Farm Sector Laws and their Implications for Punjab Agriculture

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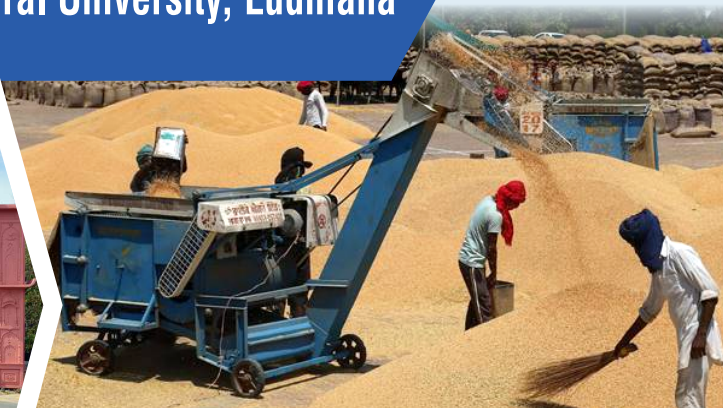

Webinar on

Farm Sector Laws and their Implications for Punjab Agriculture

Compiled by
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Farm Sector Laws and their Implications for Punjab Agriculture

A. Introduction

Three farm sector bills were passed by the Parliament of India in September, 2020 and turned into laws. These laws are named as following:

1. The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020.
2. Farmers (Empowerment & Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and farm Services Act, 2020.
3. Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

The first law aims at creating an ecosystem for providing freedom to farmers and traders to trade with free choice. The second law aims at empowering the farmers to engage with the agri-business firms and other important players of agricultural value chains by providing a national framework for mutual agreements. The third law removes the basic food items from the list of essential commodities in order to reduce excessive regulatory restrictions on private business operations in agriculture.

There are some claims that the laws will make markets more efficient, will increase competition, strengthen value chains in agriculture and will ultimately benefit the farmers. However, some sections are not ready to accept this argument. The North-western states of India, also known as the food bowl of country, are fearing to bear a significant fall in revenue being generated from the procurement of grains and other agricultural commodities in the markets, which may have a significant adverse effect on agricultural infrastructure, other public expenditure in agriculture and rural

development. The farmers fear that the laws will weaken the MSP regime as the large traders and companies may cartelize. This may not occur immediately as the traders may lure initially but will ultimately harm the nation, the farmers' economy and threaten the national food security. These laws are also being termed untimely and against the federal structure of the country.

B. About the Webinar

Taking stock of the divergent views on these laws and their significant bearing on the structure of agriculture sector in future, it was timely to conduct a comprehensive review of these laws. Therefore, the Department of Economics and Sociology of Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana organized the Webinar on "Farm Sector Laws and their Implications for Punjab Agriculture'. The objective to organize the webinar was to focus discussion on important areas of concern such as the following:

1. What do these laws claim to achieve in the agriculture sector?
2. Are the claims in support of these laws realistic? If not, what are the main reasons?
3. If the claims are valid, why do many states and farmers oppose it?
4. Was the timing of the laws apt or were these enacted in a haste?
5. Had the enactments of these laws followed the federal structure of our economy in letter and spirit?
6. What are the implications for Punjab agriculture and food security of the country and how are North-western states of Punjab and Haryana positioned vis-à-vis other Indian states to bear the implications?

7. Will MSP and public procurement regime co-exist with new market structure?
8. Will smallholder farmers benefit from the law on Farmers Price Assurance and how they are positioned when compared to the large holders?
9. What is the possibility of private trade becoming exploitative under the new regime?
10. What will be the implications for APMC markets as well as on state revenue?
11. What is the way forward for Punjab in present situation?

Four eminent panelists, who analyzed various aspects of the farm sector laws were:

1. Mr Ajay Vir Jakhar, Chairman, Punjab State Farmers' and Farm Workers' Commission, Mohali, Punjab.
2. Dr Sucha Singh Gill, Research Coordinator and Professor, Center for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CRRID), Chandigarh.
3. Dr PS Birthal, National Professor, ICAR-National Institute for Agricultural Economics and Policy Research (NIAP), New Delhi, India
4. Mr Avtar Singh Dhindsa, Vice Chairman, Punjab Agri Export Corporation Ltd., Chandigarh and progressive farmer of Punjab.

