* trading," said an Indian trade source. From Dumai, the consignments are taken to places such as Jakarta or Surabaya by road.

The shipments are initially sent to Malaysia in the name of an importer near Port Klang. "After landing, the consignments change hands. The deal is done through cash," said another trading source.

UP FROM SEPTEMBER
No trade invoices or purchase bills are offered as the traceability of the consignments gets lost once they are unloaded at Port Klang. "This results in all-cash



SUSPICIOUS SURGE. Data accessed by *businessline* showed that groundnut exports, which had never crossed 6,500 tonnes until September 2025, began rising from October

dealing on both sides," the source said.

Also, second-level buyers in Indonesia deal in cash. They prefer not to get invoices. However, food factories cannot follow this route as they are largescale establish-

ments and cannot avail themselves of tax benefits in that case.

Data accessed by *businessline* showed that Indonesian exports, which had never been above 6,500 tonnes until September 2025, began rising from October.

"Imports to Malaysia surged in October to 8,300 tonnes (6,533 tonnes in October 2024), 15,800 tonnes in November (6,000 tonnes) and 15,000 tonnes in December (3,625 tonnes). This is a clear indication of something illegal," said a trade source.

MALAYSIA'S IMPORTS
Malaysia's annual groundnut imports are around 55,000 tonnes. "In December, groundnut exports to Indonesia were 20 full containers officially, whereas illegal shipments were 225 full containers," said the Singapore-based source.

The illegal imports of groundnuts have dragged their domestic prices to 30,000-32,000 Indonesian rupiah a kg from 35,000 rupiah. (1 Indonesian rupiah = ₹1). The current prices in-

clude the 5,000 rupiah that smugglers and boat operators charge buyers.

One of the problems this year with Indian groundnuts is the kharif crop being affected by rain during the drying period, particularly September-October.

"Indonesia's aflatoxin limit is 15 parts per billion (PPB), against India's 20 PPB. On the other hand, the aflatoxin in Indian groundnuts this year is at least 10 times more than the permitted levels in India," said the Singapore-based trade source.

The source said that the situation had turned worrisome for India after China told its ASEAN partners to tighten quality control on groundnuts. "It also asked them to source more from its growers," the source said.

‘Convert horticulture waste into bioethanol’

Sribala.Vadlapatla
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Hyderabad: With nearly a third of horticultural produce (30%) lost after harvest, scientists in Telangana are now racing to turn farm waste into wealth.

Highlighting the scale of the challenge and opportunity, Professor Danda Raji Reddy, vice-chancellor of Sri Konda Laxman Telangana Horticultural University, said research is underway to convert post-harvest horticultural waste into value-added products. He was speaking at an event at the university. Prof Raji Reddy said India produces around 500 lakh tonnes of fruits annual-

ly, of which nearly 150 lakh tonnes are wasted. He stressed that this loss must be viewed as an opportunity, particularly because fruit and vegetable waste is rich in sugars and suitable for bioethanol production. He said that substantial quantities of bioethanol are already being produced using waste from crops.

Converting waste into high-value products, he said, can significantly raise farmer incomes, strengthen the green economy and generate employment. He also underlined the importance of mechanisation in horticulture to cut cultivation costs, improve yields and quality, and enhance returns.

Farmers divided over G RAM G law, seek relief and wage security

FAIR PAY. Cultivators call for slashing input costs while ensuring minimum wages for farm labour

Prabhudatta Mishra
New Delhi

Farmer organisations are split over the newly-enacted G RAM G law that replaced the two-decade-old MGNREGA framework, but a key strand of opinion is emerging from the farm sector — the programme should be leveraged to lower farmers' input costs while simultaneously guaranteeing minimum wages for agricultural labourers.

A section of farmer unions, while welcoming provisions such as a break in public works during peak sowing and harvesting seasons, is pushing for a more fundamental rethink. Their demand is that agricultural operations on farmers' fields be brought within the ambit of



NEW THINKING. A section of farmer unions, while welcoming provisions such as a break in public works during peak sowing and harvesting seasons, is pushing for a more fundamental rethink

job work under the new law, allowing MGNREGA-style employment to directly support farm productivity.

Articulating this view, Abhimanyu Kohar, a leader of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (non-political), said farmers had long demanded a halt to MGNREGA works during

critical farm periods because of acute labour shortages in agriculture.

"We now want to go a step further. The government should notify agricultural work on farmers' fields as eligible job work under the new law," he said. Such a linkage, he argued, would ease labour

availability while reducing the overall cost of cultivation.

MANUAL HARVESTING

Kohar pointed to the recently harvested basmati crop in Haryana to underline the problem. This season, the cost of manual harvesting rose so sharply that Pusa 1121 paddy fetched ₹4,100-4,200 per quintal when manually harvested, compared with ₹3,100-3,200 per quintal when harvested by combine. "Earlier, the difference between manually and machine-harvested crop used to be ₹200-300 per quintal. This year it jumped to nearly ₹1,000," he said, reflecting the scarcity and rising cost of farm labour.

Under the proposed linkage, Kohar explained, the government would pay la-

bourers the notified minimum wage, while farmers would top up the difference between that wage and the prevailing market rate for agricultural work in many northern states. This, he said, would marginally reduce farmers' cost of production, protect minimum wages for labourers, and potentially improve farm profitability.

PRIVATE FARMLAND

The demand to include agricultural activities under MGNREGA or its successor is not new and has been raised earlier by parliamentary panels as well. Successive governments, however, resisted the idea, citing administrative and monitoring challenges associated with allowing public employment works on private farmland.

Odisha to establish Farmer Skill and Agri-Incubation Centre (FSAIC)

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
Bhubaneswar, 8 January

Deputy Chief Minister Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo held a meeting here on Thursday to finalize the roadmap for establishment of a state of the art Farmer Skill and Agri-Incubation Centre (FSAIC) aiming to position Odisha as a leader in futuristic agriculture.

The FSAIC is designed to be a comprehensive hub for upskilling farmers and incubating agri-entrepreneurs. Singh Deo said the project's core mission is to bridge the gap between traditional farming and modern entrepreneurship.

The center will operate through four specialized modules: Agri-entrepreneurship Development; Cultivating new businesses in the



agricultural sector. Farmer Skilling and Training: Practical education in modern, high-yield techniques. Technology Demonstration: Showcasing the latest advancements in "Ag-Tech." Value-Added Services: Enhancing the marketability of raw produce.

By training our farmers in modern techniques and providing them with financial access and market connectivity, we are ensuring long-term profitability and economic

stability for rural Odisha, said the Deputy Chief Minister.

Additional Chief Secretary Dr. Arabinda Kumar Padhee, said that the FSAIC will integrate cutting-edge systems including Precision Agriculture-IoT-driven data for crop management. Agri-photovoltaics-Dual use of land for both solar energy and farming. Advanced Lab Facilities-Tissue culture labs and Recirculatory Aquaculture Systems (RAS). Sustainable

Logistics- Renewable energy-powered cold storage and primary processing centers.

The government has conducted detailed technical and financial feasibility studies at two potential sites: HTI Nildunguri and Deras Agriculture Farm. The studies indicate that the project is highly feasible with Viability Gap Funding (VGF) support from the government for both capital expenditure (CAPEX) and operations and maintenance (O&M).

Ernst & Young (E&Y) is currently serving as the transaction advisor to ensure the project meets global standards of implementation.

The meeting was attended by Director of Horticulture, Kalunge Gorakh Waman, representatives from E&Y, and senior officials from the Department of Agriculture.

Farmers to take out *yatra* across India to seek legal guarantee for MSP

Our Bureau

New Delhi

Farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political) plans to organise a farmer awareness drive from Kanyakumari to Kashmir, highlighting a range of demands.

The key demands include a legal guarantee for minimum support price for crops, farm loan waivers, India's exit from the WTO and repeal of land acquisition laws. He also opposed the provisions of the draft Seeds Bill, claiming that it could make farmers dependent on foreign seeds, including genetically modified crops, pushing them into a debt trap due to rising input costs.

Dallewal, who led a 130-

day hunger strike last year at the Punjab-Haryana border, on Thursday announced, "We will launch a *Kisan Jagriti Yatra* (farmer awareness drive) in the first week of February, tentatively on February 2, from Kanyakumari to Kashmir and culminate in Delhi on March 19."

Farm mechanisation & natural farming schemes launched

HASS NEWS SERVICE
ANWARAPETA
(KOTHAGUDEM)

THE government on Friday launched statewide farm mechanisation and natural farming programmes from Anwarapeta, reaffirming its commitment to improving farmers' income and promoting sustainable agriculture.

The initiatives were inaugurated at the Anwarapeta Agricultural College campus in Kothagudem district by Agriculture Minister Tummala Nagewara Rao and Irrigation Minister N. Utam Kumar Reddy.

Addressing the gathering, Nagewara Rao said farmer's welfare remains the core objective of the State government.

He recalled that the Anwarapeta Agricultural College, established about 35 years ago with the approval of former chief minister NT

- The programmes are crucial for enhancing productivity and reducing input costs, says Irrigation Minister Utam Kumar Reddy.
- Previously stalled mechanisation schemes have been revived and agricultural equipment is being supplied to farmers with a 50 per cent subsidy.

Rama Rao, has grown into a premier institution producing agricultural experts of national and international repute. He announced that Rs 8 crore has been sanctioned for the development of the college and expressed confidence that it would emerge as a model institution surpassing others in the state. The Minister said Bhadradi Kothagudem district has immense agricultural potential and farmers are successfully cultivating oil palm along with inter-crops such as cocoa, pepper and jasmine. He added that the government has set a target of bringing 10 lakh acres under oil palm cul-

tivation over the next four years. To support small, marginal, tribal and backward class farmers, the government has introduced a farm mechanisation scheme with 50 per cent subsidy, he said, adding that the long-term goal is to achieve 400 billion dollars in agricultural income by 2047. Utam Kumar Reddy said farm mechanisation and natural farming are crucial for enhancing productivity and reducing input costs. He stated that previously stalled mechanisation schemes have been revived and agricultural equipment is being supplied to farmers with a 50 per cent subsidy.



During the current financial year, around 1.31 lakh farmers across the state will be provided farm machinery at a cost of Rs 101 crore, he said.

Highlighting the importance of natural farming, the minister said the government is encouraging chemical-free and organic agricultural practices in view of health concerns arising from excessive use of fertilisers.

As part of the programme, the ministers inaugurated a farmers' fair, a soil testing and oil palm document integrated laboratory set up by TG Oshid, and activities under the National Mission on Natural Farming.

Foundation stones were also laid for a biodiversity park at the agricultural college, construction of a girls' hostel at a cost of Rs 5 crore, and BT road works spanning three kilometres costing Rs 3 crore.

US tariff strike on Iran to hit India's \$1.7-billion trade

SANGEETHA G.
CHENNAI, JAN. 13

US President Donald Trump's move to impose additional 25 per cent tariffs on countries trading with Iran can affect India's \$1.7 trade with the Middle East country. While exporters are experiencing slower demand due to internal conflict and currency depreciation, industry hopes that the new move may spare food and pharmaceutical supplies to Iran.

Of the total exports of \$1.24 billion as in FY25, rice shipments accounted for \$757.3 million, oil meals \$70.8 million, fruits and vegetables \$58.3 million. Exports of inorganic and organic chemicals stood at \$56.5 million in FY25, followed by engineering goods valued at \$43.3 million, drugs and pharmaceuticals worth \$40.7 million, tea worth \$37.9 million, and spices valued at \$29.1 million.

If the government instructs the industry to stop trade with Iran in order to avoid additional 25 per cent tariffs on US exports, \$1.7 billion worth exports and imports will have to be relinquished.

HIGH PRESSURE

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- Of total exports of \$1.24 bn as in FY25, rice shipments account for \$757.3 mn, oil meals \$70 mn.
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WE HOPE that food materials like rice, fruits, vegetables, tea and spices as well as pharma will not have to face any restriction. If that be the case, the impact will be much lower.
— AJAY SAHAI,
DG, FIEO.

"We will have to wait for the Executive Order to understand the details. We hope that food materials like rice, fruits, vegetables, tea and spices as well as pharma will not have to face any restriction. If that be the case, the impact will be much lower," said Ajay Sahai, director general, FIEO.

Meanwhile, the internal conflict in Iran and currency depreciation are emerging as bigger challenges. Exporters are already facing the heat of slower demand. Basmati rice exports to Iran during April– November 2025–26 stood at \$468.10 million

against \$753 million in FY25.

The current internal turmoil has disrupted trade channels, slowed payments, and dented buyer confidence. The immediate fallout is evident in Indian mandis, where Basmati prices have softened, finds Indian Rice Exporters Federation (IREF).

"Exporters must exercise heightened caution, particularly with respect to credit exposure and shipment timelines," said Dev Garg, VP, IREF.

It urged exporters to reassess risk associated with Iranian contracts.

Agri extension institute holds 1-day training on strategies for sugarcane development

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

LUDHIANA, JANUARY 8

Punjab Agricultural Management and Extension Training Institute (PAMETI) organised a one-day training programme on 'Strengthening Extension Strategies for Sugarcane Development in Punjab'. In all, 16 extension officials from the Sugarcane Wing, Department of Agriculture and Farmers' welfare, Punjab, participated in the training programme.

The programme began with a welcome address by Dr Ravneet Singh, Deputy Director (PHT), PAMETI, who greeted the participants and highlighted the objectives and significance of the training in enhancing sugarcane productivity and extension outreach in the state. Dr Amrik Singh, Cane Commissioner, Punjab, also joined the programme and



Participants during the extension education programme at PAMETI in Ludhiana.

shared valuable insights with the participants.

The training programme was formally inaugurated by Dr KB Singh, Director, PAMETI, along with Dr Amrik Singh, Cane Commissioner, Punjab. In his inaugural address, Dr KB Singh emphasised the need for adopting

improved technologies and effective extension strategies to strengthen sugarcane development in Punjab.

A series of technical lectures were delivered by eminent experts from the PAU and allied Research Stations. Dr Gulzar Singh Sanghera, Director, Research Station,

Kapurthala, delivered a comprehensive lecture on integrated approaches to sugarcane production, protection and varietal selection. Dr Kuldeep Singh, Director, Regional Research Station, Faridkot, elaborated on agronomic practices for sugarcane cultivation. Dr Rajesh Goyal,

Principal Scientist, PAU, highlighted the mechanisation aspects in sugarcane farming. Dr Mahesh Kumar, Additional Director of Research, PAU, delivered an informative session on Improved jaggery processing practices for quality and marketability. To enhance practical understanding, an exposure visit to the Jaggery Processing Unit, PAU, was also organised, which helped participants gain firsthand experience of improved jaggery processing techniques.

The participants actively interacted with the experts and expressed their satisfaction with the

programme. They provided positive feedback and emphasised the need for organizing more such practical and skill-oriented training programmes in the future to strengthen sugarcane extension services in Punjab.

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Ernst & Young (E&Y) is currently serving as the transaction advisor to ensure the project meets global standards of implementation.

The meeting was attended by Director of Horticulture, Kalunge Gorakh Waman, representatives from E&Y, and senior officials from the Department of Agriculture.

Agri varsity urges extension scientists to help farmers protect horticulture crops

Asked to stay available for round-the-clock assistance for winter contingencies

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

LUDHIANA, JANUARY 8

In the wake of the peak winter season, extension scientists of Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) were urged to remain available round-the-clock at their respective districts to address farmers' agriculture-related on-field and off-field problems.

Presiding over the monthly meeting to review the research and extension work, Dr MS Bhullar, Director of Extension Education (DEE), observed, "The sharp dip in the minimum and maximum temperatures, resulting in blanketing of the region with a dense fog and intensification of the chill, was a warning sign for the farmers and the public, to take extra care of the crops and human as well as animal health."

The severe climate change could lead to a new pest outbreak, the PAU DEE cau-



The PAU cautioned severe climate change could lead to new pest outbreaks. FILE

tioned, while asking the extension functionaries to remain in tune with the farmers' needs and provide them timely services at their doorsteps through print, electronic and social media tools. Advocating diversification, Dr Bhullar also made a call for protecting horticultural crops,

especially, fruits and vegetables, as the icy-cold wave could hit their productivity and make them vulnerable to its side-effects.

Dr GS Mangat, Additional Director of Research (Agriculture), informed that the talks catered to agriculture and farmers' welfare, underlining the need to put

in unceasing efforts to bring maximum area under less water consuming and climate-smart crops, bolster diversification by engaging in oilseeds and pulses cultivation, fortify production through PAU biofertiliser usage, strengthen advanced mechanisation of groundnut crop, and supply nutri-

products to the dairy farmers on time.

Dr Mangat further advised the farmers to visit and inspect their crops regularly in the chilly winters to avoid productivity and fiscal losses.

Welcoming the dignitaries, senior officials, research and extension scientists, Dr GPS Sodhi, Director of Extension Education, pointed to the agenda of the meeting, laying focus on the status of winter vegetable crops, management of yellow rust in wheat, off-season management of cotton sticks, rice straw management and status of wheat crop. "Advising and warning the farmers against the susceptibility of the crops to insect-pests and diseases in extreme winters were vital to protect them from incurring economic losses," he stressed. Dr Sodhi also called for gathering timely feedback from the farmers since they were the real experimenters.

