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KRISHI UNNATI MELA

Diversify and boost income, PM to farmers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the agriculture sector under duress due to sudden change in weather conditions, Prime Minister Narendra Modi feels it is time for farmers to look at alternative sources of income as well, apart from agriculture.

Speaking at the inauguration of Krishi Unnati Mela on Saturday, the PM urged the farmers to focus on crop diversification and go for allied activities like dairy, poultry and food processing to boost their income as depending on farming alone cannot help them sustain their families.

In order to survive natural calamities, Modi suggested that farmers should follow three-pronged approach towards farming to insulate from crop losses. "At present, farmers follow one pillar, that is farming alone. When this pillar falls down due to hailstorm, their survival is affected. So, it is



important to have our farming based on three pillars," he said. The first one is to continue to regulate farming in one third of the crop area. The second one is to grow timber on the boundary of the farm field and the third one is to adopt animal husbandry, poultry and bee keeping among other activities. "If we do our farming on these three pillars then farmers will have ways to insulate from losses due to natural calamities. And their income will also rise," Modi said.

He called upon farmers to go for value addition and take up food processing in a big way to boost their income. "The more farmers take up food pro-

cessing, the more their income will increase. If you sell milk, you will get less price. But you sell ghee and paneer, you earn more. Similarly, if you sell raw mango, you may get less price but you would earn more if you make pickles and sell," he said, while urging farmers to unite together to bring changes in villages," PM said. He even talked about the increasing market of organic food in the country and suggested farmers to explore this aspect as well.

As per the latest Government data, the all-India average monthly income of agricultural households during the crop year July 2012-June 2013 was estimated at ₹6,426.

The PM also asked farmers to conserve water and mentioned several initiatives taken by his Government for agriculture growth, including introduction of a new insurance scheme and giving soil health cards to farmers, with a view to doubling their income by 2022.

Modi added his Government has identified 90 stuck irrigation projects which can irrigate 80 lakh hectares. The Government is spending ₹20,000 crore to boost irrigation projects.

He even emphasised on micro and drip irrigation as well as liquid fertiliser to reduce cost of production and raise farmers' income level. Water harvesting is of as much importance as water conservation. We do not have the right to waste water. Per drop more crop is how we can do that," Modi said.

Attacking Opposition parties for claiming that all projects and programmes started when they were in power, PM said: "You would be surprised to know that as much as 90 projects which are full of water like dams have been built, but there is no way to provide water to farmers. Now, my Government is working to provide water from these projects and once it is completed, around 80 lakh hectares will get water. And

once water reaches there, you all can think how much that land will give us back."

He suggested funds from MNREGA should be utilised for creation of assets such as ponds to conserve water. "About MNREGA, many discussions take place, but no asset has been created. This government is emphasising... During this summer in every village, one work should be done through MNREGA and that is desilting of ponds, deepening of ponds and creating new ones. In this Budget, the government is aiming at 5 lakh ponds," Modi said.

Modi also gave away the Krishi Karman Awards for 2014-15 to states and farmers for their outstanding performance in agriculture. He also launched a mobile application for farmers — Kisan Suvidha. This app will provide information to farmers on weather, market prices, seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and agriculture machinery.

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PM Narendra Modi honours progressive farmer Sona Devi in New Delhi on Saturday.

Y'nagar woman farmer honoured

SHIV KUMAR SHARMA
CHANDIGARH SERVICE

YAMUNANAGAR, MARCH 19

Sona Devi, a progressive woman farmer from Yamunanagar district's Harewa village, has been honoured with the the Agriculture Minister's Krishi Karman Award.

The award, which carries a cash prize of Rs 2 lakh along with a 'prashasti patra' was given by PM Narendra Modi in New Delhi today.

Dr Aditya Pratap Dabas, Deputy Director (Agriculture), Yamunanagar, said in

the women's category, Sona Devi was honoured for her exemplary performance in the field of paddy production. He said she had transplanted Bayer-6444 variety of paddy and produced 20 quintal in an acre.

She said she had a land holding of five acres in the village and had been farming for 27 years. "My husband died of heart attack in 1988 when I was 27 years old. Since then, I have been doing farming all by myself. I have two sons and they also help me," said Sona.

*Correct
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