The webinar was attended by nearly 200 participants from various state and national level institutes, Departments and Universities including Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Ludhiana; ICAR-National Institute for Agricultural Economics and

Policy Research (NIAP), New Delhi; Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (GADVASU), Ludhiana; Punjabi University, Patiala; Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU), Amritsar; Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Punjab; Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST), Jammu, etc., as well as by the representatives of press and media.

The panelists and participants were welcomed by Dr NS Bains, Director of Research, PAU, Ludhiana. Dr Bains emphasized that the reactions and polarization on the farm sector laws are evident but not translating into a constructive response and this webinar is expected to help in this direction. He mentioned the green revolution and the extent of groundwork that went into it in the form of land reforms, inputs, infrastructure, electrification, Minimum Support Price (MSP) and public procurement, etc. He exhorted the participants to delve into whether the current changes have the potential of increasing farm income as witnessed during green revolution. He also mentioned that the webinar should throw light on the way ahead under such a drastic change and should also generate awareness amongst the participants and encourage discussion on this issue. Dr Kamal Vatta, Head, Department of Economics and Sociology, PAU, Ludhiana briefly introduced the laws and important areas of debate and concern.

C. Expert Views on Farm Laws

All the four panelists covered different aspects of the farm laws in detail. Their views have been described below.

Mr Ajay Vir Jakhar

Mr Ajay Vir Jakhar is an eminent economist who writes and speaks regularly on the national and international platforms on

issues of Indian farming and farmers. The major focus of his talk was on Union and State relations and the farm sector laws. The laws are viewed to be brought hastily without any consultation with the State governments, farmers' organizations and any other stakeholders despite the fact that agriculture is a state subject. There are apprehensions that the laws are a step towards dismantling the MSP policy and abolishing public procurement of food grains. The reports of RBI and CACP in recent past have highlighted over procurement of food grains above the standard norms causing overflowing of stocks in the godowns and even the report submitted earlier by Shanta Kumar Committee (2015) emphasised on abolishing the PDS in India. The current focus of the Union government is on Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) such as PM Kisan and PM Ujjwala Yojana but reorientation from input subsidies to DBT may adversely affect the input use as farmers lose the incentive to use improved inputs translating into lower output and farmers' income. Also, the amount of transfers under these schemes is much less than the indirect taxes being paid by the farmers on various inputs such as diesel and farm machinery. The farmers may also lose more than Rs 4500 crore annually if the fertiliser subsidy is also converted under DBT system. The state governments will have to play a proactive role in negotiating and discussing major policy interventions with the central government in future so that these are not implemented in haste and also do not cause any major disequilibrium in the state economy. In Punjab, procurement outside the designated Agricultural Produce Market Committee(APMC) markets will erode the revenue of the State which is spent on rural and market infrastructure. Farm sector laws will also affect about 26000 registered commission

agents in Punjab as their annual income of Rs1500 crore will be at stake after the implementation of these bills. While the interest of farmers is paramount but the laws may also eliminate most of the commission agents from the marketing system. It was expected that only 5000 commission agents may finally survive who will be financially strong and will actually be the traders/agents of larger cooperatives and MNCs and this development will further weaken the bargaining power of the farmers and will ultimately harm the farmers of Punjab. It was further emphasised that the combined effect of three laws was significantly more harmful than the effects of these laws individually. All these laws have widened the definition of trader in the sense that a consumer also gets classified as a trader now as he needs a PAN card to purchase any amount of a commodity. There are doubts over the rationale of transferring the power and mechanism of dispute settlement from the courts to the bureaucracy. All the new laws are also likely to adversely affect the trade through eNAM. There are apprehensions that the price discovery mechanism will be considerably distorted due to these laws as the smallholder farmers have very poor bargaining capacity when compared to the large corporates, which are likely to benefit more in the long-run. He also emphasised to develop the food value chains system where farmers grow food to meet their own nutritional requirement so that farmers' dependence on markets for their own food/nutrition gets reduced. It was suggested that proper system for tracking of the stocks of the essential commodities lying with the traders and warehouses be developed in the country to reduce the chances of manipulation by the traders and enable farmers to reap the optimal prices for their commodities.