AGRICULTURE

New Trump tariff could be last straw for basmati exports to Iran



HARISH DAMODARAN

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump's latest trade salvo, announcing an additional 25% per cent tariff on any country doing business with Iran, can have a significant impact on India's basmati rice exports.

The reason: Iran is India's third largest market for basmati rice.

The Islamic Republic accounted for \$753.20 million out of India's total basmati exports of \$5,944.49 million in 2024-25 (April-March). That was next only to the \$1,203.67 million of Saudi Arabia and \$850.08 million of Iraq.

In quantity terms, out of the total exports of 60.65 lakh tonnes (lt), Iran's share was 8.55 lt, with Iraq's at 9.06 lt and Saudi Arabia's at 11.74 lt.

The current fiscal has seen Iran overtaking Iraq, with exports to the former soaring by 20.9% from 4.95 lt in April-November 2024 to 5.99 lt in April-November 2025. On the other hand, exports have contracted to both Iraq (by 2.9%, from 5.16 lt to 5.01 lt) and

BASMATI EXPORTS TO IRAN ARE DECLINING

	Quantity*	Value**
2018-19	14.84	1,556.17
2019-20	13.19	1,246.02
2020-21	7.47	590.67
2021-22	9.98	818.36
2022-23	9.99	980.14
2023-24	6.71	680.54
2024-25	8.55	753.2
Apr-Nov 2024	4.95	473.14
Apr-Nov 2025	5.99	468.1

*LAKH TONNES; **\$ MILLION; SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Saudi Arabia (by 2.8%, from 6.89 lt to 6.70 lt).

These are just the official figures. Basmati exports to Iran are also routed via Dubai. The UAE imported 3.89 lt of basmati rice from India in 2024-25 and 2.52 lt during April-November 2025. A lot of these shipments are believed to be diverted to Iran, with exporters using the more reliable banking channels and payment systems in the UAE.

"Exporters prefer either shipping through Dubai or selling in Iranian government tenders floated by the Government

Trading Corporation of Iran, Iran Garment Company Ltd, and Jahad Sabz Company. These two routes are safer from a payment standpoint than exporting directly to private buyers in Iran," said a trade source.

But the proposed new Trump levy has made exporters wary of striking fresh contracts even through the hitherto less risky routes. "The 25% additional duty rate (announced by Trump in a Truth Social Post on January 12) has not been officially imposed. It has, however, created huge uncertainty among the trade. Nobody wants to export in this situation where there is no guarantee of payment for even the rice already shipped out," Vijay Setia, former president of the All-India Rice Exporters' Association told *The Indian Express*.

The impact is being felt in prices. India mostly exports parboiled Pusa Basmati-1718 and Pusa Basmati-1509 rice to Iran. These varieties, bred by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute in Delhi, have a good market in Iran due to their extra kernel length and volume expansion capacity: A cup of milled '1718' or '1509' grains give around 4.5 cups on cooking, making it possible to serve more plates of biryani from the same quantity of rice.

Pusa-1509 basmati rice rates in Haryana's mandis rose from Rs 54-55 per kg in October to around Rs 68 towards De-

ember. But since late last month, when the street protests in Iran broke out, prices have fallen to Rs 63-64. Wholesale prices of Pusa-1718 rice have similarly eased from Rs 70 to Rs 65-66 levels. Pusa-1509 paddy prices have dropped to Rs 3,200 per quintal in the last 4-5 days, from Rs 3,300-3,400 prior to the disturbances.

Basmati exports from India to Iran peaked in 2018-19, at nearly 15 lt (valued at over \$1.5 billion). But with US sanctions being reinstated under the first Trump administration in November 2018, exports settled at lower levels (see chart). As the sanctions began to bite and create shortages of foreign exchange, payment issues, too, correspondingly rose.

While Trump's newly announced 25% tariff was the last straw, it was preceded by the Islamic Republic's own decision, on January 1, to stop the issue of subsidised foreign currency. Importers of essential products such as rice could earlier access dollars at a preferential exchange rate of 28,000 tomans. That ended in the new year, with all importers now having to buy foreign currency at the open market rate of around 130,000-131,000 tomans-to-the-dollar.

The decision to end the heavily-subsidised exchange rate has made Iranian imports unviable, hitting the Indian basmati trade hard as well.



Tagros Announces Acquisition of Bayer's Global Flubendiamide (FLB) Business

Tagros Chemicals India Private Limited has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire global assets related to Bayer AG's Flubendiamide (FLB) active ingredient business across the LATAM, EMEA, and APAC regions.

As part of the transaction, Tagros will acquire Solo and Mixture Formulations related to the active ingredient, along with a comprehensive suite of business assets, including trademarks (**BELT, FAME, FENOS, FENOS QUICK, BELT EXPERT, and TIHAN**), product registrations and registration data, product information, formulation know-how, technical information, and inventories associated with the FLB business.

This strategic acquisition provides Tagros with access to markets across more than 25 countries, significantly strengthening its global footprint and reinforcing its position in the Diamide segment. This acquisition also represents a significant milestone for Tagros, marking its strategic entry into the B2C formulations business, which will be housed under its recently established entity, Arqivo..

EY India acted as the M&A advisor to Tagros, while Khaitan & Khaitan served as legal advisor.

Paddy grain discolouration leaves farmers worried

The Hindu Bureau
NAGAPATTINAM

Farmers in parts of Keezhaiyur block have raised concerns over the grain discolouration in samba paddy crops at the harvest stage, prompting fears of possible yield and quality loss.

The impact has been reported in several acres, though the exact extent is yet to be assessed.

Samba and thaladi paddy have been cultivated across the block during the current season, following heavy northeast monsoon rains. In villages such as

Thirupoondi, Kameswaram, Vettaikaraniruppu, and Vizhunthamavadi, farmers who adopted the direct seeding method using CO-51 and ADT-46 varieties observed that grains in some fields had turned black at the maturity stage.

V. Manivannan of Keezhaiyur Kadaimadai Pasana Vivasayigal Sangam said farmers had spent ₹25,000 to ₹30,000 per acre for cultivation.

Close to harvest

"After safeguarding the crop through continuous rains and adverse weather, this problem at the final

stage has caused anxiety," he said.

Scientists from the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Sikkal, inspected the fields on Monday. P. Aravindhan, Joint Director of Agriculture, said the phenomenon appeared to be grain discolouration triggered by recent cold and foggy weather.

In an advisory, the Agriculture Department said grain filling would not be affected and urged farmers not to panic while recommending timely crop protection measures if pest or disease incidence crossed economic threshold levels.

STEP TO BE EXTENDED TO OTHER CROPS AND STATES SHORTLY

Haryana, Punjab rice farmers to get carbon credit by FY26

SANDIP DAS
New Delhi, January 18

IN A FIRST-of-its-kind initiative to incentivise small holder farmers for adoption of environmentally sustainable agriculture practices, rice farmers in Punjab and Haryana will be awarded carbon credits by the end of the current fiscal.

The first issuance of carbon credit for the farming programme would cover around 30,000 acres across Punjab and Haryana, generating more than 50,000 carbon credits for adopting practices such as direct seeding and low tillage. The idea is to extend the facility to other areas and crops expeditiously.

The programme was initiated by a private entity Grow Indigo (GIPL), a JV between domestic seed major Mahyco and US-based Indigo in 2022.

Following the issuance of credit, which is expected shortly, the company will aggregate the credit and sell it to buyers, while 75% of revenues earned from the credit flow back to farmers.

SUSTAINABLE MOVE

■ The first issuance would cover around **30,000** acres across Punjab and Haryana

■ It will generate more than **50,000** carbon credits

■ A registered farmer could earn 1 carbon credit annually per acre

■ The value of 1 carbon credit ranges from **\$10 to \$40**



The audit of the programme has been completed under the carbon standard (Verra) protocol, which is a global voluntary greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction programme.

"After a long audit and review process, this approval helps us meet our purpose of impacting smallholder farmer livelihoods positively in a sustainable manner and continue bringing interventions that

help farmers facing challenges due to climate change," Usha Barwale Zehr, executive director, Grow Indigo, told *FE*.

Zehr said that these internationally recognised carbon credits will increase farmer incomes, while improving soil health. "We are aiming to generate 1 million carbon credits annually by 2027," she said.

A farmer registered with the programme could earn 1

carbon credit annually per acre and currently the value of 1 carbon credit ranges from \$10 to \$40 and reduces 1 tonne of CO₂ emission.

According to Umang Agarwal, COO carbon, Grow Indigo, the company is currently engaged with over 100,000 farmers across 1 million acres in Punjab and Haryana on sustainable farm practices and farmers would be eventually encouraged to shift to growing maize from water intensive rice production.

According to scientists, the issuance of credit under Verra's methodology is considered one of the most rigorous standards for smallholder farmers in land management.

Farmers who adopt farming techniques — direct seeded rice, improving water use efficiency and no tillage practice, conserve soil's organic biomass prior to planting of paddy and wheat — can register for the programme for getting carbon credit.

The agriculture ministry has released a framework for Voluntary Carbon Market (VCM) aimed at bringing all the stakeholders together.

Nilgiris to rev up organic farming

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, JAN.18

More impetus to encourage farmers and increase fund allocation for promoting organic farming is underway in the Nilgiris district.

Collector Lakshmi Bhavya Tanneeru stated that the state government announced a special scheme in 2023 to promote organic farming in the eco-sensitive Nilgiris in a big way over a five-year period by allotting Rs 50 crore. Accordingly, in the first phase, Rs 2.16 crore was released during 2023-24 fiscal for promotion of organic farming in the Nilgiris, which saw 1,311 farmers taking to organic farming in around 675 hectares to start with. Farmers in this scheme took to organic farming practice of cultivation of vegetables, millets, fruits and spices.

During the 2024-25 fiscal, ₹2.26 crore fund was released to promote organic farming in around 700 hectares that saw 1,330 farmers across the Nilgiris join the organic farming module to raise

hill vegetables.

For the 2025-26 fiscal, the government has released ₹2.16 crore more. In the present fiscal, it is proposed to promote organic farming of vegetables in 500 hectares, organic fruits cultivation in 100 hectares and organic spices cultivation in 75 hectares. The farmers in the Nilgiris, who are interested to join the organic farming promotion scheme this fiscal, can contact the concerned horticulture offices in the respective taluks to enroll their names.

The selected farmers will be given training in organic farming, besides a chance to tour the fields wherein the organic farming is being practised to have a firsthand knowledge on the technologies being adopted for organic farming. The selected farmers will be provided with all the necessary inputs required for taking organic farming. Efforts will be taken to market the organically-produced vegetables, fruits and spices in the special weekly markets established for the purpose, she noted.

Agri sector pitches for tech, climate-smart infrastructure

NEW DELHI, PTI: Ahead of the FY27 Union Budget, agriculture industry leaders and experts are making a strong pitch for increased investments in digital infrastructure, climate-resilient farming practices, and technology adoption to transform a sector that employs nearly half the country's workforce but contributes less than a fifth to the national output.

With agriculture and allied sectors supporting about 45% of India's workforce, while contributing only around 18% to the GVA, industry voices say Budget 2026-27 presents a critical opportunity to reposition the sector as an engine of economic growth rather than just a welfare concern.

"Agriculture is increasingly being recognised not merely as a welfare sector, but as a credible engine of economic growth — one that can drive productivity, employment, rural demand and resilience," said Amit Vatsyayan, Leader, GPS-Agriculture, Livelihood, Social and Skills at EY India.

Dairy sector needs

Heritage Foods Ltd Executive Director Brahmani Nara pointed to favourable conditions created by the September 2025 GST rationalisation, which has accelerated consumer preference for high-protein, health-focused products like paneer, cheese, ghee, and butter in the organised dairy segment.

With government initiatives like the Rashtriya Gokul Mission and National Digital Livestock Mission integrating over 3,00,000 farmers into the organised ecosystem, Nara outlined three key Budget asks: subsidised access to quality feed and chromosome-sorted semen to boost animal productivity; expanding veterinary college capacity to bridge the gap between India's 68,000 registered veterinarians and the requirement of 110,000-120,000; and increased capital subsidies for mini-dairy units, particularly for women entrepreneurs.

Vatsyayan emphasised the need for scaling green infra-

structure and climate-resilient irrigation through investments in micro-irrigation, watershed management, aquifer recharge and renewable-powered agri assets. "From a growth lens, these interventions also act as strong multipliers — stimulating rural demand, stabilising farm incomes and strengthening food security," he stated.

He also called for expanding public-private partnerships in storage, logistics and agri R&D to reduce post-harvest losses, and focused investments in seed systems to achieve self-reliance in pulses and other nutrition-sensitive commodities.



Digital infra push

Map My Crop Founder and CEO Swapnil Jadhav urged the government to champion digital infrastructure and seamless credit linkages to propel precision agriculture at scale.

"Agri-drones, IoT sensors, and AI-driven analytics hold transformative potential to elevate yields, optimise water and fertilizer use, and fortify climate resilience for 140 million farm holdings," he said.

Jadhav called for targeted subsidies, robust PPPs and R&D tax incentives to fast-track integration with national platforms like AG-MARK-NET and e-NAM, helping India pivot from input-heavy subsidies to a tech-powered agriculture ecosystem.

BDO India Partner for Agriculture Soumyak Biswas highlighted persistent structural challenges, including small and fragmented landholdings, inadequate investment in allied sectors, high post-harvest losses, and underfunded research.

He outlined priorities including scaling climate-smart agriculture by increasing funding for DARE, strengthening allied sectors like livestock and fisheries, empowering FPOs through market-linked strategies and credit guarantees, and incentivising diversification into horticulture, pulses and oilseeds to reduce overdependence on water-intensive crops.

Syngenta expands Pune GCC with focus on AI, innovation

Our Bureau

Pune

Syngenta has announced a major expansion of its Global Capability Centre (GCC) in Pune, underlining its focus on digital innovation and strengthening global operations.

The expanded facility further cements Pune's role in Syngenta's worldwide technology and business ecosystem.

The GCC, which currently employs over 1,100 professionals, functions as a key support hub for the company's global operations across finance, IT and digital functions, as well as its AMEA regional operations.

SUPPORTING FARMERS

The company said it is accelerating its digital transformation by deploying AI-powered solutions to improve operational efficiency and foster innovation across functions.



“Syngenta GCC serves as a strategic engine for innovation and talent development, strengthening India's contribution to Syngenta's global operations while creating valuable employment opportunities in the agriculture sector,” said Abhishek Agarwal, Head, Syngenta Global Capability Center Pvt Ltd.

“Technology and artificial intelligence have the potential to revolutionise agriculture. Syngenta is committed to building innovative technology solutions that help farmers across the world,” remarked Salil Bongale, Head of ITD Pune Center & Enterprise Integration, Syngenta Global Capability Center Pvt Ltd.

For farmers, Union budget increasingly a ritual



EXPERT
VIEW

AJAY VIR JAKHAR

Respond to this column at
feedback@livemint.com

The year 2026 is a significant one for India's economy. The Union Budget will matter, of course, but the Eighth Pay Commission and the Sixteenth Finance Commission are the most consequential milestones to watch. These are followed by the two government expert panels led by Rajiv Gauba: one for realizing Viksit Bharat goals, and the other for non-financial sector regulatory reforms. Also, the strategic choices India makes in trade negotiations with the US and EU, which may quietly lock us into external standards on food safety, data regulation and compliance regimes, may not be in our interests.

For Indian farmers, the Budget has increasingly become a ritual rather than a remedy. Either the finance ministry does not heed the agriculture ministry, or the agriculture ministry fails to marshal a convincing case. Sometimes, budget announcements can remain statements of intent. Last year's promised increase in the Kisan Credit Card limit from ₹3 lakh to ₹5 lakh is yet to be notified.

This is not to suggest a lack of boldness at the top. New ideas have been tried. Naturally, sometimes programmes underperform, or over time circumstances change. But political exigency to continue with failing programs narrows the political headroom for reforms, and the system enters a vicious loop: weak outcomes feed electoral anxiety, which in turn fuels populism. Finally, populism and fiscal problems feed on each other, making it harder to govern.

The politics of populism is stronger in places with larger inequality. The Bihar elections validated this. Also, while political parties differ ideologically, their populist tendencies are eerily alike. Governments alleviate the debt problem by throwing more debt at it. Shockingly, the borrowing costs of many private businesses are lower than those of many states, whose debts are backed by sovereign guarantees. Take the fertilizer subsidy. Food security is no longer the justification it once was. Agriculture grows roughly 3%; population growth is closer to 0.5%. The math has changed. It's politically doable to raise urea prices by 25% and repurpose the savings to directly benefit farmers.

On consumption, India has made great strides in reducing extreme poverty numbers to 75 million, or as per Niti Aayog, 150 million face multidimensional poverty. But 800 million Indians get free cereals. Logically, this cannot go on.

Then there is crop insurance. The Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) has the Centre and states together pitching in 90% of the premium.

Yet dissatisfaction is widespread among farmers and states alike on claim settlement and transparency. It is time to replace PMFBY with a straightforward crop compensation fund. It will help regain farmers' trust.

