

Impact of COVID-19 on Indian Agriculture and Farmers

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Introduction

The different pandemics that humanity has experienced, like Spanish Flu, Asian Flu, Ebola, and swine influenza, have had a bad impact on the economy, the environment and any activity like livestock, agriculture, tourism, transport, education, health, fishing, mining, industry, commerce, etc. Currently, humanity is facing another pandemic, the infection of the new coronavirus (2019-nCoV) that generates the disease referred to as COVID-19. The target of this article is to research and discuss the consequences in agriculture of events associated with the disease of COVID-19. For this review, data from the Food Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and scientific and technical documents are used. There's sufficient evidence to affirm that the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 disease has a crucial effect on agriculture and therefore the food supply chain, mainly affecting food demand and consequently food security, with an excellent impact on the foremost vulnerable population.

Impact of COVID-19

The SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes the COVID-19 disease is very infectious and contagious. The long-term consequences for people are so far unknown, while the long-term effects on the international community are going to be dramatic. COVID-19 has changed the world forever in every imaginable respect and has impacted heavily on the agricultural sector, which accounts for 18 per cent of India's gross domestic product (GDP) and provides employment to 50 per cent of the country's workforce and it is highly sensitive to significant shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has not only affect manufacturing, services and business but also pushed back Modi's government ambitious programme to



double farmer's income by 2022. Farmers are in distress after the lockdown caused disruptions within the food supply chain, scarcity of labour and resulted during a decline in demand. During this challenging time, how do Agriculture answer the crisis and the way do government measures affect 140 million farm households across the country and thereafter impact the economy of a really important country within the developing world? We assess the immediate challenges that COVID19 has posed to the farm sector and suggest mitigation measures to make sure a sustainable food system within the post-crisis period. Immediately after the lockdown was announced in our nation, the Indian minister of finance declared an INR 1.7 trillion package, mostly to guard the vulnerable sections against any adverse impacts of the pandemic. The announcement, among a slew of advantages, contained advance release of an INR 2000 to bank accounts of farmers as income support under the PRADHAN MANTRI-KISAN scheme. Narendra Modi's Government also raised the wage rate for workers occupied under the MANREGA, the world's largest wage guarantee scheme. Under the special scheme to require care of the endangered population, PRADHAN MANTRI GARIB KALYAN YOJANA (Prime Minister's scheme for the welfare of the poor) has been announced. Additional grain allotments to beneficiaries were also announced for the upcoming three months. Food and cash assistance to persons occupied within the informal sector, mostly migrant labourers, have also been announced that a separate PM CARES (Prime Minister Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations) fund has been created. The Federal Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has also announced certain measures that address the "burden of debt servicing" thanks to the pandemic and therefore the minister of finance introduced Rs. 20 lakh crore 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Package' focused on the agriculture and allied sectors which is a good initiation towards sustainable development, However the poor or poverty-stricken sections of society are always the hard-hitting in any pandemic or disaster situation. With about eighty-five per cent of Indian farm households being small and marginal farmers, and a significant part of the population being landless farm labourers, welfare measures to contain any damage from COVID-19 are getting to help them with sincere implementation. The focus of the govt, therefore, has got to be to guard the lives of each citizen. However, humans living on agriculture and its allied activities, mostly those losing their income from the informal sector at this lockdown period, need to be given alternative avenues (cash transfers) till the economy bounces back. The govt will need to step



back and review its programme for doubling farmer income within the next two years. It will first need to take measures or actions that pull out growers from the bad economic situation the pandemic has pushed them into. Unlike the industry and manufacturing sector, farmers didn't stop the production of food grains, pulses, milk, fruits and vegetables through the lockdown months. On the contrary, they're set to offer the state record output of wheat, pulses, milk, fruits and vegetables. In the coming time, some points are very important in respect of food security like Growers will need monetary assistance to shop for seeds, fertilizers and other inputs for subsequent sowing season to supply enough to stay the nation's granaries full. They also got to look out for their families in such trying times. Apart from that, it must be ensured that each one of the grain and pulses farmers brings back the govt procurement centres are purchased and at the fixed support price. At an equivalent time, the govt must facilitate the timely availability of adequate quantities of quality seeds/saplings and fertilizers for the subsequent sowing season. The cash strapped Indian farmer has played a vital role through the coronavirus crisis to keep the country well provided which should never be forgotten. If assistance is not given now, farmers will fall over into debt and therefore the agrarian crisis will deepen, which can be further bad for the country's overall economy.

Conclusion

The first and second wave of pandemics called COVID-19 features a great impact on the actions and activities of humanity, agriculture isn't outside this impact. Food demand and thus food security are greatly affected because of mobility restrictions, reduced purchasing power, and a greater impact on the foremost vulnerable population groups. As cases of contagion increase, governments take more drastic measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, also influencing the worldwide food system. The premise of any measure adopted should be to secure the health and food security of the population, to the detriment of economic development, although some governments enter the other direction.