Dr Sucha Singh Gill

Dr Sucha Singh Gill is one of the leading economists of Punjab who tracks agricultural policy and has been involved in various state and national level dialogues. He appreciated the timely organization of the webinar and pointed out that these laws were introduced in a haste and should not have been implemented during times when the nation is struggling to counter the challenges of Covid-19 situation as they will bring major fundamental changes in the agricultural markets and will greatly influence the farming community. During the Covid-19 pandemic, while agricultural sector was the only sector which showed resilience and positive growth, the introduction of these laws will harm Punjab agriculture which provides livelihood to relatively poor and more vulnerable sections of the society. He also underlined the need for consultations with the state governments and criticised the passing of these laws without any consultations. The farm sector laws together will surely increase the role and power of corporate sector in procurement, trading as well as in establishment of agricultural markets, and will erode the bargaining power of the farmers. It will also lead to the emergence of dual marketing system with two types of markets, first being regulated by the state government and the other being operated by the private traders and corporates where no charges are to be paid. This type of situation will create uneven and discriminatory opportunities, will make the markets very uncompetitive and will not benefit the farmers in either way. The market system seems to move towards oligopsony in future where few buyers will have much higher bargaining and market power than the producers/ sellers, who are larger in numbers. This will increase inefficiency in the agricultural marketing system in the country as well as in

Punjab. He also highlighted that agricultural markets are not perfect and also differ significantly from the markets for industrial goods. In the long run, such markets and the absence of MSP and public procurement may ruin the smallholders and will turn them completely unviable whereas on the other hand, other sectors of the economy offer no promising sources of livelihood to them. The new laws will eliminate the power of state government to regulate markets and impose taxes or charge market fee to generate state resources. Talking about the essential commodities amendment Act, Dr Gill showed apprehensions that the provision of ceilings on prices will provide an opportunity to hoarders/traders to charge higher prices to the consumers to the extent of 50% for non-perishable agricultural produce and up to100% for perishable horticultural produce. He also showed apprehensions about the efficacy of contract farming system and feared exploitation of farmers by big corporates. The new laws may also promote private research and extension in agriculture and allied activities charging more from the farmers and public sector research and extension may also be adversely affected.

Dr PS Birthal

Dr PS Birthal is an eminent agricultural economist at the national level and is a member of various national level committees on agriculture. He expressed his views on new opportunities under the farm sector laws. He pointed out that a large number of arguments on the farm sector laws are not based on evidences. The major emphasis of any agricultural sector policy intervention should focus on the farmers. Taking an all India view, he opined that farmers will have better marketing opportunities for their produce and it will enhance farmers' welfare. It was emphasized

that despite being declared for 23 commodities, MSP is effectively ensured for only paddy and wheat crops and benefits only a small proportion of farmers. He mentioned that less than10% farmers in India were able to sell their produce at MSP. Paddy and wheat do not account for a major portion of value of output in India but the high value perishable crops account for higher share. By raising the question “Who benefits from whom?”, he expressed that in the previous marketing regime the major beneficiaries were the middlemen, especially the commission agents as they not only charged high commission (2.5%) but also exploited the farmers through various malpractices. The paddy-wheat cropping system of Punjab is depleting the groundwater resources and may completely deplete them in a span of 10-15 years, which is a cause of concern. It was also said that the current cropping system in Punjab is also causing environmental pollution and inter-regional disparity and is not sustainable in the long run. Sticking to the current cropping pattern is promoting the exports of natural resources from Punjab. Dr Birthal also emphasized that political economy of farm subsidies is complex as it is tough to withdraw them after their introduction and they start losing their relevance and efficiency. An alternative system for incentivising productive, sustainable and resource efficient behaviour needs to be developed for enhancing farm incomes and ensuring long-term sustainability in India as well as in Punjab. Giving an example of milk, it was highlighted that it contributes significantly to the value of agricultural output in Punjab despite no MSP for milk. The milk sector revolution has helped in enhancing farmers’ income and welfare. He criticized very high rate of market fee and cesses being charged in the APMC markets in Punjab and expressed apprehensions that such high rates were only to generate revenue for the state and not to improve welfare

of the farmers. In the end, he concluded that contract farming in broilers is the best example of win-win situation to both buyers and sellers. Group contract and clustering are the solutions to raise the bargaining power of farmers.