Urban policy offers another misstep. The "Smart Cities" idea was a dead duck even when conceptualized 10 years ago. It pulls people from villages into already-strained cities and ignores India's settlement patterns. The correction is obvious: instead, revitalise over 5,000 census towns—for inclusive growth.

None of this is easy. The backlog of grievances is long; the problems have been compounding for decades. Evaluation must precede expansion. But governments are poor judges of their own performance. A statutory farmers' commission should be constituted with a mandate to audit existing interventions, recommend improvements, propose new initiatives and a farmers' policy.

Some policies, it must be said, work remarkably well—though not for reasons openly acknowledged. Artificial suppression of farm-gate prices remains India's most effective inflation-control tool. Whatever the Reserve Bank of India may argue, repo rates come second. This suppression is visible in the data: *arhar*, cotton, *gram*, groundnut, maize, *masur*, *moong*, ragi, soybean and *urad* have traded below MSP.

Even common vegetables—onion, potato, tomato, carrot—have seen prices fall by about a third, despite a 4% increase in fruit and vegetable output. This is not a paradox. It is the difference between production and productivity. The writing on the wall is clear: the government's welfare/populist measures restrain the depression from turning into open dissent.

Trade policy compounds the squeeze. Import tariffs on palm, soybean and sunflower oils were cut by 40% last year. India now imports 57% of its edible oil needs. Imports are high as the crop yield gap persists because farm R&D has been starved for decades. Anything short of doubling R&D funds betrays Viksit Bharat ambitions.

Ironically, the one relief farmers have received is unintended: currency depreciation. A weaker rupee—from ₹60 per dollar in 2014 to near ₹90—acts as a natural barrier against the import of cheap farm produce and boosts export competitiveness. In the absence of tariff protection, depreciation has done the job that policy would not.

India has risen to be the world's fourth-largest economy by GDP. Yet, among roughly 200 countries, it ranks about 142nd in GDP per capita. Farmers will receive higher farm-gate prices only when purchasing power rises, consumption expands and the economy grows more evenly. Governance is key.

To improve the quality of governance and the commons (air, water, soil, etc.) and practically everything else, if there is one reform that is undertaken this year, it is this: civil service recruitment through the Union Public Service Commission should reduce the upper age limit to 26 and cap attempts at two, irrespective of caste. Begin at the top to lift the bottom.

I have faith in the Prime Minister's intent and capacity; I wish I were more confident that the government would listen to us farmers.

Ajay Vir Jakhar is chairperson, Bharat Krishak Samaj.



Farmers want assured returns to diversify



HARVINDER KHETAL
DEPUTY EDITOR, THE TRIBUNE

INDIA has overtaken China to become the world's largest rice producer with 150.18 million tonnes, as per the Union Agriculture Ministry data. Wheat acreage across states has risen to a record 334.17 lakh hectares during the current rabi season (2025-26), as farmers favour wheat amid weak prices of other crops, raising prospects of another bumper harvest and easing export curbs. This ascent may appear, at first glance, as an unlikely success. For Punjab, however, these milestones are less a cause for celebration than a reminder of a deepening structural crisis.

The state that once powered the Green Revolution now finds itself trapped by its legacy—a farming system built for food security in the 1960s that has become ecologically and economically unsustainable in the 21st century. Punjab's agriculture remains overwhelmingly dominated by the wheat-paddy cycle. Together, these two crops account for nearly 85 per cent of the state's gross cropped area. This dominance is a matter of policy design. Decades of assured procurement at minimum support

prices (MSPs), subsidised electricity for irrigation and a procurement infrastructure unmatched anywhere else in the country have made wheat and paddy the safest choices. In an environment of rising costs and uncertain markets, farmers grow what the system rewards.

This explains why crop diversification has remained more rhetoric than reality. Successive governments have urged Punjab's farmers to shift towards maize, pulses, oilseeds and horticulture. Yet these alternatives rarely come with the same guarantees. Market prices fluctuate sharply, procurement is patchy or absent and processing and storage infrastructure weak. Faced with such uncertainty, diversification becomes a gamble rather than a transition. Not surprisingly, security trumps sustainability.

However, the ecological costs of this model are now impossible to ignore. Paddy cultivation in a semi-arid region has driven groundwater depletion to alarming levels. Official estimates say that over three-quarters of Punjab's groundwater blocks are overexploited. Recent reports from the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) reveal that Punjab records the highest rate of groundwater extraction in India. The water table is falling by nearly a metre annually in several districts. Paddy cultivation—a water-intensive crop in a semi-arid region—is the primary driver for this dire situation. Tube wells are drilled ever



SAFEST CHOICE: The state's agriculture remains overwhelmingly dominated by the wheat-paddy cycle. ILLUSTRATION

deeper electricity consumption soars and the cost of cultivation rises year after year.

Soil health has also suffered. Repeated mono-cropping of wheat and rice, combined with heavy fertiliser use, has depleted organic carbon and micronutrients. Stubble burning, a byproduct of mechanised paddy harvesting and compressed cropping cycles, has become an annual environmental crisis, choking cities beyond Punjab's borders. These problems are structural outcomes of a cropping pattern frozen in time.

Economically, the picture is equally troubling. While MSP procurement ensures price stability, farm incomes have stagnated. Input costs—seeds, fertilisers, diesel and labour—have risen faster than returns. Small and marginal farmers, with limited land and high

dependence on credit, are especially vulnerable. Punjab continues to report farmer suicides every year. The numbers underline a hard truth: procurement-led security has not translated into lasting prosperity.

This distress has increasingly spilled onto the streets. In recent years, Punjab's farmers have repeatedly mobilised against what they see as broken promises and policy neglect. Thousands converged on Chandigarh to mark five years since the 2020-21 farm laws agitation, demanding a legal guarantee for MSP, debt relief and accountability for assurances made at the time of repeal.

Elsewhere, farmers blocked highways and protested at mandis over unsold paddy stocks and delayed procurement. Police action at protest sites such as Shambhu and Khanaura has further deepened mis-

trust. It highlights how economic distress is translating into political confrontation.

Successive governments have recognised the problem and introduced crop diversification schemes. Incentives to shift from paddy to maize, for instance, are well-intentioned. But they remain piecemeal. A one-time payment cannot offset the absence of assured buyers, storage facilities or processing units. Nor can it compensate for the institutional familiarity farmers have with wheat and rice. Diversification, to be credible, must offer a similar certainty of returns.

Punjab's predicament also exposes a national policy contradiction. On the one hand, India celebrates record rice production and expanding wheat acreage as symbols of food security. On the other, it urges states like Punjab to diversify for environmental reasons. As long as the Food Corporation of India procures rice and wheat in bulk while alternatives are left to the vagaries of the open market, farmers will stick to staples. You cannot preach diversification while rewarding monoculture.

The solution, therefore, lies in redesigning incentives. If pulses, oilseeds and maize are genuinely national priorities for nutrition, import substitution and sustainability, they must enjoy procurement assurance, price support and infrastructure investment comparable to wheat and rice. Punjab's farmers should not be asked to bear the cost of national food policy adjustments alone.

Plus, Punjab has the potential to become a hub for high-value agriculture—dairy, vegetables, fruits and food-processing. But this requires investment in cold chains, logistics and agro-industries. It also requires land consolidation, cooperative models and market access that protect small farmers from corporate dominance.

There is also a generational dimension to Punjab's agrarian crisis. Younger farmers are increasingly disillusioned with agriculture that requires high effort, but offers low dignity and uncertain returns. Many seek livelihoods outside the country altogether. Without structural reform, Punjab also risks losing its human capital.

Ultimately, Punjab's crisis is a cautionary tale for the rest of India. It shows what happens when agricultural success is measured only in terms of tonnes produced, not in sustainability achieved. The state fed the nation when it was most needed. Today, it needs a new social contract, one that balances food security with ecological survival and farmer welfare.

India's record grain production should prompt reflection. For Punjab, the challenge is stark: continue down a path of diminishing returns or undertake a difficult but necessary transition. The choice will determine the future of the states farmers as also the credibility of India's promise of sustainable agriculture.

You cannot preach
diversification while
rewarding the
wheat-rice
monoculture.

CENTRE LIFTS BAN ON WHEAT EXPORTS



THE GOVERNMENT ON Friday lifted over three-years-old ban on

exports of wheat products, including flour, maida, semolina and wholemeal atta, by allowing 0.5 million tonne (MT) of shipment. According to a Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) notification, exports of 0.5 MT of wheat flour and other products will be permitted under the export authorisation.

Awaiting clarity on US' Iran-related tariffs, says Comm Secy

NEW DELHI, Jan 15: India on Thursday said its exports to Iran are largely humanitarian and it will wait for the US executive order on the 25 per cent tariff announced by President Donald Trump on countries doing business with Tehran to assess its implications.

Trump, in a social media post on Monday, said "effective immediately", any country doing business with Iran will pay a tariff of 25 per cent on any and all business being done with the US.

"We have limited trade with Iran. Largely, our exports of goods and services are of a humanitarian nature. We are looking at that ... We are awaiting the details...we are awaiting the (executive) order," Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said here when asked about the implication on India of the announcement.

Federation of Indian Export Organisations has said that Indian companies and banks are in full and demonstrable compliance with Office of Foreign Assets Control sanctions on Iran, engaging exclusively in clearly permitted humanitarian trade, mainly in food and pharmaceuticals.

The earlier sanctions imposed by OFAC of the US Department of the Treasury in November 2018 led to a sharp fall in bilateral trade between India and Iran. India had a total trade of USD 1.68 billion with Iran in 2024-25, which included USD 1.24 billion in exports primarily from the farm sector.

Exports to Iran accounted for a meagre 0.28 per cent of its total USD 437 billion shipments in 2024-25. India's top exported products to Iran were cereals, animal fodder, tea and coffee, spices, fruits and vegetables, and pharmaceuticals. - PTI

Godrej Agrovet to empower Maharashtra women farmers

Our Bureau

Bengaluru

Godrej Agrovet Ltd (GAVL) has signed an MoU with the Maharashtra State Rural Livelihoods Mission (MS-RLM-UMED) to empower rural farmers and promote sustainable agriculture.

This three-year partnership aims to mobilise self-help groups (SHGs) and women farmers to adopt good agricultural practices (GAP) and integrated pest management (IPM), improving farm productivity and creating resilient livelihoods.

NINE DISTRICTS

In its first year, the programme will focus on key cotton-growing districts of Nagpur, Amravati, Yavatmal, Washim, Parbhani, Jalgaon, Beed, Akola and Nanded, covering over 5,000 women farmers and over 50,000 acres of farmland while engaging 100 SHGs per district.

The initiative will support

over 5,000 SHGs over three years, as per a statement.

The collaboration aligns with the United Nations' observance of 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer, it said.

Under the MoU, Godrej Agrovet will work closely with MSRLM-UMED to conduct training on GAP, IPM and safety practices, organise farmer field schools and demonstration plots, and distribute safety kits. MS-RLM-UMED will facilitate mobilisation and coordination through its SHG and Krishi Sakhi networks while Godrej Agrovet will fund and implement the programme.

Nilesh Sagar, CEO, MS-RLM-UMED, said, "Leveraging our network and Godrej Agrovet's expertise, our intent is to ensure that women farmers are well-equipped with scientific crop management practices to manage their farms efficiently and improve the socio-economic fabric of rural Maharashtra."

Mamata praises four new varieties of paddy raised by state govt

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
Kolkata, 20 January

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has expressed satisfaction over the introduction of four new varieties of paddy by the state agriculture department.

She wrote in her X handle: "Happy to announce that our agriculture department has invented four varieties of rice that are suited to the weather. The drought prevention centre in Purulia and the centre carrying out various experiments of rice in Chuchura have discovered these new varieties. I congratulate the scientists and others involved with this work."

Of the four new varieties, three are meant for the drought prone areas of Midnapore, Purulia and Bankura. They are called Subhasini, Lachmanti



and Musafir. These varieties can yield 52 to 55 per quintal per hectare during the Kharif season.

For the flood prone areas of south Bengal a new variety called Irabati has been introduced. This new variety does not get spoiled during long hours of waterlogging.

Taking these four varieties from 2011 till date the state government has introduced

15 new varieties of paddy for the benefit of the farmers.

After coming to power in 2011, the state government has been paying the premium of crop insurance. The income of the farmers has trebled. The state government buys paddy from the farmers to avoid the oppression by middlemen. Rice and vegetables are being sold through Sufal Bangla stores.

Fog raises disease threat in wheat crop; scientists issue advisory

Farmers asked to watch for frost damage, complete nitrogen application on time

PARVEEN ARORA
THE HINDU NEWS SERVICE

KARNAL, JANUARY 16

Amid persistent foggy weather conditions across northern India, scientists at the Indian Institute of Wheat and Barley Research (IIWBR), Karnal, have issued an advisory urging wheat farmers to closely monitor their crops for frost damage and disease incidence.

With wheat sowing now completed, the prevailing weather is considered favourable for vegetative growth and tillering in northern parts of the country, while crops in central India have entered the booting stage. However, the humid conditions accompanying fog have increased the risk of fungal diseases, particularly yellow rust.

The advisory also includes recommendations on fertiliser application, weed management, lodging control in early-sown wheat, Karnal bunt management in seed production crops and pest control measures. Farmers have been advised to complete nitrogen application within 40-45 days



Farmers spray weedicide on the late-sown wheat crop in Karnal district on Friday. PHOTO: VARUN GULATI

after sowing and strictly adhere to recommended herbicide and pesticide practices.

Keeping in view the favourable humid conditions for yellow rust, also known as stripe rust, farmers have been urged to remain vigilant and conduct regular field inspections to detect early symptoms.

"If any symptoms of yel-

lowing of crops appear, farmers should consult the experts of KVK, Agriculture University, state agriculture department, or IIWBR. After confirmation, they should spray fungicides in the infected areas to prevent further spread. One spray 0.1 per cent solution of Propiconazole 25 EC or a combination of Tebuconazole 50 per cent and Trifloxys-

trobin 25 per cent WG at 0.06 per cent. For Propiconazole, one millilitre of the chemical should be mixed in one litre of water, which means 200 ml of fungicide should be mixed with 200 litres of water for spraying one acre of wheat crop. In case of Tebuconazole and Trifloxystrobin, 0.6 g of fungicide should be mixed in one litre of

water, requiring about 120 g of fungicide in 200 litres of water per acre," said Dr Ratan Tiwari, Director, IIWBR.

Farmers who had applied a particular fungicide in the previous year have been advised to use an alternate recommended fungicide this season. "Farmers should spray the crop when the weather is clear," Dr Tiwari added.

Apart from rust management, farmers have also been advised to protect wheat crops from frost damage. "Light irrigation should be applied if the soil lacks adequate moisture," he said.

Emphasising efficient water use, Dr Tiwari said farmers should ensure timely and judicious irrigation to conserve water and reduce cultivation costs. Weather forecasts should be checked before irrigation to avoid waterlogging due to unexpected rainfall.

"If yellowing of the crop is observed, excessive use of nitrogen fertilisers like urea should be avoided, especially during foggy or cloudy conditions," he added.

'Natural farming a profitable venture'

'Focus on soil and water conservation to protect the soil health'

RAICHUR, DHNS

“Today, the soil has lost its vitality. Its natural productive capacity has declined. Excessive use of chemical fertilisers driven by the intention of earning higher profits has increased production costs. Therefore, organic and natural farming is the solution to all these problems,” opined University of Agricultural Sciences Director of Research A Amaregouda.

He was speaking after inaugurating a seminar on ‘Technologies in organic and natural farming’, jointly organised by the University of Agricultural Sciences, Raichur, KRIBHCO Limited, the Organic Farming Research Institute, and the Agriculture Department.

He said that microorganisms in the soil have been destroyed, and there is a need to rejuvenate them. Soil fertility must be enhanced through organic and natural farming. He emphasised that animal



UAS Raichur Research Director A Amaregouda speaks at a symposium organised at Organic Farming Institute in Raichur.

DH PHOTO

husbandry is the backbone of organic and natural farming.

He said, the varsity has been holding training programmes and field demonstrations throughout the year and the farmers have to interact with the scientists and use the advice in their fields to protect the fertility of the soil and to provide nutritious food.

Speaking on the occasion, Agriculture Department Joint Director Prakash Chauhan said, “Soil is the foundation for all crops. Soil and water conservation measures are crucial. Reuse of organic matter enhances soil fertility.”

Director of Extension A R Kurubar said, “In recent days, production costs have been increasing and farmers are not

getting net income. Hence, external chemical inputs should be reduced, and soil fertility should be improved by using naturally available inputs such as dung, cow urine, jeevamrutha, and similar preparations.”

Organic Farming Research Institute Head M A Basavanneppa said, “The core principles of natural farming are beejamrutha, jeevamrutha, mulching, and the waapas method and these should be adopted in agriculture.”

Agriculture Department Deputy Director Nayeem Husain, KRIBHCO Manager Shashikumar, Deepa L, Amaresh Ashihal, progressive farmers Muniyappa Nayak, Amaresh, and Mareppa Nayak shared their experiences.

Pesticide sector seeks tighter rules to curb fake product sales

NEW DELHI

THE pesticide industry on Wednesday urged the government to tighten the regulation for e-commerce platforms selling crop protection products, warning that basic compliance checks are insufficient and calling for mandatory authorisation certificates to prevent fake products from reaching farmers.

