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# AGRI BYTES

*E- Weekly Newsletter*

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## **1. Finance to 5 Lakh Joint Farming Groups of “Bhoomi Heen Kisan” through Nabard in the Current Financial Year**

Shri Radha Mohan Singh, Agriculture Minister inaugurated the National Rabi Conference on 17th September. In his inaugural speech Shri Singh proposed to provide finance to 5 lakh joint farming groups of “Bhoomi Heen Kisan” through NABARD in the current financial year. Minister said that, a very large number of landless farmers are unable to provide land title as guarantee, institutional finance is denied to them and they become vulnerable to money lenders’ usurious lending. He informed that in order to achieve the targeted growth of agriculture and allied sector at 4%, from the year 2014-15, various schemes of Ministry of Agriculture have been restructured into specific Missions/Programmes. The foodgrains production during 2013-14 as per Fourth Advance Estimates released on 14.8.2014 is estimated at 264.77 million tonnes against 257.13 million tonnes produced during 2012-13. The credit for increased level of foodgrains production goes to the hard work of our farmers.

Shri Singh said that cotton, jute and sugarcane are amongst the main cash crops in India and during the year 2014-15 the Government of India has approved implementation of Crop Development Programme under the NFSM (Commercial Crops) by following Cropping System Approach to encourage farmers to improve productivity of these crops. This would be possible through use of proper crop rotation, multiple cropping systems, intercropping, etc. Shri Singh informed that deteriorating soil health has been a cause of concern and leads to sub-optimal utilization of farming resources. Government has, therefore, formulated a Mission to provide every farmer with Soil Health Card. Issue of 3 crore Soil Health Cards in the current year, 5.50 crore Soil Health Cards in year 2015-16 and 5.50 crore Soil Health Cards in year 2016-17 is targeted. Besides, 100 Mobile Soil Testing Laboratories (MSTLs) will also be set up in year 2014-15.

## **2. Agriculture Minister Launches Reefer Vehicle Call-In Centre (RVC)**

In order to facilitate smoother transportation of perishable goods by providing redressal to issues that reefer van operators face on Indian Highways, Agriculture Minister, Shri Radha Mohan Singh announced the launch of a Reefer Vehicle Call-In Centre (RVC) on September 10. Launching the unique call-in- centre, he said that the cold chain sector is fast growing, and key products including fruits, vegetables, meat, fish, poultry, dairy products, confectionery and pharmaceuticals are critically dependent on it. An essential link between source and markets is refrigerated transport, which face several bottlenecks and challenges. The RVC will help create a database of bottlenecks and their types across the national highways. The response generated from this exercise will help

devise long term plans and policies to alleviate bottlenecks and thus control inflation in prices of perishable goods in the country.

The Minister said that this initiative, perhaps first of this kind in the world would provide help in registering the complaints of more than 30,000 vehicles carrying perishable goods like vegetables and fruits. They can register their complaints on toll free number 18002676223. Complaints may include extortion, transit delays, harassment, etc. The RVC is a joint initiative by the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, National Centre for Cold-chain Development (NCCD) and Mahindra Logistics, he informed.

### **3. Activists plead for formation of national bamboo board**

Vidarbha Bamboo Mission (VBM), a forum of artisans, growers, entrepreneurs, NGOs, and others working for promotion and development of bamboo, has moved prime minister Narendra Modi for setting up a National Bamboo Development Board (NBDB) on the lines of National Coir Board to monitor and develop bamboo sector across the country. VBM is attempting to attain inclusive, integrated and interdependent development and socially and ecologically sustainable industrial economy in bamboo sector in Vidarbha and India with a view to offer economic, livelihood, food and ecological security to people.

