Promoting Agripreneurship in India

What is the issue?

It is time to give due attention to the agri-preneurs in India, for making best use of the collective potential of the farmers across the country.

What are the challenges for any entrepreneur?

- Creating products or services for which s/he must find a market and customers
- Adapting to changing consumer requirements and technological possibilities
- Suffering from a poor ecosystem for management advice, mentorship, fund-raising and risk management
- Experiencing great psychological stress due to unparalleled unpredictability
- Attracting social approbation and disapproval if s/he fails

Why are agri-preneurs significant for India?

- The above challenges are invariably faced by the farmers in India too.
- It is thus right to recognise them as entrepreneurs looking after land, fish, poultry and dairy sectors.
- 170 million of them are working for the economic well-being of 700 million people, assuming four to a family.
- Farmers are at the heart of employment generation and national economic growth.
- The government must thus acknowledge this and chart out a well formulated plan for the agri-preneurs.

What are the possible reform measures?

- **Agriculture minister** - The constitutional accountability for agriculture is with the states.
- But farmers and public look to the centre for action, which is why farmers' livelihood and crop prices become important in national politics.
- India thus needs an influential agriculture minister, as strong as the finance or home minister.
- **Policy** - Whenever a coordinated, systems approach to transformation is required, a common framework goes a long way in helping it.
- But India has no politically approved national agricultural development

policy (NADP) in place at present.

- In contrast, there are national industrial development policy, national SME policy and entrepreneurship/startup India initiative.
- It is, therefore, in farmers' interest that India brings in a formal framework and a national agricultural development policy (NADP).
- **Council of Ministers** - Farming is not like telecom, roads, electricity and other reform-seeking sectors.
- This is because agriculture has economic, social, political and power dimensions.
- So making crucial decisions in agriculture and for farmers requires active and deep centre-states cooperation.
- It thus needs a mechanism like the National Development Council or the GST Council.
- In this context, India should consider having a council of ministers exclusively for agriculture.
- **Marketing** - In the past, farming initiatives were focused on increasing production, which was important to feed a growing population.
- To conserve the output, which increased gradually, frictional restrictions were placed in the marketing chain.
- These included regulations on where farmers can sell, restrictions on exports, taxation at the mandi level and compulsory government procurement.
- But given the present needs, marketing must be freed up from this web of controls and hindrances, for utilising the full potential.
- **FPOs** - A national drive on Farmer-producer organisations (FPOs) is crucial as a vehicle to implement ideas and modernisation.
- India will be better off with one crore FPOs (like SMEs in the industrial sector) instead of 170 million individual farmers.
- Farmers must be actively trained to organise themselves into FPOs.
- **Technology** - India cannot afford to debate old-fashioned technology ideas concerning land, soil, water, seeds and nutrients.
- A modern and futuristic approach is essential with regard to adoption of modern technologies.
- A national technology policy must be developed and executed with urgency.

Source: Business Standard



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