Industry body CropLife India said that the government should issue clear rules under the existing Insecticides Act, 1968, and include explicit provisions in the draft Pesticides Management Bill to regulate online sales, as



concerns mount over product authenticity and supply chain traceability.

"As digitisation is increasing in India, the usage of these platforms will grow. Pesticide is a regulated industry, and the entire supply chain should follow the regulatory framework," CropLife India Chairman Ankur Aggarwal said.

'Check unregulated online sales of pesticides'

Our Bureau
New Delhi

The ₹66,000 crore pesticide industry on Wednesday called for a loophole-free Pesticides Management Bill, 2025, specifically to prevent the sale of counterfeit products online.

The appeal comes amid conflicting estimates regarding the scale of the fake pesticide market, with valuations ranging from ₹250 crore to over ₹5,000 crore.

Briefing the media about the consequences of pesticides currently sold on online platforms, industry body CropLife India's Chairman Ankur Aggarwal said the government should have explicit provisions in the draft Bill as well as in the Rules (when framed) to regulate online sales amid concerns over au-



FAKES CREEP IN. The appeal comes amid conflicting estimates regarding the scale of the fake pesticide market, with valuations ranging from ₹250 crore to over ₹5,000 crore

thenticity and traceability of pesticides sold online.

RISING DIGITISATION

Pointing out that basic compliance checks were insufficient now as mandatory authorisation certificates were required for sellers to sell pesticides online and with the platforms are not enfor-

cing it, he clarified that the industry does not want any restriction.

"As digitisation is increasing in India, the usage of these platforms will grow. Pesticide is a regulated industry, and the entire supply chain should follow the regulatory framework," Aggarwal said.

Pointing out that pesticides were being sold online through both marketplace and inventory-based e-commerce models, CropLife India said pesticides are stored, handled and dispatched from warehouses that are not licensed under the Insecticides Rules under the inventory-based models, whereas identical activities require licensing in the offline supply chain.

"This weakens regulatory oversight and makes inspection, sampling and traceability significantly more difficult," the association said in a statement.

He said that companies had issued legal notices to e-commerce platforms over unauthorised sales and some had filed lawsuits, too. In some cases, courts had directed platforms to remove listings of those products.

Budget 2026: Can India outrun US tariffs and reboot its growth engine?



AS Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman prepares to present the Union Budget on 1 February 2026, India stands at an inflection point. Domestically, the economy retains robust growth fundamentals despite global headwinds, grounded in strong internal demand and rising digital participation.

The expectations are that this budget will be different from the previous ones keeping in view the rising tariff barriers in the United States — including punitive levies of up to 50 per cent on Indian exports — present a significant shock to export-oriented sectors and test the resilience of India's trade strategy. It will have to be re-tuned to advance the government's vision of 2047.

The common man is keeping fingers crossed as he awaits announcements on tax relief, market participants are hoping for an easing of capital market taxation, including a higher exemption limit on long-term capital gains.

In this context, Budget 2026 is not merely an accounting exercise but a strategic response to strengthen domestic engines of growth, while cushioning key sectors against external duress. The expectations from industry and the public reflect a blend of urgent relief measures, forward-looking reforms, and a more ambitious global posture for Indian enterprise.

Over the past year, the imposition of steep U.S. tariffs on a broad swathe of Indian exports — encompassing textiles, gems and jewellery, leather, electronics components, and other labour-intensive goods — has reshaped export dynamics. Data suggest that the United States accounts for roughly one-fifth of India's merchandise exports, and prolonged tariff barriers could erode tens of billions in export revenues if unresolved. Several industries like the Denim indus-

A moment to align today's budget with tomorrow's India

try in Gujarat are redrawing their strategies to make good the loss on account of the negative impact of US tariffs. Budget 2026 is expected to go beyond traditional incentives and design a fiscal framework that helps Indian exporters compete on quality, compliance, and diversified market access rather than solely on cost. The government's initiatives such as an Export Promotion Mission and expanded credit guarantees underscore the seriousness of the challenge.

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have historically been the backbone of India's economy — a crucible of innovation, employment, and export potential. Yet they face a confluence of pressures:

Post-GST 2.0, has left some small firms struggling with compliance cost-burdens, credit constraints and liquidity shortages that stifle expansion and innovation that disproportionately damage export prospects, especially for smaller exporters without risk-hedging capacity.

Industry groups, therefore, anticipate the Budget to champion reinforced GST reforms that simplify compliance, expand the GST exemption threshold (even proposals to Rs 1.5 crore have been floated), and reduce litigation.

Combined with credit support instruments — such as extended Export Credit Interest Subvention, additional loan window for distressed MSMEs, and longer NPA classification periods — the fiscal framework can provide MSMEs the breathing space to innovate and plan with confidence.

The industry also expects that with the tariff shock looming large on exports, special subvention schemes for international orders and export-linked performance incentives can help stabilise order pipelines while India negotiates market access barriers.

India's digital economy — driven by platforms such as UPI, Aadhaar etc — is a global success story. It now contributes close to 12 per cent of GDP and supports millions of jobs. As we approach Budget

2026, stakeholders in the technology sector (including SaaS, cloud services, fintech, AI, and deep tech) are signalling a need for: Stable regulatory certainty, particularly in areas like data governance, cross-border interoperability and taxation of digital services, enhanced R&D incentives, including tax credits tied to patent development and high-end innovation, rather than mere volume-based subsidies.

Improving IP protections, and offering fiscal incentives for tech startups scaling internationally, industry feels would anchor India's future-ready services exports — which are far less vulnerable to

for special incentives and easy loan facilities to establish Panchgavya manufacturing units at the village level. Gramothan is essential for holistic rural development, as the national economy cannot grow at the desired pace unless the rural economy expands in tandem.

Cow urine and cow dung not only have immense potential to rejuvenate soil health but can also provide farmers with an additional source of income through the sale of gaurutra. In the long run, this model can evolve into a viable cooperative movement, much like the milk cooperatives that transformed India's dairy sector.

As India heads into Budget 2026-27, the economy stands at a critical crossroads. With US tariff barriers squeezing exports and global trade turning uncertain, the budget must do more than balance books. From MSMEs and exporters to technology, agriculture and the salaried middle class, expectations are high for relief, reform and resilience. This is a moment for strategic clarity—aligning fiscal prudence with India's long-term ambition of becoming a globally competitive economy by 2047

tariff barriers than goods — as a reliable growth pillar.

India's agricultural sector remains fundamental not only to food security but also to rural incomes and political economy. The Budget 2026 dialogue has seen calls for a paradigm shift — from production-centric policies to innovation-driven, export-oriented agricultural growth.

Key expectations from the sector include:

There should be a special focus on developing cow dung and cow urine-based products, popularly known as Panchgavya products, especially within the small-scale sector in rural areas. According to Shyambhai of Banaskantha, a pioneer in setting up units that manufacture by-products from cow urine and cow dung, the Budget must prioritise organic farming, reduce taxes on electric vehicles, and extend targeted support for rural entrepreneurs engaged in research and development in organic agriculture. He emphasises the need

Echoing this vision, Vallabh Kathria, former Union Minister and founder of the Global Confederation of Cow-Based Industries, said that a mega Gautech Expo—GAUTECH 2026 will be organised in Pune from March 20 to 23. The event aims to bring together tradition and technology, showcasing cow-based innovations in agriculture, health and environmental sustainability, smart farming tools for sustainable practices, and providing a platform for networking among farmers, experts and entrepreneurs.

Other expectations are infrastructure outlays for cold chains, processing clusters, logistics nodes and export terminals to reduce post-harvest losses and enhance value addition.

Agri-tech incentives, particularly for drone technology, precision agriculture, bio-inputs and climate-smart farming systems.

MSP reform and market infrastructure that allow farmers to link directly with organised, global sup-

ply chains without over-reliance on minimum support price regimes.

The general public — the salaried middle class, small traders, and rural households alike — are looking for relief on several fronts: personal tax rationalisation, improved access to affordable housing and credit, and infrastructure that directly impacts living standards. Investors and markets broadly expect no dramatic populist giveaways but targeted incentives that boost investment, consumption and long-term demand. Personal tax cuts, extensions of key deductions, and rationalisations in long-term capital gains taxes are anticipated measures that could increase disposable income without derailing fiscal discipline.

Budget 2026 must also signal India's macro-economic stability: predictable tax codes, credible fiscal consolidation plans and a transparent roadmap for capital flow liberalisation. Experts have emphasised reforms to simplify cross-border tax treatment, improve investor certainty, and make India attractive for long-term foreign investment.

Budget 2026 has the opportunity to strike a nuanced balance — by strengthening internal competitiveness, enabling firms to adapt to modern trade realities, and forging deeper bilateral and multilateral trade engagements.

As India confronts the twin challenges of global economic uncertainty and rising trade barriers, Budget 2026-27 must be a statement of confidence — not only fiscal prudence but also strategic ambition. By empowering MSMEs with ease and credit, catalysing tech-led growth, modernising agriculture, and cushioning exporters against tariff shocks, it can set the stage for a more resilient, more competitive India that thrives in a multipolar global economy.

Above all, this budget must chart a path where India's domestic strengths and global aspirations converge, ensuring that the country does not merely weather external headwinds but emerges stronger in the decades ahead.

(The author is a former Chief Editor at The Hans India)

PROFIT | TARGET Govt commits itself to adopting modern 'farmer agri-technology' ₹53,752cr allocated for agri, allied sectors

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC VIJAYAWADA, FEB. 14

AP government has committed itself to adopting modern "Farmer Agri-Technology" to transform agriculture into a profitable and high-income generating sector in Andhra Pradesh.

On behalf of the state government, revenue minister Anagani Satya Prasad presented in the AP Legislative Council on Saturday the Agriculture and Allied Sectors Budget with a proposed total outlay of ₹53,752.12 crore for 2026-27.

As per the Budget documents, the state government is committed to achieve the goals of Swarna Andhra 2047.

AGRICULTURE AND ALLIED SECTORS BUDGET- 2026-27

₹6,000 cr has been proposed for Annadata Sukhibava scheme.

RYTHU BAZARS supply quality vegetables directly to households at reasonable

AP RANKED first in the country contributing 29% of India's fish production and 34% of marine seafood exports valued at ₹21,246 cr.

AP CONTRIBUTES 75% of India's shrimp production.

Towards this, it has come up with 10 principles, with Farmer Agri-Tech being one of them. Accordingly, the government will leverage modern technologies, such as artificial intelligence, internet of things, drones, robotics, satellite-based systems, and deep technology to ensure that

agriculture becomes a profitable sector.

The document pointed out that Andhra Pradesh's State Gross Domestic Product stands at ₹17,62,357 crore (2025-26), to which agriculture sector has contributed ₹5,39,454 crore amounting to a 33.20 per cent share.

This is as against India's agriculture and allied sectors growth share of 0.80 per cent.

Under the Annadata Sukhibava-PM Kisan scheme, AP has proposed ₹6,600 crore for farmers during 2026-27.

An amount of ₹1,123.86 crore has been proposed for the Horticulture department, with the state ranking first in the country, contributing a 15.6 per cent share to India's fruit production. AP is also in the top position in production of oil palm, papaya, lemon, cocoa, tomato and coconut crops. It has secured second place in chilli production.

The budget document emphasised that West Godavari district is being developed as a Cocoa Hub

with establishment of a Cocoa City.

The government proposed ₹523.525 crore for Fisheries department in the Budget. It pointed out that AP ranked first in the country by contributing 29 per cent of India's fish production and 34 per cent of marine sea food exports valued at ₹21,246 crore. It also contributed 75 per cent of India's shrimp production.

The Budget has proposed ₹515.39 crore for Agriculture Marketing department, ₹504.11 crore for the Horticulture University, ₹163.01 crore for AP Fisheries University, ₹13,722 crore for power subsidy, ₹500 crore for VBG RAM G, and ₹14,276.89 crore for Water Resources department.

ITC to extend benefits of new GenAI innovations to FPOs, rural communities

Our Bureau

Kolkata

Diversified conglomerate ITC Ltd is looking to extend the benefits of latest AI innovations to its larger ecosystem of farmer producer organisations (FPOs), organic farmers and rural communities.

By deploying new generative AI applications and agentic AI capabilities, the conglomerate is expanding its ITCMAARS phygital ecosystem into a resilient, connected, and intelligence-driven agri-stack at scale, it said in a statement.

This is an integral part of ITC Chairman Sanjiv Puri's strategy and commitment to usher in "next-gen agriculture" for Indian farmers.

10 MILLION FARMERS

As a company working for more than a century with farmers, its digital stack for agriculture, led by ITCMAARS, aims to reach 10 million farmers enabling rural development and progress.

The agritech platform combines the benefits of digital technologies delivered through a super app, specially designed to provide tailor-made solutions for small farmers, along with on-ground human engagement by leveraging FPOs as the anchor.

It also offers a separate app customised for the needs



of FPOs in its ecosystem.

Extending the benefits of this FPO app, the model now plans to introduce AI solutions to improve efficiencies of FPO operations, helping them scale up.

Additionally, the ITCMAARS community platform, which facilitates knowledge exchange on agri best practices by farmers, will be strengthened using AI-driven digital assistant and agentic workflows, the statement added.

The objective is to resolve a large percentage of community questions near real time, using AI as a complement to expert advice.

The model also plans to introduce an AI-enabled platform with customised advisory and services specifically tailored for organic farming.

As global leaders and tech visionaries descend upon Bharat Mandapam for the India AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi, the spotlight has shifted from theoretical risk models and governance to inclusive, demonstrable

applications of AI to solve everyday grassroots challenges for "people, planet and progress".

In this context, ITCMAARS and its transformative impact on a large number of farmers stands as a pertinent use case, resonating with India's AI philosophy of "Sarvajan Hitaya, Sarvajan Sukhaya" (welfare for all, happiness for all).

"Today, ITC's next generation agriculture initiative is powered by the ITCMAARS, a full range crop-agnostic 'phygital' model that aims to democratise the access of latest technologies for small farmers, helping them win over critical challenges of climate change, crop management and market access," said S Ganesh Kumar, Divisional Chief Executive, Agri Business, ITC Ltd.

EVERY NODE

Kumar said the company's AI strategy in agriculture focuses on orchestrating a multi-stakeholder inclusive ecosystem that aims to enhance efficiency at every node of farming operation from crop planning, climate-smart advisories, production, input linkages, procurement and market discovery.

"We are continuously innovating and forging new partnerships to progressively enhance the scope of AI applications for diverse agri stakeholders and specific farming needs," he added.

MoUs worth ₹11,000 cr signed with Japanese firms

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Tokyo/Lucknow

Memoranda of understanding (MoUs) worth about ₹11,000 crore were signed with several Japanese companies during the first day of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's visit to Japan on Wednesday.

The agreements were signed with firms, including Kubota Corporation, Minda Corporation, Japan Aviation Electronics Industry, Nagase & Co, Ltd, Seiko Advance, O&O Group, Fuji Japanese JV, and Fujisilvertech Concrete Pvt Ltd, as per an official release. The partnerships span sectors such as agricultural equipment



UP CM Yogi Adityanath meets Kazuki Shimizu, Managing Officer and COO of Infrastructure Projects Business Unit at Mitsui & Co, and senior team members to discuss investments in Tokyo, Japan

manufacturing, industrial machinery, water and environmental infrastructure solutions, automobiles, electronics, industrial print-

ing and graphics, hospitality and real estate. Officials said the agreements are expected to boost manufacturing capacity and deepen

industrial collaboration between India and Japan. Founded in 1890 and headquartered in Osaka, Kubota Corporation is a

leading multinational known for agricultural and industrial machinery.

Minda Corporation, part of the Spark Minda Group, is a major automotive components manufacturer providing mechatronics, wiring harnesses, plastic interiors, sensors and electric vehicle solutions. Japan Aviation Electronics Industry, also known as JAE, specialises in advanced connectors and electronic interface solutions for automotive and aerospace sectors.

Nagase & Co, Ltd is a diversified Japanese trading and technology company engaged in chemicals, advanced materials, mobility solutions and electronics. Officials said collabora-

tion among these companies is expected to promote automotive electronics and advanced component manufacturing. Seiko Advance, a Japan-based firm known for high-performance screen printing inks and coating solutions, supplies products used in automotive decals, industrial graphics, electronic panels, glass printing and consumer appliances, including through its manufacturing presence in India.

Meanwhile, O&O Group has signed an agreement to invest in the hospitality and real estate sector. Officials described the agreements signed are expected to give fresh momentum to bilateral industrial cooperation.

'Pest resistance on the rise in Bt cotton'

AJ Vinayak

Mangaluru

Pest resistance is increasing in Bt cotton in India, if the answer the government gave in the Lok Sabha is any indication.

In a written reply in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, Ramnath Thakur, Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, said about 95 per cent area under cotton cultivation is occupied by Bt cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum*).

Though Bt cotton has continued to control one major cotton pest [American bollworm (*Helicoverpa armigera*)], pink bollworm has developed resistance against Bt protein and is becoming a major pest in all cotton-growing areas. Sucking pests are also surging in the cotton ecosystem over the years, he said.

