

Super Cyclone Amphan: A Huge losses on the Agricultural Sector of West Bengal, India

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SUMMARY

Agricultural sector faces different challenges in the form of natural calamities. Amphan was one of these disasters in Bengal. As a result of it crop damage and poor productivity occurs. The impact of lockdown on the economy of agricultural and horticultural sectors of West Bengal is no doubt devastating. Apart from the lockdown, we have suffered huge crop loss due to super cyclone Amphan. As per West Bengal government, the state is the largest producer of paddy and seasonal vegetables; hence the loss has been immense. According to the State Agricultural Department, paddy crop in districts of Burdwan, West Midnapore and Hooghly has been completely destroyed due to this super cyclone. To mitigate these situations necessary steps should be taken by the government of West Bengal. Hope government shall overcome all the issues related with Amphan.

INTRODUCTION

The main reason for poor productivity in agricultural sector is uncertain weather and natural disasters. The low productivity in these sectors affects the food security. As a result of it, the mass of poor people find it impossible to purchase food. The super cyclone Amphan and its associated heavy rain and flood cause damage to agricultural and horticultural crops. The crops get affected in terms of productivity. The crop damage occurs due to the stagnation of water inside the crop field. Amphan associated flood water brought sand and silt particles along with it to the crop fields. As a result of it, soil physical condition was changed. According to Sundarbans Affair Minister Manturan Pakhira, nearly 17,800 hectares of agricultural lands had been damaged because of saline water from seas entering the crop field. The super cyclone Amphan was coming with high destructive power compared to other cyclones causing large scale damage to semi matured fruits waiting to be harvested. According to State Agriculture Minister Ashish Banerjee, Amphan had ravaged the farming sector in at least 14 of the 23 districts in West Bengal.



Negative impact of super cyclone Amphan on Agriculture:

The super cyclone Amphan cause significant loss of life and large scale economic damages in West Bengal. According to officials, in East Midnapore district, crops in around 47,000 hectares of land were lost, while 70 per cent and 50 per cent of paddy in Burdwan East and Bankura districts were destroyed respectively. A senior official of the agriculture department said that in East Midnapore, paddy crop in around 30,000 hectares, sesame in around 12,000 hectares and vegetables in around 5,000 hectares of land had been lost due to the destroying cyclone. Betel vine cultivation in the district had been hit very badly. In Burdwan district, most of the lands where paddy was cultivated had been lost. The farmers had managed to harvest only 30 per cent of the paddy cultivation, the rest amount of paddy crops were under water. In Bankura district, a huge loss occurs in the harvesting of boro paddy and vegetable farming. Around 50 per cent of the Boro paddy was lying in the fields. They were under water for two to three days. The entire crop was totally lost. The mango orchards in Murshidabad district were also badly hit by the Amphan. Incidentally all the mango producing zones in West Bengal like the districts of Malda, Murshidabad and South 24 Parganas are industrially backward and highly dependent on this perishable seasonal fruit. According to officials, around 30 per cent of the mangoes had fallen from the trees during the cyclone Amphan. It would be very difficult for the farmers to make any profit.

The flower growers of Howrah and Hooghly districts were also severely affected. With sea water entering agricultural land more than 2 lakhs of farmers could be severely affected. The areas worst hit by cyclone Amphan are Ghoramara Dweep and Kalinagar in Kakdwip, Naamkhana, Bakkhali, Frasergunj, Sagar and Pathor Pratima Island in South 24-Parganas. Vegetable prices had shot up in Kolkata and its adjoining areas as supplies took a hit in West Bengal, which was battered by cyclone Amphan. According to the traders of West Bengal, the prices of most of the vegetables had risen by 20-30 per cent over the last two days after Amphan was done. Road communication in several parts of the metropolis had been severely impacted as thousands of trees and electric poles lay scattered on the streets. The biggest victims in this were the farmers of West Bengal, who were left with nothing but destroyed crops, agricultural fields which were destroyed after the cyclone Amphan. Most of the small farmers took loans for cultivation, while many cultivate on lands they got on lease. All of them were in a panic as they had lost everything due to this cyclone Amphan and they were unable to repay the amount of loan they took.

Resilient Agricultural System for Management of Super Cyclone Amphan:

There is a need to generate more awareness among the affected farmers of West Bengal. Adequate quantities of cyclone and flood resistant varieties of crop seeds should be supplied by the government. For an example, water logging tolerant varieties of rice such as 'Durga', 'Hangseswari' etc should be suggested for those areas. The practice of zero tillage helps in better crop establishment and productivity of okhra, bitter gourd and sunflower under post flood conditions. Cyclone and flood resilient mechanism should be practiced in the form of over-aged seedlings. In the coastal areas of West Bengal, bio-drainage using chestnut and eucalyptus plantation should be needed to improve soil drainage. Land modification techniques, contingency crop planning, post flood management; cultivation of flood resistant aquatic crops should be practiced for flood prone water logged areas of West Bengal.

CONCLUSION

In this hard situation the remarkable steps had been taken by the government. Prime Minister Modi surveyed affected regions in West Bengal and announced Rs. 1,000 crore assistance to West Bengal. Chief Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee had ordered to estimate the losses incurred in the horticulture and agriculture sectors due to Cyclone Amphan within a week. She further announced Rs 2.5 lakh as compensation for the families of those killed in the cyclone. According to the UNICEF West Bengal Cyclone Amphan 2020 Situation Report 3, the Chief Secretary, Mr. Rajiva Sinha mentioned that there was a huge loss in agriculture. He was providing help like food, water and shelter to those affected people and financially supports to stand on their feet. The agriculture minister was covered to hold a meeting with the officials of Bankura, Birbhum, East and West Burdwan, districts on May 26, 2020 in connection with the estimation of the losses. The problem cannot solve immediately, it will take time to mitigate this situation.

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