

Optimising Agricultural Prosperity: Embracing The Theory Of Change Framework

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A robust monitoring and evaluation system enables policymakers to assess the adaptability of existing policies to these externalities



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Agriculture, the backbone of our nation, has witnessed significant transformations and growth due to a comprehensive strategic framework involving substantial budget allocations, policy measures, and welfare schemes initiated by the Government of India. This comprehensive overview sheds light on the myriad initiatives undertaken to bolster the agricultural sector and uplift the livelihoods of our farmers.

Over the years, the Government of India's commitment to agricultural development has been evident through the substantial increase in budget allocations. In the financial year 2013–14, the budget allocation of the Ministry of Cooperation, the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, and the Department of Fisheries, which were integral parts of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, was only INR 30,223.88 crore. The budget of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare is INR 1,25,035.79 crore in 2023–24, reflecting the prioritisation of agricultural growth.

The Government of India has implemented a myriad of schemes and programmes to enhance farmers' well-being, increase production, and provide income support. Some of the key highlights of the initiative include a range of welfare schemes aimed at enhancing farmer income, ensuring crop protection, and providing financial support, including:

- PM-KISAN: With over INR 2.81 lakh crore disbursed to more than 11 crore farmers, this scheme has played a pivotal role in providing direct income support.
- PMFBY (Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana): Over 49.44 crore farmer applications have been enrolled, and over 14.06 crore (provisional) farmer applicants have received claims of over INR 1,46,664 crore. During this period, nearly INR 29,183 crore was paid by farmers as their share of premium, against which claims over INR 1,46,664 crore (provisional) have been paid to them. For transparency in the calculation and payment of claims, the Claim Payment Module to workout claims and to transfer these claims directly to the farmer's account is being done through the National Crop Insurance Portal (NCIP) using the PFMS platform. All the claims have now been paid by insurance companies directly to farmers' accounts through Digiclim.
- MSP Increase: Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for various crops have seen a substantial rise, ensuring a return of at least 50 percent over the cost of production. The government has increased the MSP for all mandated Kharif, Rabi, and other commercial crops with a return of at least 50 percent over the all-India weighted average cost of production from 2018–19. MSP for paddy (common) has increased to INR 2,183 per quintal in 2023–24 from INR 1,310 per quintal in 2013–14. MSP for wheat increased from INR 1,400 per quintal in 2013–14 to INR 2,275 per quintal in 2023–24.
- Organic Farming Promotion: Initiatives like Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) and Mission Organic Value Chain Development in the North East Region (MOVCDNER) focus on promoting organic farming practices. Under PKVY, 32,384 clusters have been formed, and an area of 6.53 lakh hectares has been covered, benefiting 16.19 lakh farmers. Under MOVCDNER, 379 farmer-producer companies have been formed, comprising 189,039 farmers and covering a 1,72,966-hectare area.
- Micro Irrigation Fund: Covering 81.87 lakh hectares under micro-irrigation through the Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) scheme, with an initial corpus of INR 5,000 crore.
- FPOs (Farmer Producer Organisations): Registration of 7,476 FPOs under the new scheme, promoting collective farming and enhancing farmers' bargaining power. An equity grant of INR 113.68 crore has been released to 2,663 FPOs. A credit guarantee cover worth ₹ 213.82 crore was issued to 918 FPOs.
- National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM): Extended for the next three years with a budget of INR 370.00 crores, contributing to the "Sweet Revolution."
- Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF): A central sector scheme with an outlay of INR 1,00,000 crores to enhance post-harvest management infrastructure.
- Kisan Rail: Facilitating the exclusive transportation of perishable agri-horti commodities with 2,359 services on 167 routes.

- Start-up Ecosystem: supporting 1,259 start-ups in agriculture and allied sectors, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship. INR 83.67 crore as grants-in-aid has been released in installments to the respective Knowledge Partners (KPs) and Agribusiness Incubators (R-ABIs) for funding these start-ups under the RKVY Agri-Startup Programme of the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare.

Notable schemes and initiatives such as e-NAM (National Agriculture Market), Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF), and the National Mission on Edible Oil (NMEO)-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP), among others, have been instrumental in supporting farmers across the country, which also aim to strengthen post-harvest management and contribute to the creation of a robust agricultural infrastructure. Furthermore, the government's support for start-ups in the agriculture sector, along with efforts to boost agricultural exports, underscores its commitment to fostering innovation and expanding the reach of Indian agricultural products globally. The agri- and allied exports have increased to 50.24 billion USD in 2021–22. Additionally, the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) has implemented schemes that have yielded remarkable results in augmenting the income of farmers. Institutional credit for the agriculture sector will increase to Rs. 21.55 lakh crore in 2023–24. With increased budgetary provisions, strategic policies, and targeted welfare schemes, India's agricultural landscape is poised for sustained growth, empowering farmers, and fortifying the foundation of the nation's agrarian sector.

The success of India's agricultural policies relies on the conscientious application of the Theory of Change framework, combined with rigorous monitoring and evaluation practices. This approach not only validates the effectiveness of policies but also charts a course for adaptive planning, result-oriented implementation, and the optimal utilisation of resources. It is important to establish a robust framework to evaluate impacts, outputs, and outcomes because they are imperative for ensuring that all available resources significantly contribute to the ongoing transformation of the agricultural landscape. Executing well-thought-out strategic and feasible plans maximises efficiency, minimises wastage, and amplifies the overall impact of interventions, a crucial optimisation in an environment where each input profoundly influences the sustainable development of agriculture. It is significant to understand that to achieve transformative outcomes, a thorough assessment of agricultural policies is essential. By examining the social and economic impacts, policymakers can identify gaps and design interventions that address the needs of marginalised and vulnerable communities, fostering inclusivity and sustainable development. This iterative process allows for continuous improvement, ensuring that policies remain resilient in the face of evolving challenges.

While the government's multifaceted approach to agricultural development reflects its commitment to the welfare of farmers and the growth of the sector, we should not forget that agriculture is inherently susceptible to external factors such as climate change, market fluctuations, and technological advancements. A robust monitoring and evaluation system

enables policymakers to assess the adaptability of existing policies to these externalities. The dynamism of agriculture demands a result-oriented approach that goes beyond theoretical constructs.

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