

Exempting Farming Activities

Why in News?

The government has exempted all agricultural, horticultural activities and those relating to harvesting, transportation, etc from the lockdown.

What is the issued order?

- The order has exempted the agencies engaged in procurement of agriculture products, including MSP operations and mandis.
- It also exempted the farmers and farm workers in the field.
- It exempted the custom hiring centres related to farm machinery.
- It also allowed the intra- state and inter-state movement of machines.
- The functioning of manufacturing and packaging units of fertilizers, pesticides, seeds, etc is allowed now.

Why was this order made?

- This order was made so that harvesting would continue uninterrupted.
- This decision has been taken to facilitate unhindered farming activities to ensure essential supplies.
- It was also taken so that the farmers and common people do not face any difficulty.

What is AIKSCC's current concern?

- All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordinating Committee's (AIKSCC) concern is about all farmers/workers being shut behind the doors.
- The AIKSCC is concerned about this because now is the peak time to harvest winter crops (wheat, barley, pulses).
- It is worried about the fate of vegetables/fruit growers, milk producers, the landless labourers and their families.
- Everything can wait but not farming as a season lost means a year lost.
- It will lead to a major crisis in food availability and may result in large numbers of hunger deaths.

What does the AIKSCC want?

- The AIKSCC, in a representation to the government, had asked the police not

to stop peasants, farmers, vendors and transporters.

- It demanded that all harvested crops, milk, poultry, meat and eggs should be procured.
- It demanded that the regulated markets should operate at requisite strength.

What were the activities that stopped abruptly?

- The lockdown was introduced without ensuring the continuation of provisions mandated under the National Food Security Act, 2013.
- Consequently, the **anganwadis were closed**.
- Therefore, supplementary nutrition for children below age six, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers came to a stop.
- **Mid-day meal**, which reaches millions of school-going students, discontinued abruptly.
- The provision of **Rs. 6,000 to every pregnant & lactating** woman, mandated under the Maternity Benefit Act, also virtually ended.
- Officials have hindered with the **collection of non-timber forest produce** by the forest dwellers (allowed by the Forest Rights Act).
- This has caused hunger and distress to many tribal people.

What could the judiciary do?

- There is a harshness, arbitrariness and lack of thought and preparation in the execution of the lockdown.
- Starvation deaths on account of hunger and merciless police beatings have been reported from across the country.
- With the crisis spreading to agriculture, the judiciary must abandon this hands-off approach.
- It must carefully review its approach of modestly following the executive.

Source: The Hindu