

## Impact of Covid-19 on Indian Agriculture

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### SUMMARY

The progressing emergency around COVID-19 has influenced varying society. Governments have swung into activities since the Corona virus assault made an extraordinary circumstance. Rules gave by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India on 18 May 2020 after the expansion of lockdown till 31 May 2020. Powerful spread of the rules and usage on the ground will be urgent, as ranchers gather the Rabi yield and start arrangements for the Kharif season. Going ahead, one can predict numerous difficulties as ranchers and homestead workers set out to modify their lives and jobs. This has led to a fall in the world economy especially in developing countries like India. India with its suitable control has however tried its best to combat this crisis with a country wide lockdown to prevent the health implications. But agriculture being the backbone of the country and the GDP has been impacted in a negative way with enormous disruption in the provide series and cropping decisions for imminent agricultural seasons. All these have a negative implication on the farming group of people that is and will be undergoing serious inimical and mind losses.

### INTRODUCTION

The ongoing health crisis around COVID-19 has affected all walks of life. Protecting lives of people suffering from the disease as well as frontline health responders have been the priority of nations. Governments have swung into actions since the Corona virus attack created an unprecedented situation. The central government on 17 May 2020 extended the nationwide lockdown, first imposed on 24 March 2020, for the fourth time till 31 May 2020 while giving considerable flexibility to the States in deciding red, green and orange zones of COVID-19 intensity. In India the epic corona virus has spread quickly with 96,169 cases as of 18 May 2020. The global pandemic of Covid-19 that originated in the Wuhan province of China has stretched its arms in the entire world affecting each and each sector of the financial system. During these challenging times, how does Indian Agriculture respond to the crisis and how do government measures affect 140 million farm households across the country and thereafter impact the economy of a very important country in the developing world? We assess the immediate challenges that COVID-19 has posed to the farm sector and suggest mitigation measures to ensure a sustainable food system in the post-crisis period.

Immediately after the nation-wide lockdown was announced, the Indian Finance Minister declared an INR 1.7 trillion package, mostly to protect the vulnerable sections (including farmers) from any adverse impacts of the Corona pandemic. The announcement, among a slew of benefits, contained advance release of INR 2000 to bank accounts of farmers as income support under PM-KISAN scheme. The Government also raised the wage rate for workers engaged under the NREGS, world's largest wage guarantee scheme. Under the special scheme to take care of the vulnerable population, *Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana* (Prime Minister's scheme for welfare of the poor), has been announced. Additional grain allotments to registered beneficiaries were also announced for the next three months. Cash and food assistance to persons engaged in the informal sector, mostly migrant laborers, have also been announced for which a separate PM-CARES (Prime Minister Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations) fund has been created. On 12 May, the Prime Minister, in an address to the nation, said that the coronavirus crisis should be seen as an opportunity, laying emphasis

on domestic products and "economic self-reliance", a *Atmanirbhar Bharat*) through a *Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan*. The following day the Finance Minister started laying out the details of the Prime Minister's vision which would be in favour of Indian farmers.

### **Main Body:**

This research is mostly descriptive in nature. Secondary sources of data have been used for this. Secondary data has been collected from different published sources like books, journals, newspapers and magazines, and web sites.

### **Challenges of the agriculture in COVID 19:**

- Interruptions in the acquirement of nourishment grains by government organizations.
- Disturbances in the assortment of harvests from the homesteads by private dealers.
- A lack of labourers to collect the rabi crop.
- A deficiency of drivers in the transportation area.
- Barricades in the development of rural products over the significant expressways.
- Conclusion or restricted tasks of APMC mandis.
- Shutdowns in the retail farming markets. These elements have prompted an emergency in a scope of yields as well.

