

Recommendations of National Commission on Farmers

September 19, 2020

The National Commission on Farmers, chaired by **Prof. M. S. Swaminathan**, submitted five reports through the period December 2004 – October 2006. Following from the first four, the final report focused on causes of farmer distress and the rise in farmer suicides, and recommends addressing them through a holistic national policy for farmers.

Recommendations:

The report identifies **major causes of the agrarian crisis** as:

- unfinished agenda in land reform
- quantity and quality of water
- technology fatigue
- access, adequacy and timeliness of institutional credit
- opportunities for assured and remunerative marketing
- adverse meteorological factors

Land Reforms

- Distribute ceiling-surplus and waste lands
- Ensure grazing rights and seasonal access to forests to tribals and pastoralists, and access to common property resources
- Establish a National Land Use Advisory Service, which would have the capacity to link land use decisions with ecological meteorological and marketing factors on a location and season specific basis

Irrigation reforms

- Increase water supply through rainwater harvesting and recharge of the aquifer should become mandatory
- Minor irrigation and new schemes for groundwater

recharge

Productivity

- Substantial increase in public investment in agriculture related infrastructure particularly in irrigation, drainage, land development, water conservation, research development and road connectivity
- A national network of advanced soil testing laboratories with facilities for detection of micronutrient deficiencies

Credit and Insurance

- Establish an Agriculture Risk Fund to provide relief to farmers in the aftermath of successive natural calamities
- Develop an integrated credit-cum-crop-livestock-human health insurance package
- Issue Kisan Credit Cards to women farmers, with joint pattas as collateral
- Expand crop insurance cover to cover the entire country and all crops, with reduced premiums and create a Rural Insurance Development Fund to take up development work for spreading rural insurance

Food Security

- Implement a universal public distribution system. The NCF pointed out that the total subsidy required for this would be 1% of the GDP
- Eliminate micronutrient deficiency induced hidden hunger through an integrated food cum fortification approach
- Promote the establishment of community food and water banks operated by women Self-help Groups (SHG), based on the principle 'Store grain and water everywhere'

Competitiveness of Farmers

- Promotion of commodity-based farmers' organisations such

as small cotton farmers' estates to combine decentralised production with centralised services such as post-harvest management, value addition and marketing, for leveraging institutional support and facilitating direct farmer-consumer linkage.

- Arrangements for MSP need to be put in place for crops other than paddy and wheat. Also, millets and other nutritious cereals should be permanently included in the PDS.
- Availability of data about spot and future prices of commodities through the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCD) and the NCDEX and the APMC electronic networks.