It was opined that the new farm sector laws may create opportunities for crop diversification and increasing farm incomes as the private sector may help in strengthening the global value chains. There is a large scope for diversifying to crops like fruits and vegetables in the long run. There will be a reduction in the transaction costs as traders buy produce at the farmgate and farmers will have better access to new technologies. It was mentioned that the private sector has huge resources for boosting research and development and it will be good for bringing structural shifts in the agricultural sector as public sector will not be able to the infuse sufficient resources required for research and development needs of the future.

Dr Birthal is of the view that the benefits of new laws outweigh the losses under the new regime. Despite poor bargaining power of the farmers, opportunities like formation of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) can be a good alternative to enhance the bargaining power. The farmers should be adequately compensated for any income loss for shifting to alternative crops to achieve crop diversification. We also should encourage rural industrialisation which was missed during the green revolution period in Punjab. He also proposed the idea of paying farmers for conserving ecosystem services and this will encourage sustainable agriculture and will enhance farmers' incomes as well. Except the provisioning services, all other ecosystem services have remained largely unquantified in the past and need to be quantified and monetised so that the farmers

may be incentivised. He hinted at the need for strengthening of market intelligence and research services for the farmers and other stakeholders to ensure that the farmers may receive higher prices for their produce.

Mr Avtar Singh Dhindsa

Mr Avtar Singh Dhindsa is a postgraduate in agriculture and is a leading agricultural entrepreneur of India. The major focus of his talk was on the way ahead for Punjab in era of farm sector laws. He started by pointing out that the new laws pose a serious challenge for Punjab economy and also for the survival and viability of Punjab farmers. The farmers and other stakeholders should have been properly taken into confidence but the bills were passed very hastily in the parliament. Instead of abrupt changes, gradual changes in this direction could have been more welcome and would have yielded better receptiveness amongst the stakeholders. The government should also have considered the extent of investments and infrastructure created in APMC markets which may become defunct. The strategy of gradual changes would also have been more realistic in bringing the desired changes in the agricultural markets. He simply proposed the idea of bringing 10% of the production or markets under new regime rather than changing it altogether. There may be a 10-year roadmap for such a shift for the Punjab state. The farmers must be properly trained to realize the desired changes. Further, it is important to generate large scale awareness about the farm sector laws, their implications and possible way ahead amongst various stakeholders, and scientists and extension specialists must be trained on these laws. With regard to contract farming, Mr Dhindsa emphasized that farmers must be secured against the potential losses emanating from

adoption of new crops and practices under the contract farming, and contracting companies must ensure the responsibility of bearing any such losses. He also warned about the fly-by-night companies who fleece the farmers and pointed to the need to control them. Only then the farmers will be attracted towards contract farming and may play a role in crop diversification in Punjab. He concluded with the suggestion that Punjab and Haryana should move away from paddy-wheat cropping system and adopt more diversified cropping pattern. He also raised apprehensions on the efficiency of shifting the dispute settlement from courts to the bureaucracy.

D. Discussion

During the final session of the webinar, there was discussion on various aspects of the new farm sector laws. The idea was to understand various issues as well as to cover untouched aspects of the laws.

There was a general agreement that the Acts have be enacted in a haste. There should have been broader consultations at various level of the Government, including the states and other stakeholders, particularly, the farmers who are the most vulnerable ones. Further, the policies regarding agriculture should be the prerogative of the states because not only that agriculture is the state subject but also there being great diversity in agro-ecology in India.

Even if there are inefficiencies in the APMC markets in India and the states could not make good progress in improving the market efficiency, and there are associated issues of storage of essential commodities and difficulties in contract farming, there should have been comprehensive consultations and an action plan giving enough time to all stakeholder for adaptation to new

scenario; rather than a shock treatment (when the humanity at large is struggling against COVID-19 pandemic) leading to suspicions and trust deficit in the society.