### **Immediate Challenges:**

In spite of all these measures and in view of continuing restrictions on movements of people and vehicular traffic, concerns have been raised regarding negative implications of COVID19 pandemic on the farm economy. This is the peak time when the farm harvests crops like wheat, gram, lentil, mustard, etc. reach the *mandis* (market yards) for assured procurement operations by designated government agencies. Moreover, any severe disruption to the supply of perishable fruits and vegetables, dairy products, fish, etc. having mobilized to meet the increasing demand from a bulging middle class as well as urban and rural consumers, may create irreparable damage to all actors in the supply chain. The migration of workers from few parts to their native places has also triggered panic buttons, as they are crucial for post-harvest handling of produce in storage and marketing centres.

Making the food grains, fruits and vegetables and other essential items available to consumers, both in rural and urban areas, is the most critical challenge for Government machinery during the lockdown period. Smooth functioning of the supply chain, with adequate safety measures for the people involved, is of paramount importance. Transportation of public distribution system (PDS) items to last mile delivery agents, by both rail and road, has to be ensured by respective Government agencies. Distribution of the commodities to vulnerable population, while maintaining prescribed guidelines and protocol, particularly of social distancing, must be effectively monitored.

### **Mitigation Measures:**

The poor sections of society are always the hardest hit in any disaster or pandemic situation. With about 85 percent of Indian farm households being small and marginal farmers, and a significant part of the population being landless farm labourers, welfare measures to contain any damage from COVID-19 are definitely going to help them with sincere implementation. The focus of the Government therefore has to be to protect the lives of every citizen. However, people living on agriculture and allied activities, mostly those losing their income from informal employment at this lockdown period, have to be provided with alternative avenues (cash transfers) till the economy bounces back (when this health crisis is successfully overcome). To sustain the demand for agricultural commodities, investments in key logistics must be enhanced. Moreover, e-commerce and delivery companies and start-ups

need to be encouraged with suitable policies and incentives. The small and medium enterprises, running with raw materials from the agriculture and allied sector or otherwise, also need special attention so that the rural economy doesn't collapse. Relaxation of the norms by Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs) allowing farmers to sell their produce beyond the designated *mandis* will certainly ease the burdens of farmers. Structural reforms such as land leasing, contract farming and private agricultural markets, etc. have long been advocated to bring enhanced investments into the agriculture sector and to push its growth.

### Reaction of the Government of India:

The reaction of the Indian government in farming has included four arrangement measures.

1. It has reported that most agrarian exercises will be on the basic rundown. It has excluded farm workers in the fields, cultivating activities by ranchers, offices occupied with obtainment of agribusiness items including MSPs, and is informed by the State Governments, between and intra-state development of reaping and planting related machines and assembling, bundling units of composts, pesticides, and seeds among others.
2. It has reported that the primary portion of the PM-Kisan instalment to ranchers, i. e., Rs 2000, will be paid forthright to ranchers. It has likewise declared that the wages under MGNREGS will be raised from Rs 182 to Rs 202 every day.
3. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reported a ban on rural term credits (counting crop advances) for a time of a quarter of a year.
4. India's overall economic package is worth ₹ 20 lakh crore. This is 10% of India's GDP. The package, though announced Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (ABA) on 12 May by the Prime Minister, included previous government actions, including the RBI announcements.

### CONCLUSION

The eruption of Corona virus happening in Wuhan region in China in December 2019 has now become a global pandemic. Though nearly all of the citizens are recovering daily, this natural disaster has poorly surprised the world financial system and has a huge unenthusiastic insinuation on the same. The most responsive cultivation sector which is the spine of our nation is also hit with the externalities of Covid-19 eruption. The farmers are likely to feel a dip in their returns. Mostly due to lockdown the restrictions on the movement of agriculture commodities from its place of production to the ultimate consumer has been hampered. Another problem lies with the shortage of labour force due to the fear of viral transmission which ultimately leads to the wastage of harvested commodities, mainly fruits and vegetables which are perishable in nature, in the farmer's field itself. The Corona infection pandemic has put a potential effect on the agribusiness item store network which is a mind boggling web of maker, transporter, distributor, retailer lastly the customer. Likewise the arranging of the Kharif crop and post-harvest management of Rabi crops produce, which will cause a significant halt in the up and coming agrarian seasons.

### REFERENCES

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