

Agro-Economic Alerts

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For kind attention of:

The Hon'ble Prime Minister's Office,
the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare,
and all others interested

Emerging Critical Situations and Threats in India's Agricultural Economy

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1. Didi Badi Yojana in Jharkhand:
A COVID-19 Pandemic Initiative
Needs Boost 2
2. Pineapple Cultivation in
Hmarkhawlien Village of Assam
Calls for Intervention 4
3. Highlighting the Impact of
Paramparagat Krishi Vikas
Yojana 6

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Didi Badi Yojana in Jharkhand: A COVID-19 Pandemic Initiative Needs Boost

Key Highlights

- To offset the effect of unemployment as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, the state government of Jharkhand came up with a holistic initiative of Didi Badi Yojana (DBY) in September 2020 to ameliorate the problem of malnutrition among women and children living in the rural areas. The initiative is called so since *didi(s)* from 'Sakhi Mandals' are assisting in the implementation.
- Beneficiaries get help in the production of nutritious vegetables and fruits on one to five decimals of land around their houses. Land owners with a job card, rural landless, and permanent residents of the state get the opportunity to work under this scheme.
- About five lakh families are targeted to benefit under the scheme. The coverage, however, is still 70-80 percent of all the eligible beneficiaries which needs to be boosted in order to achieve long run nutritional security.

Observations

- For effective implementation of this scheme, the state government decided to take support of various agencies namely (a) Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS), (b) Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), (c) Gram Panchayat (GP), and (d) Women and Child Development (WCB).
- Training to beneficiaries and 'Didi Badi Sakhis' (DBSs) is provided by JSLPS which bears the

total expenditure in implementing the scheme. Arranging training materials, facilities for state, district and block level trainers, orientation of MGNREGA employees and panchayat representatives are some components under this scheme.

- Scientists at Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Research Complex for Eastern Region (ICAR-RCER), Ranchi, suggested grafting of tomato stems with brinjal roots to fight the drooping disease (Murjha) which is caused due to soil acidity. It affects the plants of solanaceae variety namely, tomato, brinjal, chilli, etc.
- After two and half months of grafting tomato with brinjal, growth of healthy fruits becomes evident. During the whole period of its fruiting, there is a possibility of getting five to six kg(s)/plant, whereas the plants without grafting could only produce four to five kg(s)/plant. Higher productivity leading to higher net returns is a step towards fulfilling the objective of achieving nutritional security.

Image 1: Meeting Beneficiaries of DBY



Source: Site visit.

- During the first 35 days of the mission, a target of creating one crore 50 lakh labour man-days had been fixed. The horizon of MGNREGA was extended in Jharkhand for creation of assets, apart from generating employment opportunities.
- Groups of two to five landless villagers need to be formed for implementing the scheme. With the permission of Gram Sabha, the scheme is effective on public land. Wage payments are made according to the number of days worked.
- During the first year of DBY launching, hardly 20 percent of the eligible beneficiaries came forward to be a part of the scheme. Groups and migrant labourers who are 18 to 35 years of age and are permanent residents of Jharkhand must come forward.
- From panchayats to upper state authorities, the state must conduct Awareness Creation Drives (ACDs) to educate people about the benefits and provisions of DBY, especially in the rural areas.

Actions Suggested

- Despite the provisions of DBY, in absence of correct and desired land ownership related papers, and other documents, land verification exercises get obstructed. Such beneficiaries can be considered by taking extra efforts at the block level mandated departments.
- From the beneficiaries' point of view, payments are delayed by a month, or so. Efforts must be made in that direction for successful implementation of the scheme.

Information Sources:

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Pineapple Cultivation in Hmarkhawlien Village of Assam Calls for Intervention

Key Highlights

- Cachar district in Assam contributes a large share in total pineapple production in the state. It produced 2.50 crores of pineapple on 1,500 hectares of land in the year 2020-21. It inhabits the largest pineapple orchard in Hmarkhawlien village of Lakhipur sub-division which is completely organic.
- Due to good taste, unique aroma, size and flavour, pineapple produced in Hmarkhawlien has a high demand but some traders from Mizoram and Manipur mix pineapples of their areas thus negatively affecting its reputation.
- In spite of high demand of pineapple produced round the year supply cannot be increased due to lack of irrigation facilities

and shortage of inputs. Due to scattered rainfall, pineapples grown in winter season are smaller in size and have a reduced sweetness. Provision of appropriate facilities can save cultivators from losing income during such times.

Observations

- Around one thousand families of Lakhipur sub-division are dependent on pineapple cultivation for their subsistence, and it is the mainstay of about 5,500 inhabitants of Hmarkhawlien. The sweetness and unique aroma of pineapple produced differentiates it from the produce of other north-eastern states since the sugar content of pineapple is between 16 to 18 percent.
- Notwithstanding the appreciable production of pineapple, the growers face many problems in marketing. Traders from plains exploit the growers by paying a nominal price

and reaping a larger profit. Lack of modern cold storage within the vicinity of pineapple orchards and non-availability of proper transport system to ferry the pineapple to wholesale and retail outlets in and outside the district hinder the growers to reap full benefits of pineapple cultivation.

- The pineapple growers of Hmarkhawlein need proper support by the agriculture department. Due to absence of any fruit processing plant in Lakhipur or Fulertal, they are unable to produce various value added products like jam, jelly or pineapple juice concentrate to earn more profits. Table 1 given below shows the area, production, and yield of pineapple grown in Cachar district and that in all of Assam through the years. It then helps to compare the percentage share of Cachar to that of Assam which is fairly competitive.