Some arguments that MSP and public procurement benefit only 6% of the farmers in India and this entails huge financial outlay are also misplaced. The outlay is nothing when compared to the tax and other economic benefits given to the big corporates in India. In India, about 60% of rural population largely earns about 16% of gross value added in Indian agriculture whereas remaining 40% of the population earns the remaining 84% of the gross value added which clearly indicates gross inequality in income distribution of agricultural/rural households as compared to other sections/households. In this situation our effort should focus on the enhancement of the income/profit of remaining 94% farmers, whereas the new developments focus on bringing down the livelihood of 6% of the farmers who are receiving MSP backed by public procurement.

The unequal treatment of rich and the poor can be judged from the accumulation of wealth by big corporates in India. Almost half of the richest 100 individuals in India increased their wealth by 14%, amounting to US$ 63.5 billion, even during the Covid-19 period, when everybody was suffering and one of them alone accounted for more than half of this gain. One is forced to think why no steps are being taken to redistribute the income from rich to poor and the focus is on so-called rich 6% farmers who are in fact extremely poor compared to those in other sectors, what to say of corporate houses.

The assumption of improved market efficiency through these laws may be misplaced. In Bihar where the APMC markets were

absent and food grains were sold through private traders, there were no gains in efficiency and farmers had to bear losses as they were unable to sell at MSP. The recent developments have created very strong apprehensions that the MSP and public procurement regime may get dismantled in near future harming the farmers in the food bowl of India, though some sections are of the view that this will not happen as public procurement is still important to meet the national food security needs. Another argument in support of the continuation of the MSP and public procurement regime is huge infrastructure of FCI which cannot be just dismantled or wasted. But the farmers are not willing to buy these arguments in the current scenario of mistrust.

There are theoretical expectations that the scope for crop diversification will increase under the new laws. In the food bowl of India, the so-called improved marketing system is operative for crops other than rice and wheat, but still the area under other crops has not increased, paddy-wheat cropping system continues to be the most predominant cropping system and there has not been much progress in diversification in spite of the efforts by the Government. Taking example of two most important alternative crops, namely maize and cotton, the market prices ruled substantially lower than the MSP even when the ordinances were issued/ laws have been enacted. The market price of maize is ruling between Rs 700 to Rs 1000 per quintal in Punjab, whereas its MSP is Rs 1850 per quintal.

Crop diversification requires MSP backed by assured marketing for alternative crops or adequate compensation to the farmers for any loss due to crop shifts. This will also require better research in markets, establishing industries and developing value chains and post-harvest infrastructure. These require large investments and long gestation period.

A comprehensive crop diversification strategy may only be successful if an economically viable option is offered and this is implemented in a well-planned and gradual manner. It has to be kept in mind that someone will think of future, only when his/her survival is assured financially today.

The effect of these laws on general consumer will need to be watched. Presently the increased role of private trade and corporate, in general, is manipulating the food prices to the disadvantages of the consumers besides that of producers in vegetables.

Kinnow and seed potato (major fruit and vegetable crop of Punjab) and poultry (broiler) are being cited as successful examples where there is no MSP support. An overwhelming majority of the kinnow and potato growers and poultry farmers are large farmers. They are better informed, have better connectivity, financial strength, and have better capacity to bear market shocks. Therefore, they cannot be compared with paddy and wheat growers who are dominantly marginal and small farmers and will not have any bargaining power in the current regime.

The success story of milk sector in Punjab is also cited as an example of free markets. It can/may not be completely attributed to the private sector as Verka (cooperative undertaking) is a major player in the milk industry and acts as a price leader. Even during the lockdown, when all private traders stopped procuring milk, Verka came to the rescue of milk producers.

E. Recommendations

Following are the summary points and major recommendations emerging from the webinar. There is a strong opinion that time and speed of enacting farm sector laws has created an atmosphere of suspicion and uncertainty. If the APMC market system was not

efficient or if there are associated issues of storage of essential commodities and difficulties in contract farming, there should be a comprehensive and at least medium (if not long) term action plan giving enough time to the states, farmers, consumers and other stakeholders for smooth transformation to new marketing environment.

Following are the important recommendations emerging from the webinar:

1. In agriculture, the views of states should prevail. Agriculture being a state subject, these laws are being considered as an attempt to infringe the jurisdiction. There is an open divergence of views of the central government and those of some states. In such scenario, some stakeholders may even approach Honorable Courts which may further vitiate the environment. Such an open divergence of views at different levels of governance needs to be avoided in the larger national interest.

