

Concept Note

## **National Symposium on Agriculture**

Organized By

Bharti Institute of Public Policy, Indian School of Business

**Date: 6<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2019**

**Venue: Juniper Hall, India Habitat Center, Delhi**

### **Introduction**

Farmers and their livelihoods in India are under severe stress. Farmers protests, long marches, dumping agro-produce on the streets, and distress sales, across India are a visual manifestation of this national outcry. State and central governments have used a variety of policy levers to improve the well-being of farmers with mixed results. Traditionally, these have been production-oriented policies like subsidizing inputs or providing minimum support prices (MSP). New schemes have included loan waivers and more recently direct income transfers.

Given the vast diversity among agricultural households in terms of socio-economic status and land-holding size, no one-size-fits-all approach can be used to alleviate farmer distress. A variety of policy options needs to be generated, specially taking into account both short term and long-term needs of farmers, as well as broader rural and national society and economy.

To deliberate on these aspects and think about policy options that go beyond tinkering with existing policy mechanisms such as loan waivers or MSPs, Bharti Institute of Public Policy is organising a one-day symposium on Agriculture at India Habitat Centre on February 6, 2019.

This symposium will focus on:

#### **Panel 1: Short Term Policy Options to address farmers distress**

As a solution to farmers distress, policy options like increasing MSPs or direct benefit transfer of subsidies, have been debated and the current discourse and policy action is focussing on loan waivers and direct income transfers. While some states (Rajasthan, Chattisgarh, Maharashtra and MP) have announced farm loan waivers, others (Telengana and Odisha) are looking at schemes that directly transfer subsidy amounts and working capital requirements into farmers'

bank accounts. Direct income transfers by the BJP led central government are on the anvil. Direct income transfer is considered beneficial as they reportedly direct farmers production towards market demand and optimise use of inputs vis a vis increasing MSPs that could distort markets towards certain crops and benefit large farmers who have production surplus.

The panel will discuss various policy options to alleviate farmers distress.

### **Panel 2: Role of Technology and Markets in Agriculture**

Market transactions dominate farming right from land tenure arrangements, to purchase of inputs, to crop procurement, crop loans, and crop insurance. Technology is playing an increasingly important role in linking farmers to markets. Indian agricultural markets are changing. Not only is there transformation in land tenure (land leasing) arrangements, but also new innovations and models in agro-input markets are emerging. Traditional Mandis that suffer from poor competitiveness, and excessive presence of middlemen, are also being reformed through use of technology. New electronic trading platforms like E-Nam, commodity exchanges (eg. NCDEX), forums like ITC-E Chaupal, Skymet, Mkrishi are complemented through policy instruments that can leverage predictive models based on big data and machine learning to better manage yields and therefore prices and farmer remunerations. Other technological interventions include the use of weather-indexed crop insurance practices.

This panel aims to understand the role technology can play in working of markets in agriculture.

### **Panel 3: Social Outcomes**

Agriculture is pervasive and what is grown, as well as how it is grown and consumed has much broader implications for society, than just the incomes of farmers. Agriculture policies impact nutrition, climate change, as well as resource usage like land, soil, water, electricity etc. Nutritional security can be enhanced through growing crops like millets that are suitable for diet as well agro-ecological balance. Climate resilient agriculture enhances coping strategies of farmers towards climate change as well as allows meeting national goals of emission reduction. Agricultural practices such as over use of subsidised inputs or crop cultivation unsuitable to existing biophysical land features lead to degradation of land, water and soil and appropriate use solutions need to be explored for the same.

This panel will explore ways of how agriculture can factor in to create better social outcomes of major policy challenges such as nutritional security, climate change, and land and natural resource use.