MORE EXPENSES

Farmers now spend more on pesticides than they did dur-



ing the initial period of Bt cotton introduction, he said.

Citing the studies conducted on the long-term impact of Bt cotton in India, he said Bt cotton technology replaced large tracts of varietal areas with Bt hybrids because the technology was available only in the form of hybrids in India.

Asked about the steps taken by the government to protect native cotton varieties, Thakur said the ICAR-Central Institute for Cotton Research (CICR), Nagpur, is involved in germplasm con-

servation, documentation and utilisation of wild cotton species, perennials and native cotton species.

Further, ICAR-CICR has dedicated research projects for improvement and popularisation of *G. arboreum* and *G. herbaceum* species in north and central India respectively, he added.

COTTON IMPORTS UP

Cotton imports witnessed a huge jump during the crop year 2024-25 (October-September).

Giriraj Singh, Union Textiles Minister, said India imported 41.39 lakh bales (of 170 kg) valued at ₹11,989 crore in the crop year 2024-25 against 15.19 lakh bales valued at ₹5,483 crore in 2023-24.

During the crop year 2024-25, India imported 8.56 lakh bales worth ₹2,908 crore from the US.

This was followed by 8.54 lakh bales worth ₹2,131 crore from Brazil, and 8.49 lakh bales valued at ₹2,367 crore from Australia.

Corteva, BASF introduce non-GM herbicide-tolerant mustard tech

Our Bureau

Bengaluru

Corteva India, in strategic partnership with BASF India, has unveiled a Clearfield Production System for the mustard crop. This innovative, non-GM crop system is herbicide-tolerant and aims to improve cultivation through better weed control and higher yield potential.

With an output exceeding 4 mt, mustard plays a pivotal role as the largest contributor among edible oil-yielding crops. Indian farmers cultivate over 8 million hectares each year and face major challenges from parasitic weeds like Orobanche, which can cause yield losses of up to 50 per cent.

The Clearfield technology, including the Kifix herbicide,



is a proprietary innovation of BASF, known for delivering broad-spectrum and selective control against difficult weeds such as Orobanche.

The system integrates Corteva's advanced and high-yielding genetics, with BASF Clearfield Herbicide-tolerant trait. The mustard seeds developed with the Clearfield trait are non-transgenic and non-genetically modified, achieved through conventional plant-breeding techniques. These seeds will be sold exclusively

under the Pioneer brand by Corteva.

FARMERS WELCOME

Rajasthan Agriculture and Horticulture Minister Kirodi Lal Meena said, "Rajasthan is a vital mustard production hub in India. Our farmers face immense pressure from pests and weeds like Orobanche. The Clearfield Mustard Production System from Corteva and BASF is a welcome innovation. It promises relief and prosperity for our mustard growers, enhancing agricultural productivity, ensuring stable output and safeguarding farmer livelihoods."

"BASF is delighted to launch Clearfield Production System for our mustard farmers in India," said Giridhar Ranuva, Director, BASF Agricultural Solutions India.

Shah inaugurates Rs 265 cr cooperative projects

Chairs 'Sahkar se Samridhi' manthan meeting in Gandhinagar

GANDHINAGAR: The Union Home minister, Amit Shah, chaired the Manthan meeting in Gandhinagar on Tuesday under the theme of 'Sahkar se Samridhi' with the presence of Cooperation ministers from all states and Union Territories.

During the meeting, projects related to ethanol, energy, organic potash, warehouses, and protein powder plants, amounting to Rs 265 crore, were inaugurated, and foundation stones were laid.

Speaking on the occasion, Amit Shah said that under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the country is growing in every field and will become a developed country by the year 2047. He further said that cooperatives can ensure



the dignity and prosperity of the country's 140 crore people, particularly in the areas of agriculture, rural development, and animal husbandry.

Shah said that the storage of food grains is of utmost importance, and the storage capacity must be tripled with cooperatives contributing two-thirds

of the total capacity. He said that 70 per cent of the procurement is conducted in Punjab and Haryana, and the regions could be better aligned with respect to procurement, storage, and distribution, which could reduce the transportation cost by 30-40 per cent.

Shah further said that the

sugar mills in the country must be revived, and the production of fertilisers and gas must begin, as eleven products can be produced from sugar complexes. The minister also asked the states to study the successful model of Banas Dairy.

The meeting also focused on the progress of establishing two lakh new primary agricultural credit societies and the expansion of modern warehouses under the world's largest grain storage scheme. The states were also asked to actively participate in the national cooperative bodies such as National Cooperative Exports Limited, National Cooperative Organics Limited, and Bharatiya Beej Sahkari Samiti Limited. **MPOST**

THE ECONOMIC TIMES, MUMBAI, 15 FEBRUARY 2026

'UP HAS 55% OF COUNTRY'S EXPRESSWAYS, 16 AIRPORTS—IT'S EASY TO ACCESS'

'By 2030, UP will be Among Top 2 States in Mfg & Exports'

Our Bureau

New Delhi: Uttar Pradesh is moving in the right direction and has all the ingredients to become an economic superpower within the country, said Deepak Kumar, additional chief secretary, finance, and commissioner—infrastructure, industrial development and agriculture production.

Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ambitious target of India becoming a \$5 trillion economy, UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath is aiming for a \$1 trillion economy for the state. "Under the leadership of the chief minister, there is clear intent and content to grow faster," Kumar said. "UP was contributing 8% to the national economy a decade back. This has gone up to 9%. We have 17% of the population of the country. We want to contribute to the national economy commensurate with our population," Kumar said at the ET Now Global Business Summit.

The state's growth is 17%, higher than the 16% national growth rate.

Kumar explained three important structural changes which the state has introduced in order to become the leading economy of the country.

"Instilling the rule of law is the first structural change which has been a priority under the CM's leadership," he said. "Law and order has been the first beneficiary of this. When I say law and order, it is not in a restricted sense but in an institutionalised sense. The police and other institutions have access to better resources, training and execution is better. The state has zero tolerance towards crime."

On infrastructure development, Kumar said UP has 55% of the country's expressways as well as 16 airports, making it a state that's easy to access.

"Out of the 16 airports, four are international and the fifth one is coming up at Jewar, which is going to be Asia's largest airport. We have around 33% of freight corridors and metro services in six cities. So we are number one when it comes to connectivity," he said.

At a time when every other state is trying to woo investors with tax holidays and incentives, Kumar said UP offers a lot of differentiation.

"First of all, we have the largest consumer base in the country," he said. "Every sixth Indian is in UP. We have a huge land pool of 75,000 acres of developed industrial land. We have 34 sector-specific policies. All along the expressways, we have opened industrial nodes and it is helping the state in

**9%: UP'S SHARE AT PRESENT**

We have 17% of the population of the country. We want to contribute to the national economy commensurate with our population

DEEPAK KUMAR*Additional Chief Secretary, Finance, UP*

attracting investment. You name the sectors such as semiconductors, defence, renewable energy, leather and non-leather goods and UP has it all."

Investors are welcomed by the state. "Our CM is very particular. He says speed is the new incentive. From the time an investor expresses his interest to invest in UP, there is handholding and CM also monitors it closely through the CM portal. The investor also realises they have direct access to the CM."

He further added that due to the efforts by the state, 55% mobile phones and 60-65% electronic components are manufactured in UP.

He said the state de-regularised 557 provisions and that has helped the state go up in ease of doing business ranking.

"UP has also moved up in the ease of doing business ranking from 9th position to one among the frontrunners," he said.

Apart from industrialisation, Kumar reinforced that 65% of the state population is still dependent on agriculture and it must be given priority by the government. Agriculture contributes about 26% of the state's economy. He said that UP is the leading producer of wheat, potato and sugarcane but diversification is the need of the hour.

Godrej Agrovet launches new insecticide TAKAI

VIJAYAWADA

GODREJ Agrovet Limited (Godrej Agrovet), one of India's leading diversified agri-businesses, has launched a new insecticide TAKAI, developed for rice crops. Powered by Cyclapryn™ technology developed by ISK Japan, TAKAI is effective against key rice pests, Stem Borer and, also controls Leaf Folder. When applied at a dose of 160 ml at 15-30 Days After Transplant (DAT) and again at 40-60 DAT, it provides an extensive protection window for the rice crop. The company is in process of getting label approval in Maize, Chilli, Cabbage, Soybean, Chickpea and Sugarcane crops too for TAKAI.

Stem Borer cause 30% – 40% yield loss during severe outbreaks, whereas leaf folder infestation can result in 20% – 30% yield loss under severe conditions, often attacking the crop at early and mid-growth stages when detection and timely intervention are challenging. Hence, although India is the world's largest producer of rice, with production of 150.18 million tonnes, its per-hectare yield remains significantly low at ~2.9 tonnes/hectare compared to global best of 5 tonnes/hectare.

Sunil Kataria, MD & CEO, Godrej Agrovet, said, "Effective pest management de-



termines the success of the Indian rice farmer. Through TAKAI, we intend to enable rice farmers to protect their crops from pest attacks by offering them a solution that offers quick control and is effective for a longer duration thereby improving crop health." "At Godrej Agrovet, our endeavour is to deliver crop protection solutions that address environmental and market challenges faced by our farmers. Today's launch of TAKAI is in sync with our strategy of strengthening our portfolio across key crops by leveraging our research-expertise and strong on-ground reach that empower farmers and uplift farming families," he added.

Rice, being a multi-season crop – Kharif, Rabi and Summer, is grown in warm, humid and water-logged conditions making it ideal for pest attacks throughout the year. In the early critical stage, i.e. vegetative stage during 15-30 DAT, Stem Borer damages the plant and makes it difficult for farmers to detect early.

Reimagining FCI to raise farm incomes

The revamp of FCI must be in sync with MSP and fertilizer subsidy reforms. Curbing grain wastage must also be a priority

Amit Kapoor
Pradeep Puri
Ananya Khurana

The Food Corporation of India (FCI) was set up in 1965 as a bulwark against hunger, responsible for procuring grain at assured prices, stabilising markets, and feeding millions through the Public Distribution System (PDS).

Six decades on, the mission remains vital, but the context has shifted dramatically. Today, India stands at a point of opportunity: managing abundant cereal stocks, building resilience against climate variability, and optimising fiscal resources.

FCI should pivot from open-ended physical MSP procurement to a more calibrated role focused primarily on maintaining buffer stocks for food security, while reducing unnecessary costs. This basically implies delinking procurement volumes from storage capacity so that procurement responds to buffer stock norms and does not exceed them by default.

Modern silo capacity and smarter buffer stock management, aligned with domestic price stabilisation objectives, can transform price stabilisation from a reactive exercise into a predictable, rules-based system. FCI cannot be revamped standalone or in one stroke. It must evolve alongside reforms in MSP and fertilizer subsidies through Direct

Benefit Transfers (DBT), guided by broad stakeholder consultation and consensus. This could address chronic storage inefficiencies, reduce fiscal burdens, and eventually support India's ambition to reach \$100 billion in agricultural exports by 2030.

Buffer stocks act as economic insurance as they are procured in surplus to prevent price crashes and released during shortages to curb inflation. Norms are set quarterly to meet the National Food Security Act (NFSA) requirements, strategic reserves, and contingencies, yet stocks often exceed these levels.

As of July 1, 2025, rice and wheat reserves stood at 736.61 lakh tonne against norms of 411.20 lakh tonne, forcing Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) releases to moderate prices. Such overhangs inflate carrying costs, risk quality loss, and add logistics expenses, implying the need for smarter storage and faster rotation. It is excess procurement, not capacity constraints, that generates today's inefficiencies.

In 2023-24, FCI spent a staggering ₹1,87,834 crore on procurement, logistics, employee remuneration, and depreciation on its traditional storage capacity, translating to ₹22,347.62 per tonne. Of the total expenditure, the Comptroller and Auditor General flagged ₹62.76 crore spent on storage and supervision of food stock as avoidable costs in Punjab and Haryana alone. Set this beside a modern domestic



REFORMING. Food management SHINATH M

silo operator that manages similar functions at around ₹534 per tonne, illustrating how technology and incentives dramatically lower costs.

ADVANTAGE SILOS

While conventional FCI godowns cost about ₹915 crore per million tonnes to build, modern silos cost only marginally more at about ₹1,000 crore, whereas global benchmarks hover around ₹207-₹373 crore. Even with higher upfront costs, silos slash losses, improve quality, and deliver long-term savings.

India's rapid rollout of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) silos is a step in that direction. The six modern facilities (50,000 tonne each) commissioned in Bihar, Punjab, and Gujarat promise scientific storage, bulk handling, and rail integration. Silo capacity is projected to rise from 2.8 million tonne to 9 million tonne across 250 locations in three years, with long leases and per-tonne storage charges creating clear performance incentives. The payoff is

real: scientific storage of wheat can reduce losses to 0.3-2 per cent, preserving quality and lowering re-bagging, fumigation, and shrinkage. These efficiency gains matter because they ensure that even if MSP procurement is scaled back, food security remains intact as long as buffer-stock norms under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) are maintained.

All this hinges on policy discipline. Rule-based OMSS bands should automatically trigger releases whenever stocks exceed buffer norms, with reserve prices calibrated to regional wholesale indices and transport costs. Faster OMSS releases could generate fiscal savings that can be redirected toward DBT, agronomic extension, and support for lagging regions.

Eliminating wastage of nearly 28 per cent of subsidised foodgrains could unlock savings of about ₹70,125 crore, allowing reinvestment in scientific storage that preserves grain quality, cuts losses, and improves realised farm returns.

At the same time, predictable price stabilisation would reduce crash risk and encourage diversification away from water-intensive cereals toward pulses and oilseeds. Crucially, this does not dismantle food security.

Kapoor is chair, Puri is Senior Fellow and Ananya Khurana is senior researcher at the Institute for Competitiveness

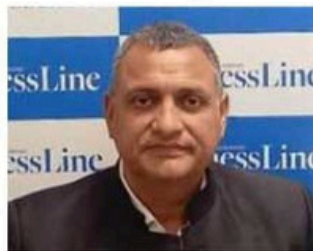
Ensure accountability of seed companies in Bill: MP

Prabhudatta Mishra
New Delhi

Demanding that the proposed Seeds Bill be sent to the Parliamentary Standing Committee, former Agriculture Minister of Bihar and current Lok Sabha MP Sudhakar Singh suggested capping the price and accountability in the current draft. He, however, supported the need for a law saying the parliamentary panel has been insisting on it.

In an interaction with *businessline*, Singh, who is also a member of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture, said the Bill has to address some key issues like terminator seed technology, uncontrolled rates of seeds, accountability of seed companies and GMO technology.

Explaining further, he



Lok Sabha MP
Sudhakar Singh

said, "We should not use any terminator seed technology in the seed production system. Seed companies worldwide don't aim to increase production, but to create a market for themselves by selling new seeds every year. This is why they want us to use genetically modified (GM) seeds and genome editing technology."

He claimed that on the last 20 years of experience on Bt cotton, both the government and farmers have realised that allowing GM cotton was

a failed technology, and India has fallen into a trap.

But when asked if limiting the seed prices was not responsible for no new technologies coming to India, Singh said Bt cotton was introduced with the claim that there will be no pest attack. "But the PBW (pink bollworm) pest is infesting Bt cotton, and there is no cure for it," he said.

LAW NEEDS REFORM

He also said that the trade agreement that has been reached with the US, allowing for zero duty import of cotton will again put India in a situation similar to 2000 when the country imported. "We never had a shortage of cotton. If needed in any particular year, we could have imported it from by waiving the import duty. So, what was the need to introduce failed technology?" he asked.

"The Seed Bill has been pending since 2004. It is introduced now because our committee raised questions about it. We want the law to clearly state that foreign technology will not be adopted. Only our hybrid and pure line technology should be adopted," he said.

Singh further said there should be a maximum retail price for seeds. "Earlier, farmers used to exchange seeds among themselves. Now, companies are making huge profits, they modify seeds in the name of pest control, but this only results in more pests," he said.

Stressing that the seeds law still needs reform, he said there is a need for seed insurance. "Companies selling seeds should guarantee production. If there is a loss of more than 10-20 per cent, compensation should be provided," he said.

House panel wants Aadhaar link to curb fertiliser misuse

SANDIP DAS

New Delhi, February 10

TO PREVENT DIVERSION of highly subsidised fertilisers for non-agricultural use, a parliamentary panel on Tuesday recommended integrating Aadhaar-based authentication of the fertiliser ministry's database with the digital farmers' registry and PM-Kisan schemes of the agriculture ministry to ensure better targeting of beneficiaries.

"The Integrated Fertiliser Management System (iFMS) portal has identified 18.7 crore unique buyers, and 6.25 crore of them have availed the fertiliser subsidy, which contradicts the PM-Kisan database of the agriculture ministry," the Standing Committee on Chemicals and Fertilisers (2025-26) said in its report.

The panel expressed concern that farmer identification is currently being carried out without a well-defined mechanism to ascertain the actual beneficiary.

"As a result, subsidised fertilisers, particularly urea, are susceptible to diversion for stocking, black marketing, and use in industrial sectors such as resins, adhesives, plastics, foams, textiles, leather, and paper and pulp industries," it observed.