2. There are extremely diverse agro-ecologies in the country (consider cropping systemin three adjoining states: Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan). Thus, the states are in a better position to develop policies which are tuned to their strengths and weaknesses, and should be allowed to design and implement (with need based financial support of Central Government) their own pathways of agricultural development and growth. In fact, implementation of uniform policy across the nation ignoring the resource endowments and agro-ecologies of the states/ region may prove to be counterproductive.

3. There is strong fear that it is beginning of the process to dismantle MSP and public procurement regime. The

argument that the MSP and public procurement will not be dismantled because of huge requirements for buffer stocks is not tenuous. As repeated verbal and written assurances are being given about the continuation of MSP and public procurement regime as at present, therefore, there should be no roadblock to legalize it.

4. It is being argued that the benefits of MSP have only been reaped by a limited number of farmers (6%) belonging to national food bowl. Efforts and programs need to be designed to raise the incomes of farmers of other regions as well, rather than to focus on depleting the livelihood of farmers of this region. Why such a contrast in policies between agriculture (rural) and other (urban) sectors? When the former is already poorly placed, there is no instance of such a plan of action for redistribution of income in the corporate sector wherein the bigger corporates are growing by leaps and bounds. It may be seen that the support provided to the farmers in the form of MSP and public procurement is just peanuts compared to the incentives being given to other sectors, especially the big corporates.

5. In a situation of highly unequal income distribution between agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, the policy should aim at narrowing down the differences by generating income opportunities and raising income levels of farmers rather than providing a platform and free hand to the larger trade and corporate houses to flourish at the cost of poor producers and consumers.

6. The Punjab state is likely to lose huge revenue to develop market and rural infrastructure on account of loss of market fee

charged from trading in the APMC markets. The loss of state revenue may adversely affect the infrastructure development in agriculture and rural areas. This is the major source of state revenue as industrial development got a major setback in Punjab due to huge tax rebates and incentives given to the industry in the hilly states. Thus, the state should be allowed to levy taxes on the trade of agricultural produce outside the APMC markets also.

7. The laws must have adequate safeguards for the farmers and the government should explore quasi-judicial forms of dispute settlement rather than leaving it to the bureaucracy. In addition, the laws must also protect the economic interests of the farmers ensuring them some minimum returns to sustain at least their current level of livelihood.

8. There is yet no clarity on how a general consumer will be affected by these laws. It is not unusual that unregulated private trade aims at maximize their own profits at the cost of both the consumer and producer. The private traders and corporates are already exploiting the producer as well consumer in onion, tomato and some other vegetables. The new laws are enormously expanding the possibilities of exploitation by private traders. The other view is that the consumers should not be evaluated as a single category as was being done 5 decades ago. They can be classified into three categories like poor, middle and rich class and the PDS system may be remodeled to ensure food safety of the poor consumers at reasonable prices. Such a classification will help in more realistic estimates of consumption needs in India and will open up opportunities for diversifying to high value foods.

On the whole, better regulation of markets would be required to balance the interests of both producers and consumers. The power of the corporate vs. producer and consumer is very aptly exemplified by comparison of sale price of milk by the farmer and that of mineral water by the trader.

9. The claim that the laws will encourage crop diversification is also misplaced. The crop diversification is definitely needed to conserve groundwater resources for long-term sustainability of farming in states of Punjab and Haryana, but it requires MSP backed by assured marketing for alternative crops and/ or ensuring at least their current level of income and livelihood. Punjab can develop niches and follow cluster development approach. Organic products, fruits, vegetables and processed products provide a huge potential in the national and international markets. Besides capacity building of the farmers, this will, however, require better research in national as well as foreign markets for alternative crops, establishing processing industries, developing value chains at the national and global level and comprehensive analysis of the risk and mitigation strategies of these chains. A comprehensive crop diversification strategy may only be successful if an economically viable option aligned with natural resource conservation is developed and implemented in a well-planned step wise manner.

10. COVID-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated the importance and role of public sector R&D institutions. Therefore, agricultural R&D will require huge financial resources to cater to the needs of the changing times and remain relevant.

