

**All India Kisan Sabha**

kisansabha@gmail.com,

New Delhi-1

26th December, 2020

## **Ignorance of Prime Minister Modi on Indian Agriculture Exposed**

### **Comments on Kerala Agriculture Deliberate Attempt to Mislead People**

AIKS condemns the Prime Minister's resort to lies and deceit to deliberately mislead Indian farmers about Kerala Agriculture and the role of the Left Democratic Front Government. His comments expose his ignorance about Kerala's agriculture. The Prime Minister is either misled by his advisors or is deliberately resorting to deceit to mislead the people of India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has raised a question that there are no APMCs and mandis in Kerala. So, why are there no protests in Kerala? Why don't they start a movement there? Let us examine the truth.

Kerala never passed an APMC Act in its State Assembly (along with other States like Jammu and Kashmir and Manipur). The reason for not passing such legislation may be traced back to the predominance of spices and plantation crops in the cropping pattern. Kerala agriculture primarily revolves around commercial crops which occupy about 82 percent of the cultivated area. Crops like coconut, cashew, rubber, tea, coffee, different spices like pepper, nutmeg, cardamom, cloves, cinnamon etc are grown by farmers. These crops have had their own specialized marketing channels sponsored by the concerned commodity boards under the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India. Different Commodity Boards like Rubber Board, Spices Board, Coffee Board, Tea Board, and Coconut Development Board and a system of auctions are in place in the State.

The prices of all these crops are dependent on the world market prices and except for one crop that is copra (Dry Coconut) the central government does not even announce any MSP. There is a system of auction and marketing for these crops but different Central Governments over the last three decades have been diluting and systematically dismantling the Commodity Boards though these crops earn huge foreign exchange. Proper funds are not allocated, appointments are not made and there have been instances of even Directors not being appointed for long time. Defunding these Commodity Boards by different Central Governments has led to a situation where they are rendered ineffective. The BJP and Congress Governments have entered into unequal Free Trade Agreements like the India-ASEAN FTA putting farmers lives in danger by allowing dumping of cheap produce leading to price crash here. The implementation of neoliberal policies has accentuated the crisis leading to many farmers committing suicide in Kerala earlier. It was only after the LDF came to power in 2006, set up the Debt Relief Commission and waived loans of distressed farmers, that these suicides stopped.

As opposed to this approach of the Central Governments, the LDF Government in Kerala has stood with the farmers and assisted them in times of price crashes, through cooperatives helped in value addition and marketing. The extent of marketed surplus of other crops like paddy or fruits or vegetables was never significant enough to require large and regulated wholesale markets like the mandis under the

APMC Acts. This does not mean that there are no agricultural markets with specified rules or regulations. There are a large number of such markets wholesale and retail governed by market rules notified by the State government from time to time.

Kerala procures paddy at Rs.2748/Qtl that is Rs.900/Qtl more than the Central MSP of Rs.1848/Qtl. It has recently announced a royalty of Rs.2000/hectare for rice cultivators spread across 2.05 lakh hectares in the State. The LDF Government announced base prices of 16 vegetables including tubers and is the only State to have done so. Amidst the pandemic the Kerala LDF has come up with the Subhiksha Kerala Programme and allocated Rs.3,600 crores to strengthen agriculture and cooperatives for processing, value addition and marketing. Subsidies for different crops/hectare given by the State are as follows: Paddy (one harvest a year) - Rs.22,000/-, Vegetables - 25,000/-, Cool Season Vegetables - Rs.30,000/-, Pulses - Rs.20,000/-, Tapioca and Tubers - Rs.30,000/- and Banana Rs.30,000/- . In addition there are different subsidies provided by the Local Self Governing Institutions. The 16 varieties of vegetables for which base prices (per kg) have been announced are: tapioca (Rs 12), banana (Rs.30), Wayanadan banana (Rs.24), pineapple (Rs.15), ashgourd (Rs.9), cucumber (Rs.8), bitter gourd (Rs.30), snake gourd (Rs.16), tomato (Rs.8), beans (vallipayar) (Rs.34), lady's finger (Rs 20), cabbage (Rs.11), carrot (Rs.21), potato (Rs.20), beans (Rs.28), beetroot (Rs.21), and garlic (Rs.139).

PM Modi rather than indulging in lies and deceit should first try to match these steps and answer why the Commodity Boards are being rendered ineffective and why the Centre without consulting State Governments is entering into unequal Free Trade Agreements and putting Indian farmers in peril. He should answer why in Bihar ruled by BJP where APMCs have been done away with in 2006 Rice cultivators are forced to make distress sales at Rs.1000-1200/Qtl way below the centrally fixed MSP of Rs.1868/Qtl. Lies and deceit cannot mislead farmers any longer. Kerala farmers are also on struggle against the Anti-Farmer Acts with indefinite Dharnas at State and District levels. Struggles will intensify if these Acts are not withdrawn.

**Sd/-**

**Ashok Dhawale**

**President**

**Sd/-**

**Hannan Mollah**

**General Secretary**