

Recommendations of NCF

Why in news?

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As India marks 50 years of green revolution, a look at the report of National Commission on Farmers becomes essential.

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What is NCF?

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- The National Commission on Farmers was chaired by Prof. M. S. Swaminathan.

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- It submitted five reports through the period December 2004 - October 2006.

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- The report focused on causes of farmer distresses and the rise in farmer suicides.

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- It proposed "faster and more inclusive growth" as the goal.

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What are the major recommendations?

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- **Land reforms** - Distribute ceiling-surplus and waste lands.

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- Prevent diversion of prime agricultural land and forest for non-agricultural purposes.

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- Grazing rights and seasonal access to forests to tribals and pastoralists, and access to common property resources.

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- National Land Use Advisory Service to link land use decisions with ecological, meteorological and marketing factors.

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- **Irrigation** - Increasing water supply through rainwater harvesting and making recharge of the aquifer mandatory.

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- "Million Wells Recharge" programme, specifically targeted at private wells should be launched.

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- Substantial increase in investment in the irrigation sector.

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- **Productivity** - the per unit area productivity of Indian agriculture is much lower than other major crop producing countries.

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- A national network of advanced soil testing laboratories with facilities for detection of micronutrient deficiencies is recommended.

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- Promotion of conservation farming to conserve and improve soil health, water quantity and quality, and biodiversity.

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- Increase in public investment in agriculture related infrastructure such as irrigation, drainage, land development, water conservation, research development, etc to ensure increased productivity.

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- **Credit and Insurance** - Expanding the outreach of the formal credit system and reducing the rate of interest for crop loans with government support.

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- Establishing an Agriculture Risk Fund to provide relief to farmers in the aftermath of successive natural calamities.

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- Cover all crops by crop insurance with the village and not block as the unit for assessment.

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- Developing an integrated credit-cum-crop-livestock-human health insurance package.

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- Creating a Rural Insurance Development Fund to take up development work for spreading rural insurance.

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- Institutional development services by strengthening producers' organisations such as self-help groups and water user associations can be taken up.

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- **Food Security** - the decline in per capita foodgrain availability and its unequal distribution have serious implications for food security in both rural and urban areas.

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- Eliminating micronutrient deficiency induced hidden hunger through an integrated food cum fortification approach.
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- Formulating a National Food Guarantee Act and continuing the useful features of the Food for Work and Employment Guarantee programmes.
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- **Farmers' Suicides** - State level Farmers' Commission with representation of farmers for ensuring dynamic government response to farmers' problems.
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- Low risk and low cost technologies to provide maximum income to farmers to cope with the shock of crop failure.
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- Price Stabilisation Fund in place to protect the farmers from price fluctuations.
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- Village Knowledge Centres (VKCs) to serve as guidance centres on all aspects of agricultural and non-farm livelihoods.
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- Public awareness campaigns to make people identify early signs of suicidal behaviour.
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- **Agricultural competitiveness** - Promotion of commodity-based farmers' organisations such as Small Cotton Farmers' Estates.
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- This will combine decentralised production with centralised government services for leveraging institutional support and facilitating direct farmer-consumer linkage.
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- State Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee Acts [APMC Acts] should work for the development of domestic and international markets for local produce, and move towards a Single Indian Market.
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- **Employment** - Despite structural change in the workforce, agriculture still provides the bulk of employment in the rural areas of India.
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- Creating productive employment opportunities and improving the quality of employment in several sectors such that real wages rise through improved productivity.
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- The "net take home income" of farmers should be comparable to those of civil servants.
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- Emphasizing on relatively more labour intensive sectors.
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- Encouraging non-farm employment opportunities by developing particular sectors and sub-sectors.
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- **Bioresources** - Rural people in India depend on a wide range of bioresources for their nutrition and livelihood security.
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- Preserving traditional rights of access to biodiversity and encouraging community-based breed conservation.
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- Finally, the NCF recommends that Agriculture which is under the State List be inserted in the Concurrent List of the Constitution.
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Source: PRS India

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