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# Dr Swaminathan wants special package for state

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**CHANDIGARH, MARCH 13**  
Former Director-General of International Rice Research Institute and one of the pioneers of the Green Revolution, Dr MS Swaminathan today said that Punjab should be declared a special agriculture zone and should be given a special package to maintain food security.

Regarding amendments in the Land Acquisition Act, he said without specifying the objective, agriculture land should not be acquired by the government. "A sizeable chunk of land was acquired for special economic zones, many of which failed to take off and have now become real estate sites," he said.

No land should be acquired without consulting farmers and without declaring the need for acquiring the land, he said. "While acquiring land, three factors—food security, security of farmers and purpose for which land is to be acquired—should be kept in mind. Preserving land is a must as 90 per cent of food for humanity comes from the soil and only 10 per cent comes from other resources such as the ocean," he said.

**Cropping pattern**  
On the crisis in the farm sector, he said Punjab farmers should adopt a three-year cropping pattern. In the first two years, they should grow wheat and in the third, leguminous crops or green fodder to invigorate the soil.

Likewise, farmers should grow paddy (rice), especially basmati, for two years and shift to pulses the third year, he said. Dr Swaminathan said that it would be in the national interest if farmers in Punjab continued to grow paddy and wheat. He said there was a need to move to "evergreen revolution" which meant making farming viable for small and marginal farmers, ecological sustainability and maintaining soil health.



MS Swaminathan in Chandigarh.  
TRIBUNE PHOTO: S CHANDAN

**“No land should be acquired without consulting the farmers and without declaring the need for acquiring the land.”**  
Dr MS Swaminathan

On the Shanta Kumar committee report regarding FCI restructuring, he said before taking a decision, there should be an informed debate on the issue among all stakeholders. He said the policy of MSP and grain procurement could not be abandoned. "Implementing the report without a debate could pose a threat to the country's food security," he claimed.

"I have only recommended a 50 per cent margin for the farmers whereas some pharmaceutical companies earn profit up to 500 per cent," he said.

**On need for MSP**  
There has been a hue and cry across the country over the non-implementation of Dr Swaminathan's recommendations regarding the MSP. The BJP, that had promised to implement the recommendations on the eve of the Lok Sabha elections, has backed

off. Dr Swaminathan suggested that this could be done in phases — announcing a 10 per cent increase in the first year, a 20 per cent increase the second year and ultimately a 50 per cent rise in the third year. "Saving small and marginal farmers is a must to save the farm sector as the survival of 60 per cent of the population depends on it," Dr Swaminathan said.

Value addition in the farm produce and starting allied ventures was the need of the hour, said Dr Swaminathan. He said he was for a single agriculture market in the country. Along with technical upgradation of technology, there was a need to improve the labour efficiency to ensure inclusive growth in the farm sector.

**On climate change**  
On climate change, he said there was a need for anticipatory research to counter the effect of climate change. More money needed to be pumped into agriculture research for coming out with weather-resistant varieties of wheat. With the increase in temperature (up to 2 degree Celsius) there could be a huge fall in food production in Punjab, he warned. He said soil health cards would not serve any purpose if the panchayats were given help in maintaining soil health. He said after ensuring food security, there was a need to raise the nutritional value of foodgrain.

**Need for insurance**  
There is a need to introduce insurance for the farm sector, said Dr MS Swaminathan. This would ensure stability in the farm sector and ensure food security. He said there was no harm in growing genetically modified crops. He said foreign direct investment (FDI) could prove beneficial for the farm sector. It would be a win-win situation for farmers as well as investors, he said.

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