The committee recommended integrating the agri-



culture ministry's direct cash transfer data under PM-Kisan and the digital farmers' registry — which contains details on landholdings and crops grown — with the fertiliser department's digital platform to ensure that only genuine farmers benefit from the highly subsidised fertiliser scheme.

It also suggested expanding the direct cash transfer scheme to select districts across different regions to understand farmers' fertiliser purchasing behaviour and identify constraints more comprehensively.

"In the absence of a pilot study on direct cash transfer and without plugging the loopholes in the present Aadhaar-based identification 'no-denial' policy, issues of diversion and subsidy leakage cannot be effectively addressed," the panel noted.

The committee further observed that the recent short-

fall in the supply of phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) fertilisers — particularly Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) — has exposed critical weaknesses in India's fertiliser supply chain.

At present, urea is provided to farmers through about three lakh retail outlets at a notified maximum retail price of ₹242 per 45-kg bag since March 2018, while the subsidy borne by the government is around 85-90%.

Similarly, retail prices of phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilisers, including DAP, were decontrolled in 2010 with the introduction of a fixed-subsidy regime under the Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) mechanism.

As per the revised estimate, the government has pegged the fertiliser subsidy for FY26 at ₹1.86 lakh crore, while the budget estimate for FY27 stands at ₹1.71 lakh crore.

To promote the use of nano fertilisers, the panel recommended that the fertiliser ministry conduct additional multi-location and multi-crop trials to study their long-term impact on soil fertility and ecosystem sustainability.

"There is a greater need for monitoring and wider adoption, besides addressing farmers' concerns to simplify methods of nano urea and DAP usage," the committee added.

THE TRIBUNE, CHANDIGARH 16-02-2026

No genetically modified products permitted under pact, says minister

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 15

Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday asserted that no genetically modified (GM) products had been permitted under the India-US trade deal, in response to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's "betrayal of farmers" remark.

The minister said, "Rahul is spreading lies and indulging in negative and misleading politics. No GM crops or GM-based products have been approved in any deal with the US. His concerns over DDGS (Distillers Dried Grains with Solubles) are baseless."

Countering Gandhi on the MSP issue, Chouhan said the Congress itself had failed to implement the Swaminathan Commission's recommendation of providing MSP at 1.5 times the cost of production when it was in power. — TNS

Uplifting women farmers

Land ownership, access to credit critical

BK Singhal
Harsh Ranjan

The staggering and persistent gender gaps in agriculture and the allied sector globally have led the United Nations to declare 2026 as the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF).

The gender gaps in the context of rural India are manifested primarily in three forms — land ownership, access to credit, and participation in collectives.

Accordingly, the trend of feminisation of the agricultural workforce must be complemented with directed policy and executive focus on closing these gaps.

The exclusion of women from land ownership can be understood from the fact that while women make up more than 40 per cent of the overall agricultural workforce in India (Periodic Labour Force Survey), they account for only about 14 per cent of the overall land holdings and about 12 per cent of the overall operated area in the country (Agriculture Census 2015-16).

DEFINITION OF FARMER

How a farmer is defined in official practice has practical implications. It determines who benefits from farmer-centric government schemes, and who does not. To exemplify, as a consequence, women constitute only about 23 per cent of the direct beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN). In practice, those who cultivate or work on the land but do not own it are often excluded from access to agricultural credit, interest subvention for farm loans, and crop insurance. Further, access to subsidised crop inputs is difficult without identification as farmers. Besides, in the event of crop failure, compensation is only given to owners.

Therefore, feminisation of land ownership structure is critical. To this end, ensuring that schemes and programmes centered around 'record of rights' have a built-in gender component, so that names of both spouses can be included in land titles, can go a long way in addressing the gender gap in land ownership.

Further, as a natural consequence of under-representation in land ownership, women farmers tend to face difficulties in accessing institutional credit due to collateral-related limitations.

One approach for addressing



COLLECTIVES. The participation of women farmers is limited.

the credit crunch among women farmers could be through catalysing credit appetite by way of capacity building. Institutions like NABARD are working towards addressing financial literacy gaps through Financial Literacy and Awareness Programmes. The RBI through the Depositor Education and Awareness Fund (DEAF) is also working on bridging this gap.

There also needs to be focus on credit intensification through skilling, technological enablement, and capacity building for women farmers. The Government is driving credit uptake via skill development through Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs), and schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana.

Further policy support may be explored in the form of enabling targeted and focussed credit delivery to make it more impactful.

The third critical gender gap relates to limited participation of women farmers in collectives. Collectivisation or aggregation of women producers will help in consolidating resources, boosting operational efficiency through economies of scale, while also adding to the bargaining power of the individual producer members. These goals can be met with the promotion of cooperative societies or farmer producer organisations (FPOs) or companies focused on women farmers.

As the feminisation of agriculture deepens, it is essential to complement this trend with institutional recognition and support. Only then can India unlock the full strength of its women farmers to drive a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable second Green Revolution. Let us harness the women farmers' dividend in IYWF 2026.

Singhal is Chief General Manager, and Ranjan is Manager, at NABARD, Ahmedabad. Views are personal

Chouhan bats for direct transfer of fertilizer subsidy to farmers

Prabhudatta Mishra

New Delhi

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has backed the long-pending proposal to transfer fertilizer subsidy directly to farmers' bank accounts, saying the shift "can be done" and asking officials to work out a practical mechanism.

Speaking at the annual Kisan Mela organised by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute in New Delhi on Wednesday, Chouhan said reforms were needed as the current subsidy of over ₹1.70 lakh crore is routed to companies.

"This amount can be directly transferred to farmers. It is possible and can be done," he said.

Highlighting the extent of support, he said a 45-kg urea bag is sold at ₹266 and a 50-kg DAP bag at ₹1,350, though the market prices are much higher.

The Centre bears the difference, spending more than ₹1.70 lakh crore annually to

keep fertilizers affordable.

Under the existing policy, urea prices are fully controlled by the government. For other fertilizers, companies fix the retail price after adjusting the fixed nutrient-based subsidy, announced twice a year before the kharif and rabi seasons.

At present, the subsidy rates are ₹43.02 per kg for nitrogen (N), ₹47.96 for phosphorus (P), ₹2.38 for potash (K) and ₹2.87 for sulphur (S).

COST RISKS

Chouhan said complaints persist about farmers facing shortages despite adequate supplies and a large subsidy outgo. In some areas, subsidised urea meant for farmers has also been diverted.

"The nation should consider whether fertilizer subsidy should be transferred directly to farmers' bank accounts," he said, asking Ministry officials to examine the proposal and seek support from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

He stressed the need to

build consensus and initiate a wider debate. The issue, however, remains contentious.

Speaking at an event organised by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations last month, NITI Aayog member Ramesh Chand noted that if DBT were implemented, farmers might have to pay over ₹2,000 upfront for a urea bag instead of the current ₹267, — a prospect that dampened support among farmer groups.

FISCAL PRESSURE

An official study showed that 65 per cent of farmers bought 5-7 bags of urea during 2024-25. However, 163 of the 330 fertilizer-consuming districts each used between 1 lakh tonnes and 1.8 lakh tonnes, indicating concentrated consumption.

In the current fiscal, the subsidy for phosphorus and potash (P&K) was budgeted at ₹49,000 crore but revised to ₹60,000 crore. For next year, the allocation has been cut to ₹54,000 crore.

Rising temps may hit wheat yield & quality, say experts

Karam Prakash

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PATIALA: The rapidly increasing temperatures in the past few weeks in Punjab may have an adverse impact on the wheat crop, say the agricultural experts.

Agriculture experts noted that high temperatures during the grain-filling stages can reduce grain weight, leading to a decline in both yield and quality. Heat stress may also force early crop maturity, further curtailing production as it did in 2022, experts warned.

Punjab Agricultural Univer-

sity (PAU) vice chancellor SS Gosal said that an advisory has already been issued to the farmers, cautioning them against the looming threat of an early heatwave similar to 2022.

"We have already issued an advisory to Punjab farmers to take necessary precautions, including light irrigation, as the winter crop is in the crucial grain-filling stage. In 2022, the early heatwave had reduced the output by nearly 20%. We do not want a repeat of that situation this year," said Gosal.

The maximum temperature across Punjab is currently hovering around four degrees Cel-



Experts said high temps are not good during the grain formation period.

sus above the seasonal average, with the mercury likely to climb further in the coming days. The highest maximum temperature in the state was recorded at 31°C in Faridkot on Monday, reflect-

ing early summer-like conditions in several districts.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), a gradual rise of 2-3°C in maximum temperatures is likely over Northwest India during the next four days, with no lull thereafter.

Consequent upon that, the temperatures are expected to remain 3-5°C above normal across many parts of the region during the week.

"Gradual rise in maximum temperature by 2-3°C likely over Northwest India during the next four days and no significant change during the subsequent

three days. Hence, these are likely to be above normal by 3-5°C, over many parts of Northwest India during the week," the IMD bulletin issued on Monday stated.

Gosal warned that if the maximum temperature approaches 35°C in the coming weeks, wheat yield could be adversely affected. "In February, the wheat crop is in the critical grain-filling stage. If temperatures rise sharply, the grains shrink, thereby reducing crop yield," he said.

In its advisory, PAU pointed out that during the second week of February 2026, temperatures

were already 2-4°C higher compared to the same period last year. Dr Makhn Singh Bhullar, director of extension education at PAU, has advised farmers to apply light irrigation to protect the crop from heat stress.

Additionally, Dr Hari Ram, head of the department of agronomy, recommended two sprays of 2% potassium nitrate (13:0:45), prepared by dissolving 4 kg in 200 litres of water, at the boot leaf and anthesis stages during evening hours.

These measures, experts say, may help mitigate the impact of rising temperatures to some extent.

Bayer Crop Science Q3 PAT up 180% at ₹96 crore on higher revenue

Our Bureau
Bengaluru

Bayer Crop Science Ltd (BSCL) reported a profit of ₹95.7 crore for the third quarter ended December 2025, an increase of 180 per cent over corresponding quarter last year's ₹34.2 crore on higher revenue.

Revenue from operations for the quarter were up 5 per cent at ₹1,106.2 crore as

compared to ₹1,057.4 crore a year ago. Profit before tax stood at ₹113 crore, compared to ₹33.6 crore in the corresponding period of FY25. For the nine months ended December 31, 2025, BCSL reported revenue from operations of ₹4,574.2 crore, compared to ₹4,427 crore for the corresponding period in FY25. Profit before tax for the nine months ended December 31, 2025, stood at ₹648.5 crore, compared to ₹539.5 crore for the corresponding period in FY25.

CORN SEEDS BIZ

Simon Wiebusch, Vice-Chairman & Managing Director and CEO, BCSL, said: "In Q3, revenue from operations grew 5 per cent, led by the continued strength of our corn seeds business. Weather volatility, particu-

larly excess rains extending into the quarter led to limited spray windows and constrained crop protection liquidation, while a muted chili and grape season weighed on demand. We remain focused on strengthening portfolio resilience, scaling up new launches and maintaining cost discipline to deliver consistent value."

Vinit Jindal, Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer, Bayer Crop Science, added, "Q3 profit after tax grew by 180 per cent driven by a favourable sales mix, stabilised input costs and strong financial discipline. Our ongoing working capital improvements are strengthening financial resilience and enabling the strategic investments necessary for the company's long-term growth."

India-US tariffs after Supreme Court verdict: An explainer

NEW DELHI, Feb 21: India will now face a lower reciprocal tariff of 10 per cent, down from 25 per cent, after US President Donald Trump announced a new global key on items imported into America in the wake of the Supreme Court verdict against his sweeping duties on several nations.

According to Trump's proclamation, the temporary import surcharge of 10 per cent is for a period of 150 days from February 24. A proclamation, dated February 20, was issued by the White House.

Here is a list of key pointers to explain the meaning of this announcement for Indian companies.

TARIFF: These are customs or import duties which a country imposes on goods bought from other nations. An importer has to pay this duty to the government. Normally, companies pass on these taxes to end users or consumers.

Import duty makes goods expensive in the importing country. Besides, a few other factors also play a role in this.

The term, reciprocal tariff (RT), was first used by the US. The Trump administration, on April 2, 2025, announced these duties on about 60 nations, including India. It was aimed at providing a level playing field to US exporters. For example, if a country charges X per cent duty on US goods, America will charge the same on imports of that country.

These are additional import duties, which are imposed over and above the existing or MFN (most favoured nation) levies.

RT ON INDIA
On April 2, 2025, the US announced 25 per cent reciprocal tariffs. Later in July, the US announced a 25 per cent RT on Indian goods entering American markets from August 7, 2025. In August last year, the Trump administration announced additional 25 per cent tariffs on India for purchasing Russian crude oil, taking the total RT on India to 50 per cent.

Following agreement on a framework for an interim trade deal in February, the US announced

to 18 per cent and remove the additional 25 per cent punitive tariffs. So at present, India's goods in the US are facing 25 per cent RT.

With the US Supreme Court striking down President Donald Trump's global tariffs and Washington issuing a new order imposing a temporary 10 per cent import surcharge, Indian goods will now face only a 10 per cent reciprocal levy from February 24, 2026.

For instance, if a product faces a 5 per cent MFN duty in America, an additional 10 per cent will be imposed now, taking the effective duty to 15 per cent. Earlier, this was 5 plus 25 per cent.

Trump's proclamation, dated February 20, said: "I impose, for a period of 150 days, a temporary import surcharge of 10 per cent ad valorem on articles imported into the United States, effective February 24, 2026" at 12:01 a.m. Eastern Standard Time.

"Instead of different RTs on different countries, it is 10 per cent now on everyone for the goods which were covered under RTs,"

From February 7 to February 24, 2026, the Russia-oil penalty was removed, reducing the additional duty to 25 per cent. The February 6 joint statement proposed lowering this reciprocal tariff to 18 per cent, but the change has not yet been implemented.

Beginning February 24, 2026, a temporary across-the-board 10 per cent tariff will apply for 150 days in addition to MFN duties, replacing the earlier reciprocal tariff structure.

AFTER 150 DAYS
There is no clarity yet about what the reciprocal tariff imposed by the US will be on countries, such as India, after the 150-day period.

INDIA-US TRADE PACT
To finalise the legal text for the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement, the Indian team is scheduled to meet its counterparts in Washington from February 23, 2026. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, on February 20, said that India and the US are expected to sign the

operationalised in April.

EXPERT'S TAKE
Think tank GTRI said that, as the RT on Indian goods has come down to 10 per cent from 25 per cent, India should re-evaluate the trade pact with the US.

India agreed to reduce tariffs for the US based on Washington's decision to cut RT on India to 18 per cent, but now the US has reduced the RT for all nations to 10 per cent. "Deals are not charity. Both sides must gain. Now, India's gains need fresh evaluation," GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava said.

TRUMP ON INDIA
Trump said nothing changes in the trade deal with India in the wake of the Supreme Court verdict against his sweeping tariffs, as he responded to the ruling by announcing an additional 10 per cent global levies on items imported into the US.

GOODS UNDER EXEMPTED CATEGORY
A fact sheet issued by the White House noted that some goods will not be subject to the temporary

of the US economy or in order to ensure the duty more effectively addresses the fundamental international payments problems facing the United States.

The goods include certain critical minerals, metals used in currency and bullion, energy, and energy products; natural resources and fertilisers that cannot be grown, mined, or otherwise produced in the United States or grown, mined, or otherwise produced in sufficient quantities to meet domestic demand; certain agricultural products, including beef, tomatoes, and oranges; pharmaceuticals and pharmaceutical ingredients.

Other items are certain electronics goods; passenger vehicles, certain light trucks, certain medium and heavy-duty vehicles, buses, and certain parts of passenger vehicles, light trucks, heavy-duty vehicles, buses and certain aerospace products.

TARIFFS ON INDIA
The sectoral tariffs (steel, aluminium, copper at 50 per cent, and

25 per cent) will continue.

WHY IS THE US IMPOSING TARIFFS
The US has alleged that it faces a significant trade deficit with India, blaming New Delhi for imposing high tariffs on American goods, which it says restricts US exports to the Indian market.

BILATERAL TRADE
During 2021-25, the US was India's largest trading partner in goods. The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total exports, 6.22 per cent in imports, and 10.73 per cent in bilateral trade. In 2024-25, the bilateral trade touched USD 186 billion (USD 86.5 billion exports and USD 45.3 billion imports).

