Viable value chain for pulses needs to be built up

Why in news?

Pulses production has reached a high of 231.5 lakh tonne (lt) in 2019-20 against 146.4 lt in 2009-10 making India a largely self-sufficient nation in pulses.

How is this achievement possible?

- Pulses are relatively easier to grow from the perspective of small and marginal farmers, with smaller duration, lesser requirement of water and land use.
- They are regularly procured at Minimum Support Price and there was more focus on increasing its production and productivity.
- This has played a critical role in providing remunerative prices & assured market to the cultivators thereby increasing the production.
- However the challenge is its availability at affordable rates to consumers across all income groups.

What is the issue in affordability of pulses?

- In the post COVID scenario, pulse-specific production levels and retail prices have been fluctuating.
- Inflation targeting is essential to ensure that pulse price does not emerge as a pressure point as far as inflation is concerned.
- The need of the hour is to ensure stability in prices of pulses enabled by a steady availability.
- Hence appropriate policy instruments needs to be adopted taking into consideration of the interests of both farmers and consumers.
- For this a strong value chain for pulses is crucial which can help in consuming healthier & pulses-based diets.

How to ensure well established value chain for pulses?

- One, Small scale/household level processing units needs to be set up in pulse growing areas especially at the cultivator's location.
- This will reduce price difference between raw/unprocessed pulses and processed dal/pulse products.
- Two, convergence with various components of National Rural Livelihoods

Mission must be ensured by States/UTs to improve nutrition status.

- For this processing facilities can be set up & community Investment Fund can act as Seed Capital to SHG's at Cluster level & Vulnerability Reduction Fund to SHG's at Village level.
- These small-scale mills can provide better conversion ratio of raw to milled pulses with better nutrition content.
- Three, existing schemes must be leveraged for creating infrastructure.
- Creation/Expansion of Food Processing/Preservation capacities scheme and Agro Processing Clusters can be joined under the PM Kisan SAMPADA Yojana for funding purposes.
- Four, the funding facility under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund can be used for providing debt financing facility.
- This can be invested in viable projects for post-harvest management infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and financial support.
- Five, participation and strengthening of FPOs needs to be encouraged to improve farmer's bargaining power which can ensure that consumer's extra expenditure goes to the grower.
- This will also reduce intermediary costs & PM FPO Kisan Yojana which promotes 10,000 new FPOs is an encouraging step.
- Six, tax incentive can be given to agri-business start-ups.
- Innovation and Agri-entrepreneurship Development programme promotes innovation and agri-entrepreneurship by providing financial support.
- Implementing the above suggestions can be a game changer for both consumers and farmers thereby improving the nutrition of people.

Source: Business Line

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