Diversification of Agriculture in Punjab

What is the issue?

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- The growth rate of Punjab's agriculture fell to 3% between 1987 to 2005 and it went durther down to 1.6% between 2006 and 2015.
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- This is less than half the all-India average of 3.5%.
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What is the problem?

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- Punjab is endowed with one of the best possible infrastructures for agriculture in the country.
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- The network of regulated mandis in Punjab is one of the best in the country.
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- **A robust and fast-moving procurement system** has reduced the market risks of wheat and paddy growers in the state.
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- Almost 90% of the market arrivals is procured at the minimum support price (MSP).
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- So, this system has made **Punjab's farmers risk averse.**
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- This also discourages farmers from diversifying the wheat-rice cycle e.g Diversification from common rice to hybrid maize.
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- Farmers are reluctant to switch as there is **no effective procurement system** for this crop.
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- Lack of diversification poses a threat of ecological imbalance.
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What could be done?

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- With the GST coming into force, **the processing industry could be incentivised** to prefer Punjab over other states in purchasing agricultural raw material.
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- There should be vigorous efforts to **increase productivity and procurement of rice in the eastern states**.
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- Simultaneously, Punjab should promote the use of micro-irrigation, especially for sugarcane and fruits and vegetables.
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- The **dairy and meat industries** are other sources of diversification for Punjab's agriculturalists.
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- They can also **diversify towards fruit and vegetables**.
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- The government will also need to invest in marketing infrastructure for fruit and vegetables, as it did for grains by creating a robust mandi infrastructure.
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- A **modern expressway** from Khanna (Punjab) to Kandla (Gujarat) could be helpful in the faster transportation of fruit and vegetables.
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Source: The Indian Express

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