Sunil Joshi, coordinator of VBM & co-convenor of BJP Artisan Cell, told on the eve of 'World Bamboo Day' on September 18 that a resolution in this regard has also been passed at a workshop in Delhi by the party recently. It was especially organized to deliberate upon 'National Artisan Policy'. "We decided to resolve making 'Skilled India, Strong India' to help revive the artisanal enterprises as promised in BJP manifesto," said Joshi. Joshi pointed out to Modi that Vidarbha had abundant bamboo wealth in its forest and non-forest areas. The region, much before the launch of 'National mission on bamboo technology and trade development', had shown bamboo activism that helped Vidarbha become hub of bamboo development, he added. Interestingly, national mission on bamboo was launched by then Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in 2002-03 with a view to boost bamboo economy predicted to be worth Rs 26,000 crore and Rs 96,000 respectively in domestic and international market by 2015. "In Vidarbha alone, it can be an Rs 5,000 crore industry if promoted systematically," said Joshi.

#### **4. Andhra govt seeking funds to implement mega loan waiver**

Desperate to keep its pre-poll promise of loan waiver to farmers, the Andhra Pradesh government is seeking funds from different quarters to go ahead with the financially debilitating scheme. "The Andhra Pradesh Government open for funds for rythu runamaafi (farmers' loan waiver)," an official statement said. No more details, however, were given in this regard, but Agriculture Minister P Pulla Rao said the Government is making all efforts to implement the loan waiver. A staggering Rs 40,000 crore is required for the loan waiver schemes for farmers and also women self-help groups (SHGs). The Government's hope to get the farm loans rescheduled in the name of natural calamities did not bear fruit as RBI took a tough stand. After a lot of persuasion, RBI agreed to reschedule crop loans only in a few mandals in four districts, not giving much relief to the Government.

#### **5. Netherlands, India to set up 10 centres of agriculture excellence**

The Netherlands is working with India to set up 10 centres of excellence across the country with an aim to raise agriculture output and introduce modern farm technologies and techniques. "The work has already been started on three centres, one each in Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab and the work is soon to be expected to start in Karnataka," the Netherlands Counsellor for Agriculture in India Wouter Vetthey told. He was speaking on the sidelines of an event by the Kerala government to announce the 'Global Agro Meet' in the state from November 6-8. Vetthey added that centre in Kerala and Maharashtra will be for horticulture, while in Punjab the centre of excellence will be for potatoes. He also said that all the centres will come up in a few years.

#### **6. Arunachal minister urges Centre to enhance funding pattern**

Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandary and Dairy Development Minister Chowna Mein has pleaded the Centre for enhancing funding pattern of all centrally sponsored schemes in the state in the ratio of 90:10. Mein accompanied by Arunachal MP Ninong Ering called on Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh at Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi recently apprised him of various problems faced by the state. During the meeting, Mein stressed on enhancing funding pattern of all Centrally sponsored schemes to 90:10 ratio so that the frontier could avail the benefits of the schemes launched by the Centre. He specifically highlighted the state's vast land resources stretching from tropical to

alpine zones feasible for growing various agriculture and horticultural crops besides livestock rearing before the minister.

### **7. Govt plans income insurance scheme for farmers**

The government may launch a new insurance scheme for farmers to protect their incomes against production and price risks, agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh said recently. Production and price risks adversely affect the farmer's capacity to invest in advanced crop varieties and impede capital formation in the farm sector, the minister said, adding India's monsoon-dependent farming contributes significantly to these risks. The new insurance scheme will ensure protection of livelihood and encourage farmers towards crop diversification, the minister said. He noted that the country has been implementing crop insurance schemes since 1985 to protect farmers from the adverse effects of natural calamities, adding the revised scheme may be more conducive to farmers' needs.

### **8. BJP appeals to Andhra Pradesh government to set up agri-export council**

BJP's Andhra Pradesh state president K Hari Babu appealed to the Andhra Pradesh government to set up agricultural produce export promotion councils to provide remunerative prices for all agricultural products. In his opening remarks at the BJP's state council meeting on September 16, he said that almost all agricultural commodities produced in Andhra Pradesh have an export market. He said that Andhra Pradesh produces chillies, tobacco, cotton and paddy which have export markets. He urged the AP state government to take up irrigation projects with time-bound plans to irrigate more lands to increase agricultural production, which is a major economic activity in the state.