Table 1: Area, Production and Productivity of Pineapple in Cachar District and All Assam

A=Area in Hectares, P=Production in Tons, Y=Yield in Kg/ha								
Year	Cachar District			All Assam			% Share of the District to All Assam	
	A	P	Y	A	P	Y	A	P
2010-11	1425	24117	16924	14012	214899	15337	10.17	11.22
2011-12	1186	21187	17865	14158	223624	15795	8.38	9.47
2012-13	1212	22743	18765	14192	234373	16514	8.54	9.70
2013-14	1219	22875	18765	16536	288596	17452	7.37	7.93
2014-15	1246	23381	18765	16007	281271	17572	7.78	8.31
2015-16	1340	25152	18770	16195	285165	17608	8.27	8.82
2016-17	1365	25985	19037	16209	289652	17870	8.42	8.97
2017-18	1397	26852	19221	16304	296524	18187	8.57	9.06
2018-19	1410	29910	21213	16905	308764	18265	8.34	9.69

Source: Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam.

- A consignment of 15 metric tons of pineapple was exported in a refrigerator truck from Cachar district to Mumbai for the global market of Dubai. Development of a proper marketing channel can further boost the promotion of Hmarkhawlien produce globally.
- Due to its perishable nature, a suitable procurement and distribution network must be formed to encourage pineapple growers. Farmers should be provided with proper training of production processes and given logistical support to attract more farmers towards cultivation of the fruit.

Actions Suggested

- Adequate infrastructure like cold storage facilities, post-harvest infrastructure, all-weather link roads, etc., is necessary to reduce the losses of pineapple growers during marketing and transportation. Efforts must be made to develop cost effective suitable packing material and standardized grading, and packaging techniques to maintain quality consistency.
- Private investment must be promoted in hi-tech horticulture with micro-propagation, protected cultivation, drip irrigation, and nutrient management.
- Formation of processing industries like jam, jelly, juice, pineapple shakes etc. should be encouraged for value addition and better commercial gain.

Image 1: Pineapple Harvest



Source: www.haopel.com.

Information Sources:

Various published sources, media reports and telephonic discussions with the field staff, and pineapple growers in Cachar district.

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Highlighting the Impact of Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana

Key Highlights

- Launched in 2015, the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) is an extended component of the Soil Health Management under the National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA). The scheme promotes climate resilient sustainable farming systems like organic farming to increase soil fertility and produce chemical free and nutritious food for human consumption.
- Under the programme, financial assistance of Rs.50000/hectare was provided for three years(2015-18) for cluster formation, capacity building, value addition, and marketing. It provided support for preparation/ procurement of organic inputs such as bio-organic fertilizers, bio-pesticides, seeds, etc., through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and for post-harvest management practices like storage.
- The time taken by farmers for certification purposes poses hurdles in timely realization of premium prices for their produce, and the scheme coverage needs to be expanded to benefit more marginal farmers, especially women beneficiaries.

Observations

- PKVY promotes organic farming among rural youth/farmers/traders via dissemination of latest technologies provided by experts from public agricultural research systems in the country.
- The scheme is implemented by the state governments on per hectare basis for 500

to 1000-hectares of area in each cluster. A group of farmers, 65 percent of which are small and marginal farmers, having a total area of 20 hectares in a contagious patch within a village can avail benefit to a maximum of two hectares per farmer out of which, 62 percent (i.e., Rs. 31,000) is given for organic conversion, inputs, production infrastructure, etc., through DBT during the conversion period of three years¹.

- In order to promote easy access to organic certification and to boost domestic organic market growth, a decentralized organic farming certification system called the Participatory Guarantee System–India (PGS-India) was implemented by the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation.
- Support agencies help in programme implementation and capacity building of farmers in the cluster so formed, and Regional Councils serve as PSG certification endorsing agency.
- Total amount allocated for the scheme over the period of four years (2015-19) was Rs.1307 crores and total fund released is Rs.786.41 crores till date. During 2015-18, total 11891 clusters were formed. Over 237820 hectares of land has been converted for organic farming benefitting around 3.9 lakh farmers.
- The target of covering around four lakh hectares of area is proposed which is double the area covered during 2015-18. Total

¹ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1738240>

20,000 new clusters are allocated to the states.

Actions Suggested

- Promotion of the use of PGS-India Web Portal for online registration, approval, and documentation is required. It has a database of organic producers and areas under PGS Certification which helps to bring it all under one roof.
- Government has initiated Large Area Certification (LAC) programme since 2020-21 to certify large traditional/default organic areas such as hills, islands, tribal, or desert belt with no past history of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and agro-chemical usage. This programme must be implemented effectively since it reduces the conversion period from two-three years to few months, and allows farmers to market their produce at premium prices².

- Post-harvest management support like storage facilities must be given to encourage organic farmers.
- At least 30 percent of the budget allocations need to be earmarked for women beneficiaries/farmers belonging to poor households.
- Adoption of eco-friendly, low-cost traditional technologies needs to be implemented to protect the environment from hazardous inorganic chemicals.
- This scheme must aim to promote the spirit of entrepreneurship among farmers through direct market linkages with local and national markets.

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²https://agricoop.nic.in/sites/default/files/AR_2018-19_Final_for_Print.pdf



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