With America, India had a trade surplus of USD 41 billion in 2024-25. It was USD 35.32 billion in 2023-24 and USD 27.7 billion in 2022-23. In services, India exported an estimated USD 28.7 billion and imported USD 25.5 billion, adding a USD 3.2 billion surplus. Altogether, India ran a total trade surplus of about USD 44.4 billion

खाद सब्बिसडी सीधे किसानों को देने पर चर्चा हो : शिवराज सिंह चौहान

चौहान ने किसानों से भी उनकी राय मांगी है क्योंकि खाद सब्बिसडी सीधे उनके खाते में जा सकती है

बीएस संवाददाता
नई दिल्ली, 24 फरवरी

केंद्रीय कृषि व ग्रामीण विकास मंत्री शिवराज सिंह चौहान ने बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड के कार्यक्रम 'बीएस मंथन' में कृषि क्षेत्र की नई वास्तविकताएं' विषय पर चर्चा के दौरान कहा कि खाद सब्बिसडी कंपनियों को क्यों दी जाए? इसे किसानों को सीधे देने पर राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर मंथन करने का समय आ गया है। चौहान ने कहा, 'मैं किसानों से भी उनकी राय मांग रहा हूँ क्योंकि तकनीक के माध्यम से खाद सब्बिसडी सीधे किसानों के खाते में ट्रांसफर की जा सकती है। हम इस संभावना पर भी विचार कर रहे हैं। अगर आप मुझसे पूछें तो मैं कहना चाहूंगा कि खाद सब्बिसडी का बड़ा हिस्सा इधर-उधर चला जाता है, ऐसा नहीं होना चाहिए। इसका पूरा लाभ सीधे किसानों को ही दिया जाना चाहिए।' केंद्रीय कृषि मंत्री चौहान ने राष्ट्रीय कृषि रोडमैप पर चर्चा करते हुए कहा कि सरकार तीन तरह के कृषि रोडमैप बनाने पर काम कर रही है। एक राष्ट्रीय स्तर का रोडमैप होगा। दूसरा हर राज्य के हिसाब से और तीसरा अलग-अलग फसल के आधार पर।

एफटीए में हितों की रक्षा

केंद्रीय कृषि मंत्री चौहान ने मुक्त व्यापार समझौते (एफटीए) पर चर्चा करते हुए कहा कि सरकार द्वारा अमेरिका समेत अन्य देशों के साथ किए गए एफटीए में भारतीय किसान



चौहान ने एमएसपी पर कहा कि सरकार ने उत्पादन लागत पर कम से कम 50 प्रतिशत लाभ सुनिश्चित किया है

और कृषि के हितों की पूरी रक्षा की गई है। इन समझौतों से किसानों को नुकसान नहीं लाभ ही होगा जैसे अमेरिका के बाजार भारतीय मसाला, चाय, कॉफी, कपास आदि किसानों के लिए खुल रहे हैं।

कृषि कानून दोबारा लाने की संभावना नहीं

केंद्रीय कृषि मंत्री शिवराज सिंह चौहान ने मंथन कार्यक्रम के दौरान अब वापस लिए जा चुके कृषि कानूनों को दोबारा लाने के जटिल सवाल पर कहा कि उन्हें फिर से लागू करने की

कोई संभावना नहीं है। उन्होंने कहा कि राज्य स्वयं कृषि विपणन के क्षेत्र में कई सुधार कर रहे हैं और अपने कृषि बाजारों को कितना खोलना है, यह राज्यों पर ही निर्भर करता है।

किसानों के लिए छह सिद्धांत

केंद्रीय मंत्री चौहान ने सरकार की नीतियों को दिशा देने वाले छह सूत्रीय रोडमैप की रूपरेखा प्रस्तुत की। इसमें उत्पादन और उत्पादकता बढ़ाना, खेती की लागत कम करना, फसलों का लाभकारी मूल्य सुनिश्चित करना, आवश्यकता पड़ने पर

नुकसान को भरपाई करना, फसल विविधीकरण और मूल्य संवर्धन को बढ़ावा देना तथा आने वाली पीढ़ियों के लिए मिट्टी के स्वास्थ्य की रक्षा करना शामिल है।

एमएसपी पर रुख

चौहान ने न्यूनतम समर्थन मूल्य (एमएसपी) पर कहा कि सरकार ने उत्पादन लागत पर कम से कम 50 प्रतिशत लाभ सुनिश्चित किया है। उन्होंने गेहूँ और धान के बड़े पैमाने पर सरकारी खरीद के साथ-साथ टमाटर, प्याज और आलू जैसी फसलों के लिए

किए गए हस्तक्षेपों का भी उल्लेख किया। प्रधानमंत्री अनन्यदाता आर्य संरक्षण अभियान (पीएम-आर्या) के तहत राज्यों को एमएसपी पर खरीद की अनुमति दी गई है। कुछ मामलों में कीमतों को स्थिर रखने के लिए केंद्र सरकार ने परिवहन लागत भी वहन की है।

भावांतर मॉडल का विस्तार

मध्य प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री के रूप में अपने कार्यकाल का उल्लेख करते हुए मंत्री ने 'भावांतर' मूल्य अंतर भुगतान मॉडल को याद किया। इस मॉडल में फसल की सरकारी खरीद के बजाय एमएसपी और बाजार मूल्य के अंतर को राशि सीधे किसान के खाते में स्थानांतरित की जाती है। उन्होंने बताया कि केंद्र ने अब तिलहन के लिए भी राज्यों को इसी तरह का मॉडल अपनाने की सुविधा दी है। हालांकि भौतिक खरीद और मूल्य अंतर भुगतान के बीच चयन राष्ट्रीय जरूरतों, किसानों की प्राथमिकता और राज्यों की क्षमता पर निर्भर करेगा।

किसान आईडी और प्रत्यक्ष लाभ अंतरण

केंद्रीय कृषि मंत्री ने बताया कि 8.5 करोड़ से अधिक किसानों को डिजिटल किसान आईडी जारी की जा चुकी है, जिसमें उनकी जेत और फसल संबंधी विवरण दर्ज हैं। यह डेटाबेस प्रत्यक्ष लाभ अंतरण (डीबीटी) को सक्षम बनाता है और फर्जी या अधिक्त दावों को रोकने में मदद करता है।

Only 86 pesticide formulations in 34 years: Parliamentary Committee raps IPFT

The committee, however, appreciated the contribution of IPFT in developing user-friendly and environmentally friendly pesticide formulations

SIMONTINI BHATTACHARJEE

NEW DELHI: Expressing concerns over the pace of work at the Institute of Pesticide Formulation Technology (IPFT), a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Tuesday said that the autonomous institution has developed only 86 pesticide formulations in the last 34 years, which is an average of less than three per year. The 19th report of the Standing Committee on Chemicals and Fertilisers, presented in Parliament, examined the performance of IPFT, which functions under the Department of Chemicals and Petrochemi-

cal, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers.

The committee, however, appreciated the contribution of IPFT in developing user-friendly and environmentally friendly pesticide formulations, but emphasised the need for greater focus, annual targets, and faster delivery. Founded in 1991 as a successor to the UNIDO-assisted Pesticide Development Programme in India, IPFT has so far transferred 64 of its developed formulation technologies to the industry.

While appreciating this achievement, the committee

noted that the overall rate of development has been quite slow and recommended an immediate review of IPFT's performance to ensure its output is more commensurate with the requirements of farmers and the agrochemical industry.

The committee also expressed its concern over IPFT's continued dependence on government grants for meeting its salary, general, and capital expenditures despite its long existence. The committee said that by now, IPFT should have attained a greater degree of autonomy in its financial matters through



technology transfer, analytical services, and consultancy. The committee asked IPFT to take immediate steps to cut down its dependence on the department's finances.

Drawing attention to the advantages of new generation pesticide formulations developed by IPFT, such as water-

based suspension concentrates, microemulsions, and bio-botanical products, the committee emphasised that these environmentally safer alternatives must reach the farmers at reasonable prices. The committee warned that if the pricing of these products is left solely to the industry partners, it may become costly and recommended that IPFT and the department should jointly work towards evolving reasonable pricing mechanisms.

The committee examined IPFT's farmer awareness initiatives taken during 2022-23, which they said were not sat-

isfactory, as only around 9,200 farmers have been reached through 32 programmes over a period of three years, which they felt was not adequate, considering India had more than 10 crore farmers. It suggested that there should be a road-map to increase these activities, including through mass media at a regional level.

They recognised the positive feedback from farmers on eco-friendly and bio-botanical products, but emphasised the importance of education for better adoption, especially in cases where the products take a certain time to show results,

unlike conventional chemical pesticides. There was also a need for better data on the impact of the latest generation of formulations on the productivity of crops such as wheat and paddy.

The committee also observed that the IPFT, despite having established its pilot plants and advanced laboratories, did not utilise the infrastructure to carry out large-scale production. They also suggested that the IPFT should explore the possibility of producing and marketing its formulations to compete with the players.

There have been concerns over vacant scientific positions

in the IPFT; hence, there was a need to hasten the recruitment to increase efficiency. With regard to formulation development not transferred to the industry, the panel sought a professional assessment to highlight differences in development needs, approval needs, and demand. The committee has invited the IPFT as well as the Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals to submit detailed action-taken reports on the above recommendations, with the emphasis on faster, farmer-centric, and market-responsive innovations in pesticide formulation technology.

Crystal Crop buys land in Gujarat for greenfield formulation plant

Our Bureau
Mangaluru

Crystal Crop Protection Ltd, a research-led agrochemical company, on Tuesday announced the purchase of 1,25,714 square metres of land and assets from Kurl-On Ltd at Jhagadia, Bharuch, in Gujarat.

A media statement said the investment is for a fully automated and integrated greenfield manufacturing plant for agrochemical formulations and technical products.

This greenfield project comes at a total investment of ₹100 crore over a period of three years and is designed to have an initial production capacity of 50,000 tonnes per annum of formulations, with built-in flexibility for future expansion up to 1,20,000 tonnes to meet growing demand.



The upcoming facility will manufacture a range of formulation products, including key herbicides, fungicides and insecticides, specifically targeting both the domestic market and growing export opportunities across Asia and Africa, the statement said.

These products include 'Topper', 'Tilt', 'Proclaim', 'Missile', 'ACM 9', 'Amora' and 'Sikosa'.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Quoting Ankur Aggarwal, Executive Chairman and MD

The project entails a ₹100 crore investment over 3 years and will begin with an annual production capacity of 50,000 tonnes

of Crystal Crop Protection, the statement said: "This marks an exciting new chapter for the company, underscoring our focus on innovation, dedication to serving the agricultural community and building a globally competitive, future-ready organisation."

Kavishwar Kalambe, Whole-time Director and Vice-President, Technical Manufacturing, said: "Crystal's upcoming plant at Jhagadia is expected to generate a wide range of direct and indirect employment opportunities."

Register now or lose benefits: Farmers urged to get unique IDs

- Agriculture director Samoon makes farmer registry unique ID registration mandatory for all farmers to be eligible for welfare programs like PM-KISAN
- Data reveals that around 11.24 lakh beneficiaries who received the Feb 2025 PM-KISAN instalment are yet to register, prompting a targeted outreach campaign across districts and mandals
- To streamline the process, field officers are conducting personal follow-ups while the department has launched an SMS-based self-registration link for those in remote areas or those wary of sharing OTPs



Dr Manazir Jeelani Samoon

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

DIRECTOR of agriculture Dr Manazir Jeelani Samoon appealed to farmers across the state to complete their farmer registry unique ID registration at the earliest.

In a statement here on Wednesday, he said that clear instructions have been issued to agricultural officers at all levels to ensure the timely completion of the registration process.

Emphasising the importance of the farmer registry, the director said it plays a crucial role in the effective implementation of various Central-sponsored schemes. He

noted that registration under the farmer registry is mandatory for availing benefits under key schemes such as PM-KISAN and other government welfare programmes.

According to official data, nearly 11.24 lakh farmers who received the 19th instalment of PM-KISAN released in February 2025 are yet to complete their Farmer Registry registration. Dr Samoon said that special focus has been placed at the district, mandal, and village levels to identify these beneficiaries and ensure that their registrations are completed without delay.

The details of these 11.24 lakh farmers, including their contact numbers, have been

segregated village-wise, mandal-wise, and district-wise and shared with district agriculture officers. Field-level functionaries have been directed to personally contact the concerned farmers and facilitate the registration process.

To assist farmers living in remote areas or those hesitant to share OTP details, the Department has introduced a self-registration facility by sending SMS messages containing a registration link. Farmers have been urged to make use of this facility and complete their registration within the stipulated timeline.

The agriculture department reiterated its commitment to ensuring transparent and targeted delivery of benefits under all government schemes through the comprehensive implementation of the farmer registry system.

US trade deal: More opportunity than threat for Punjab agriculture

{ GUEST COLUMN }

Jagmohan Singh Raju



Punjab remains, in both economic structure and political consciousness, a traditional agricultural state. Nearly one-third of its total population, and close to two-thirds of its rural residents, depends directly or indirectly on farming and allied activities. Agriculture here is not merely a sector; it is the foundation of livelihoods, rural employment, credit cycles, and social stability. Any destabilisation of this system would reverberate far beyond the farm, affecting mandis, transporters, commission agents, and the entire rural service economy.

It is, therefore, natural that the India-US trade deal is being examined in Punjab with caution. The instinctive concern is straightforward: Will subsidised American grain, dairy, or poultry undermine the state's hard-won farm incomes? Will cheaper imports weaken the minimum support price (MSP) procurement or disturb price stability? These anxieties are not unfounded; they are rooted in lived experience and past policy turbulence. Yet, a careful reading of the trade framework suggests that the scale of risk is far smaller than feared.

Structure of farm economy

To understand why the alarm bells are premature, one must look at the concentrated structure of Punjab's farm economy. At present, 75%-80% of the state's cropped area is devoted to wheat and paddy. This monoculture is embedded in a procurement system that has ensured assured offtake and predictable incomes for half a century. Dairy contributes roughly a third of farm income, acting as a crucial shock absorber in years when crop margins fluctuate. Cotton, maize and horticulture occupy smaller shares, while pulses

remain marginal in the state's cropping pattern.

Any trade agreement that opened wheat, paddy, or dairy to aggressive, low-tariff import competition would indeed be serious. However, that is precisely what the present agreement avoids. Wheat has not been liberalised. Non-basmati rice remains protected. Dairy and poultry are excluded from tariff concessions. Pulses are outside the scope of opening. The procurement architecture that anchors Punjab's cereal economy remains intact.

For a state so heavily dependent on these pillars, this insulation matters. It means the backbone of Punjab's agricultural economy is not being exposed to sudden global price shocks. There is no indication of dismantling the MSP framework that sustains farm incomes, nor any signal that subsidised American staples will flood local markets. The core system—wheat, paddy and dairy—remains shielded.

That alone tempers much of the immediate anxiety. When the livelihoods of nearly a third of the population are linked to agriculture, policy continuity is critical. Stability, in this context, is not inertia; it is economic reassurance.

Where opportunity lies

If the agreement does not alter the foundations, where does the opportunity manifest? The answer lies in segments that are currently smaller in acre-

age but possess larger strategic potential. Punjab is one of India's principal producers of basmati rice—a premium, aromatic variety that operates in a distinct export market. Improved tariff conditions in the US market enhance competitiveness in a high-value segment. While the US is not currently the largest destination for basmati, it is a premium one. Even incremental expansion in this niche strengthens farm realisations and provides a boost to the state's rice-milling ecosystem.

More importantly, the real opportunity may not lie in exporting larger volumes of raw grain, but in deepening value addition. India's parallel trade engagements with the European Union and the United Kingdom hold significant promise for processed and branded agricultural products. These advanced markets demand quality, traceability and strong branding. Punjab, with its established procurement networks and agro-industrial base, is well positioned to respond.

Punjab has long been known as the granary of India. Yet much of its agricultural output continues to leave the state in raw or minimally processed form. Value accrues further down the supply chain. If global trade agreements are expanding access for processed and branded food products, Punjab has an opportunity to capture that value domestically.

Transforming basmati into internationally branded consumer products, converting milk into high-value dairy derivatives, and expanding ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat

food segments could create employment far beyond the farm. Such a shift would strengthen rural incomes without expanding acreage under already stressed crops. The emphasis must move from volume to value, from bulk cereals to differentiated products.

None of this diminishes Punjab's structural challenges. Groundwater depletion, soil fatigue, rising input costs and ecological stress remain pressing concerns. Overdependence on two procurement-backed crops has created economic rigidity. These vulnerabilities, however, are homegrown and long-standing. They are not the product of the US trade pact.

Strategic adaptation

External competition is not the immediate destabiliser; stagnation is. The greater risk lies in failing to diversify and modernise while global markets evolve. Trade engagement, if managed prudently, can become a catalyst rather than a disruption.

The India-US trade deal does not dismantle Punjab's agricultural foundation. It preserves wheat and paddy, shields dairy, and opens selective export avenues. When viewed alongside India's broader trade engagements, it forms part of an opportunity landscape that rewards diversification, processing and quality upgrading.

For a state where livelihoods depend so heavily on agriculture, protection of the core is essential—and that protection appears intact. The larger task now is strategic adaptation. If approached with foresight, the US trade deal is not a threat to Punjab's farm economy. It is an invitation to evolve from being merely India's grain warehouse to becoming its processed food capital. That shift, rather than fear of imports, will define Punjab's agricultural future.

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The writer is a retired IAS officer. Views expressed are personal

IF APPROACHED WITH FORESIGHT RATHER THAN FEAR, THIS TRADE DEAL IS AN INVITATION TO EVOLVE. PUNJAB'S FUTURE WILL NOT BE DEFINED BY A FEAR OF IMPORTS, BUT BY ITS ABILITY TO TRANSFORM FROM THE NATION'S GRAIN WAREHOUSE INTO ITS PROCESSED FOOD CAPITAL

Centre launches AI-based 'Bharat VISTAAR' for farmers

Prabhadatta Mishra
New Delhi

The government on Tuesday said that over the next six months, farmers would be able to get guidance and solutions for their problems relating to agriculture from artificial intelligence (AI) technology by a helpline number from a registered mobile phone.