11. The farmers should be compensated for ecosystem services and conservation of natural resources resulting from adoption of sustainable farming practices as these may involve fall in profits. It will, however, require proper quantification of ecosystem services in the region and suitable mechanism of farmers' compensation.

12. The special economic packages and incentives have been provided to the adjoining hilly states, which have eroded the industrial base of the state. Therefore, the Punjab state needs special incentives by the Centre to revive and develop industry, particularly agro-industries. This is an essential input for diversification of paddy-wheat cropping system towards high value crops and value addition to enhance farm incomes.

13. Punjab is a landlocked state which is far away from the seaports. This acts as a major disadvantage to the state for promoting exports due to high transportation costs. The opening up of opportunities for exports through western borders will encourage crop diversification and better returns to the farmers.

14. There is need to create viable farm and non-farm income avenues for the rural poor so that their current level of livelihood/profits are not adversely affected. It must be ensured that their vulnerability is not aggravated under the new marketing regime.

Resource Speaker

Mr Ajay Vir Jakhar

Ajay Vir Jakhar is the Chairman of Punjab State Farmers' and Farmers' Welfare Commission, Punjab and also the Chairmanof Bharat KrishakSamaj, New Delhi, India. He regularly writes articles that appear in various newspapers and publications. He is also the editor of agriculture magazines, "Farmers' Forum" and "Krishak Samachar" targeting farmers, policy makers and those that influence policy in India. He passionately advocates policies for farmer prosperity, self-sustainability and equal opportunities. Mr Jakhar is member of various co-operatives societies and actively participates in their activities. He regularly organizes seminars and conferences on issues relevant to the farming community and participates and speaks at various national and international forums.

Resource Speaker

Dr Sucha Singh Gill

Dr Gill is currently working as Economist (expert) at CRRID, Chandigarh. He was Former Director-General, CRRID, Chandigarh, Former Professor and Head, Department of Economics, Punjabi University, Patiala; Former Dean, Academic Affairs, Dean, Social Sciences; Dean, Research, Punjabi University, Patiala. He was the Vice-President of Indian Association of Social Science Research Institutions (IASSI). He was also Elected President for Annual Conference for Indian Society of Labour Economics.

Resource Speaker

Dr PS Birthal

Dr Birthal is currently ICAR National Professor at the National Institute of Agricultural Economics and Policy Research (NIAP), New Delhi. He has made notable contributions in agricultural economics and policy research and has published more than 75 research papers in national and international journals, in addition to a number of books, policy papers, working papers, discussion papers etc. Dr Birthal is a Fellow of the National Academy of Agricultural Sciences (NAAS) and has also been conferred Recognition Award (Social Sciences) by it. He is a recipient of National Fellowship and Young Scientist Award from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research; DK Desai Prize (thrice) from the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics; and RT Doshi Award (thrice) from the Agricultural Economics Research Association (India) for his outstanding contributions in the field of agricultural economics. Dr Birthal serves on Editorial Boards of many national and international journals, and committees of the central and state governments.

Resource Speaker

Mr Avtar Singh Dhindsa

Mr Dhindsa is currently the Vice Chairman of Punjab Agri Export Corporation, Limited. He is aprogressive farmer from Ludhiana, Punjab, is one of India's biggest exporters of flower seeds. He manages 200 acres farm at village Langrian, on the Nabha-Malerkotla road, with family members. His farming operation is called Beauscape Farms. He runs a flourishing floriculture business that exports flowers to different countries across the globe. He is always in favour of a 100 per cent export-oriented business. He exports flowers to Europe, Japan, Australia, Korea and Taiwan, also sells 70 to 90 tonnes of flower seeds every year across globe. He always said there is a need to educate agriculturists on diversification of crops. A floriculturist earns more than five to six times as compared to a farmer who grows conventional crops like paddy and wheat.

INDIAN SOCIETY FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY (ISADP) LUDHIANA

The specific aims and objectives of the society are :-

1. To disseminate scientific knowledge about economic problems of agricultural development and policy,
2. To arrange lectures of distinguished scientists/ administrators,
3. To organize seminars/symposia/conference and to publish books, reports, papers or summaries of papers, either separately or collectively or in a periodical way, which may be issued under the auspices of the society,
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