Details of their data like land size, crops grown and fertilizers bought will be available and it will be accessed by the system automatically when it is accessed from a registered mobile phone, and accordingly queries will be answered.

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan inaugurated the 'Bharat VISTAAR' scheme, unveiled the farmer-centric AI Hackathon and the Agri Kosh AI Strategy Roadmap at an

event in Jaipur. 'Bharat VISTAAR' was announced in the Budget speech by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1.

Termining the Artificial Intelligence-based Bharat VISTAAR launch as the first stage, Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi said it would be connected with Agristack, where all data are getting stored from a farmer identity card.

WHY THIS NOW?

He said "we moved away from bureaucratic red-tapism and reached digital red-tapism" as every department, ministry and even every section within a Ministry are providing information about schemes through different apps and systems.

A farmer who wanted to obtain any information had to go to different apps, and many a times he did not understand which app to use

Farmers can get solutions for their agriculture-related problems by calling helpline number 155261 from a registered phone

for which information, he said, explaining why 'Bharat VISTAAR' was created.

Highlighting that an estimated 80 per cent of families in rural areas have at least one smartphone, he said farmers even can call from a keypad mobile phone by dialling the helpline 155261 free of cost.

Currently, Bharat VISTAAR has been launched in Hindi and English, but gradually, it will cover all regional languages, he said, adding the target is to cover additional nine languages in the next six months.



FIRST STAGE. Rajasthan CM Bhajanlal Sharma, Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan and others during the launch of Bharat VISTAAR in Jaipur on Tuesday ANI

Bharat VISTAAR provides information on *mandi* rates, weather, various central schemes, application status of farmers under any scheme, and 'Package of Practices' developed by ICAR scientists. It can be

downloaded directly as an Android app or accessed through the website.

AGRISTACK LINK

"With the Farmer ID, we have information such as where the farmer's field is

located, what crop is grown, and others. Within six months, we will link it with AgriStack; after that, as soon as one calls, the system will know from the mobile number where he lives, in which village the field is located, and what are grown in that field," he said.

"This will bring a revolutionary change in our agricultural extension, which will be very effective in increasing farmers' income," Chaturvedi said.

Chouhan said that currently schemes like Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and Soil Health Card had been included in this initiative, and information about all schemes for farmers will be available through it in the future.

"Preparations are underway to connect the entire agricultural system with the Bharat VISTAAR scheme," he added.

Why investors aren't buying into PI Industries' Q4 optimism

Harsha Jethmalani
harsha.j@livemint.com

Agrochemicals maker PI Industries Ltd is having a hard time navigating demand headwinds and the US tariff impact. In the December quarter (Q3FY26), consolidated revenue fell year-on-year and sequentially to ₹1,376 crore, sharply missing consensus estimate of ₹1,770 crore.

The revenue of its custom synthesis and manufacturing (CSM) business, which contributes over 70% of top line, dropped year-on-year for the fourth straight time in Q3, led

by weak volumes amid cautious ordering by customers.

The management hopes there will be a gradual uptick in the CSM business from Q4 onward, with stronger momentum expected in FY27. It said channel inventory in the global crop chemicals market has been normalizing and customer buying is improving, although product prices remain soft.

JM Financial Institutional Securities does not see any material improvement in PI's revenue at least till end-2026, and cut FY26-28 earnings per share estimates by 16-18%.

Slow demand from Kumiai

Tumbling down

PI Industries' custom synthesis and manufacturing revenue dropped year-on-year for the fourth straight quarter in Q3FY26.



Source: Company, PL Capital

SATISH KUMAR/MINT

Chemicals, threat of pyroxasulfone generics in the US and struggle for growth in the ex-pyroxasulfone portfolio

over the past 5-6 years are seen as dampeners.

Japanese agrochemical giant Kumiai—PI's large cus-

tom—reduced its FY26 revenue and profit guidance amid pricing pressure and muted herbicide demand in some markets. PI supplies pyroxasulfone to Kumiai.

Nuvama Research said pyroxasulfone prices have dipped around 18% year-on-year to \$69/kilogram, indicating further margin pressure.

PI's consolidated Ebitda margin fell almost 500 basis points year-on-year to 22% in Q3. FY26 Ebitda margin guidance has been maintained at 25%-26%. "While five new molecules have been commercialized in the CSM business in 9MFY26, we do not

foresee them being able to offset price declines in Pyroxasulfone," said Nuvama report.

PI has been diversifying into other businesses and aims to increase investments and launches in biologicals, pharmaceuticals contract development and manufacturing, and electronic chemicals. But these are at a nascent stage.

The stock has declined 18% in the past six months, and a fast reversal seems unlikely unless the CSM business shows sustained improvement. PI's share trade at FY27 price-to-earnings of 30x, showed Bloomberg, which is not attractive.

Farmer organisations threaten to protest against US trade deal

Our Bureau
New Delhi

Bharatiya Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait, flanked by MPs of RJD and AAP, on Tuesday announced that discussions had started at various levels among different farmer organisations to launch a protest against India's trade deal with the US.

He said the protest would be on a similar scale to the one in 2020 against the three farm laws.

However, no date has been fixed yet to hold a rally, he

said, adding it would be announced in due course.

NATIONWIDE STRIKE

Addressing the media after a conference on various farm-related issues, including the trade deal, Tikait appealed to farmers to protest by burning a copy of the joint statement or any symbolic paper on November 12, when trade unions have called a nationwide strike.

Tikait appealed to farmers to burn the effigies of US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi across villages.

Alleging that the Centre was lying about protecting the interests of farmers in the deal with the US, Tikait compared the present situation to the one in 1992, the period after India opened its economy.

"It is a one-sided deal, a pressure deal. It is not acceptable for Indian farmers. They will dump subsidised goods, our farmers will not be able to sell their produce," he said. He warned that the deal is dangerous for India. There were no stakeholder consultations before they agreed to sign, he added.

On the government's assurance that farmers' interests would be protected, Tikait said: "The government is lying... They can claim anything. Protest is the only way. Delhi is not far... Our tractors are always prepared."

Addressing the media, RJD Lok Sabha MP Sudhakar Singh said that the deal was not fair to India. "This is not an equal deal... India is paying 18 per cent tariff, while the US pays zero tariff. There is a mention that India will remove its non-tariff barriers on agriculture and food,"

he pointed out. He also opposed the proposed Seeds Bill, saying it would lead to forced buying of seeds at expensive rates.

"What is the reason for speeding up the Seeds Bill? It is only because the trade deal talks about removing non-tariff barriers affecting US food and agricultural products. The Government of India does not want to give MSP on crops, but it wants to give a corporate guarantee of profits on seeds," he alleged.

He demanded that the Seeds Bill, Pesticide Management Bill and the Electricity

Bill be sent to the respective Parliamentary panel.

AAP MP Sanjay Singh highlighted that India has agreed to export agriculture goods at 18 per cent, whereas until last year (till Trump announced country wise tariff), the US tariff was 2.9 per cent.

"Opening market for agriculture to the US is like a death sentence for farmers. How can you agree to accept American farm products at zero duty from 30 per cent and allow Indian agricultural goods at 18 per cent from 3 per cent," he asked.

India, Brazil target \$20 billion trade, to bolster supply chain

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi, 21 February

India and Brazil on Saturday set an ambitious target to raise bilateral trade beyond \$20 billion over the next five years, as the two countries expanded cooperation across technology, defence, energy, critical minerals, agriculture and global governance reforms.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the growing economic engagement reflects deep mutual trust between the two democracies. "We are committed to taking our bilateral trade beyond 20 billion dollars in the next five years. Our trade is not just a number; it is a reflection of trust," he said, noting that Brazil remains India's largest trading partner in Latin America.

The announcements came during a joint press conference held in New Delhi after delegation-level talks between Prime Minister Modi and Brazilian President Lula da Silva. Welcoming the visiting leader, Modi said, "It gives me great pleasure to welcome President Lula and his delegation



to India. The warmth and cordiality with which you welcomed me in Brazil last year, I reciprocate today with the same spirit here in India."

The two sides also pushed forward collaboration in emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, supercomputing, semiconductors and blockchain. "Our collaboration in technology and innovation is significant not only for both countries but also for the entire Global South. I am happy that we are working to establish a

Centre of Excellence in Brazil for Digital Public Infrastructure," the Prime Minister said, underlining that technology "must be inclusive and must become a bridge for shared progress."

In a significant step towards supply chain resilience, India and Brazil signed an agreement on critical minerals and rare earths. Modi described it as "a major step towards building resilient supply chains." Defence ties, he added, continue to grow, reflecting "mutual trust and strategic alignment," with

both sides determined to strengthen the "win-win partnership."

Energy cooperation featured prominently in the talks. Alongside hydrocarbons, the countries are expanding collaboration in renewable energy, ethanol blending and sustainable aviation fuel. Brazil's active participation in the Global Bio-Fuel Alliance was cited as a sign of shared commitment to a green future. Brasilia has also proposed co-chairing the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), a move welcomed by New Delhi.

Agriculture, animal husbandry, and food security emerged as new pillars of engagement. The leaders discussed cooperation in climate-resilient agriculture, precision farming and bio-fertilisers, as well as plans to establish a Centre of Excellence in Brazil for oilseeds, pulses and integrated farming. In the health sector, India will work to increase supplies of affordable and quality medicines to Brazil, while also promoting Ayurveda and traditional medicine.

CM: Farmers now get loans through e-KCC in 5 minutes

**Announces
Agri Credit
Target Of ₹3L Cr**

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Lucknow: Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday said digital governance has transformed the loan approval process in the state, enabling farmers to avail credit within 5 minutes through the e-Kisan Credit Card (e-KCC) system.

"Earlier, farmers waited 25 days to a month for loans," the CM said in his address at the State Credit Seminar 2026-27, where the State Focus Paper was also released.

He also announced that the agricultural credit target for 2026-27 was set at Rs 3 lakh crore, a 13% increase over the previous year.

Yogi felicitated several Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) on the occasion.

Elaborating on the use of technology in farming, the CM said UP is actively exploring Artificial Intelligence in agriculture. The Union Budget announced an AI Agriculture Platform, and UP was already working in that



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during the state credit seminar, in Lucknow on Thursday

direction, he said.

The CM appreciated agriculture models showcased at the seminar, mentioning a mustard production company in Mathura run by 750 women.

"By linking production with processing, they increased profits. This is a lesson for the entire state, and the govt will extend full support to such initiatives," he said.

He said the cooperative sector is undergoing a major transformation, adding that UP is the first in the country to work with the World Bank in the field of agri-tech. Agriculture, MSMEs, women empowerment and youth entrepreneurship remain

the govt's top priorities, he said.

Recalling the pre-2017 period, Yogi said the cooperative sector was dominated by mafia, leading the RBI to declare 16 district cooperative banks as defaulters.

"Now, 15 of those banks have turned profitable, and efforts were underway to revive the remaining one," he said.

The CM said the MSME sector, which collapsed, leading to large-scale migration, was revived through the One District One Product initiative, and UP became the first state to provide security insurance of Rs 5 lakh to MSME units.

"The state's credit-deposit ratio increased from 43% to 61% over the past 9 years, and we set a target of 65% in 2026-27. Strong steps were taken to empower small and marginal farmers, and UP is the first state in the country, and maybe in the world, with 86% irrigated land. Free electricity is being provided to 16 lakh tube wells, canal irrigation is free, and solar panels were distributed to 1 lakh farmers," he said.

Calling UP an example of sound financial management, Yogi said per capita income increased from Rs 43,000 in 2016 to Rs 1.20 lakh, while the fiscal deficit remains below 3%, and no new taxes were imposed for several years.

"Agricultural growth rose from 8% to over 18%, and despite having only 11% of the country's cultivable land, UP contributes 21% of India's total foodgrain production, he said.

The CM further said making policies alone was not enough and their impact must be visible on the ground. He urged banks, NABARD and financial institutions to combine training with credit to accelerate employment, income generation and self-reliance.

Holdco discount, debt a drag on UPL recast

Restructuring fails to simplify overall structure: Brokerages

RAM PRASAD SAHU
Mumbai, 23 February

The stock of the country's largest agrochemical company UPL was down 14.25 per cent on Monday after it announced a restructuring exercise aimed at simplifying group structure and housing key businesses under separate listed entities.

Investors were, however, not enthused by the move, given valuation concerns, debt overhang and holding company discount.

The purpose of the restructuring is to keep both the domestic (UPL SAS) and global (UPL Corp) businesses under one crop protection entity while separating the seeds (Advanta) and post-harvest (Decco) units into another entity.

Apart from this, there is the specialty chemicals business (Superform) which will be kept as a separate unit. While the crop protection and seeds/post harvest entities (after Advant IPO) will be listed separately, the company is yet to take a call on the listing of the specialty chemicals business. Post restructuring, the existing listed entity will become a holding company for the group and house formulations, research and development (R&D) and Superform.

Some brokerages believe that the restructuring fails to simplify overall structure and unlock value.

While the businesses are separate, overall shareholding structure remains complicated, says Elara Securities. Prashant Biyani and Yashi Jain of the brokerage believe that the move is unlikely to generate incremental value for shareholders and instead creates concerns on the holding company discount.

In the short term, it is a negative, as it shifts from financial discipline hopes to restructuring flaws, they added. Kotak Research, too, believes that the reorganisation will not serve the purpose of value-unlocking with the chief drawback being the likely emergence of potentially large hold-



Volatile move



Sources: Bloomberg, BSE

ing company discounts at UPL. The share-swap ratio implies a lower valuation for UPL SAS of about ₹8,800 crore — less than half the entry price of private equity (PE) investors in 2022.

Further, the restructuring keeps the debt levels unchanged and this has been a key overhang on the stock. While the restructuring, according to Nuvama Research, aims to gain administrative and business synergies, thereby unlocking value, it keeps total debt similar even though redistributed between two entities. Net debt in UPL Global (the crop protection entity) should be ₹19,000 crore while that in the standalone business should be ₹3,200 crore. Deleveraging, according to Archit Joshi and Rohan Ohri

of the brokerage, would remain contingent to cash flow generation and working capital management, which in their view is event neutral. UPL plans to bring down net-debt-to-operating-profit metric to 1.2-1.5 times in the medium term compared to levels of 4.6 times in FY24 and 2.1 times in FY25. The company is slated to end FY26 with leverage of 1.6 to 1.8 times.

Other brokerages, however, believe that the transaction is a win-win for minority and PE holders and will help simplify structure. It would enhance strategic focus and unlock shareholder value by enabling clearer investment choices. It will offer an opportunity for existing PE investors to exit their positions.

Antique Stock Broking believes that the Advanta listing will be a key near-term trigger for the stock. Manish Mahawar and Riju Dalui of the brokerage expect profitable growth, sustained cash flow, and balance sheet deleveraging to be the re-rating catalyst for the stock in the medium term. The restructuring will also help on the debt front, believes Motilal Oswal Research. The restructuring strengthens the group's deleveraging roadmap, as independent platforms allow capital raises at the subsidiary level, such as the Advanta IPO, points out the brokerage.

New Seed Bill likely in second part of Budget Session

Harikishan Sharma

New Delhi, February 24

THE CENTRE is likely to introduce the new Seed Bill in Parliament during the second part of the Budget Session, scheduled from March 9 to April 2, *The Indian Express* has learnt.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, which is piloting the Bill, has reportedly completed the inter-ministerial consultations and legal vetting process and is ready to send the draft of the Seed Bill for the Union Cabinet's approval "anytime soon".

Once approved by the Cabinet, the Bill will be introduced during the second part of the Budget Session, which is scheduled to begin on March 9. To make way for the new legislation, the government will withdraw the old Seed Bill, which has been pending in the Rajya Sabha since 2004.

The ministry had unveiled the draft of a new legislation—the Seeds Bill, 2025—in November last year, seeking comments from stakeholders. Once enacted into law, it will replace the existing Seeds Act, 1966, which is six decades old. The new Bill proposes mandatory registration of seed varieties and a penalty of Rs 30 lakh and three years' imprisonment for major offences such as the sale of spurious and non-registered seeds.

The existing law regulates only notified kinds and varieties of seeds and does not provide for

New Bill proposes mandatory registration of seed varieties and a penalty of Rs 30 lakh and three years' imprisonment for major offences

the regulation of research hybrid varieties or varieties that are not notified. Also, seed registration is not compulsory under the current law.

Additionally, green manure seeds, commercial crops, plantation crops, and the like are not covered by the present law. Apart from this limited coverage, the penalties under the present law were also very low. This is why the need for a new law was felt.

Earlier governments attempted to amend the existing law. For instance, a Bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on December 9, 2004, and referred to a parliamentary committee on December 17, 2004, but it never became a law.

As per the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, the annual requirement of seeds was estimated at 48.20 lakh tonnes in 2024-25, against which the availability was 53.15 lakh tonnes. In terms of money, India's seeds market is estimated to be about Rs 40,000 crore.

DGFT notifies allowing 2.5 MT of wheat export

THE DIRECTOR GENERAL of foreign trade on Tuesday notified allowing exports of 2.5 million tonne (MT) of wheat and 0.5 MT of flour, maida, semolina etc, thus lifting a nearly four-year-old ban on wheat exports.

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