

The Science, Indigenous Technology & Advanced Research Accelerator

To

Shri P.K. Mishra

Principal Secretary to PM

PMO, South Block, New Delhi, 110011

**The Farmers agitation – a solution to benefit the country**

Wednesday, 03 April 2024

Dear Sir,

This is regarding the crisis in agriculture that the country has been facing and the Government has been trying to resolve.

Recently we heard Ambassador Dilip Sinha (a distinguished SITARA member)’s excellent solution, which if implemented could solve multiple issues in the stand-off with farmers. SITARA is also concerned about the environment, which affects everything we plan to achieve.

The problem today is that the crisis facing the agricultural sector, on which the bulk of our population depends, is going to accelerate exponentially – due to climate change, global warming, drying up of water resources, depletion of the underground water table and damage to health through over use of pesticides. This is because the current system favors planting of cereal crops, of which there is an over production, further depleting groundwater reserves and resulting in agricultural exports which really means that *as a water deficient country* with only 4% of the world’s water resources and 18% of the world’s population - *we are exporting water*.

Ambassador Dilip Sinha has elaborated a simple and doable solution which we feel duty-bound to propose to our esteemed Government for urgent consideration and implementation.

**This consists of Govt paying farmers to plant multispecies including fruit trees on the lands currently devoted to cereal farming. This will have the following multiple benefits:**

* Preserve the environment,
* Combat local warming and cool down the region,
* Regenerate groundwater,
* Reduce pesticide use,
* Restore the land's health,
* Help us fulfil our international commitments (INDC) on climate change. It is reported that we have fallen behind in the category of afforestation which this will address.

The scheme could work as follows:

1. The Farmer gets compensation for planting trees, including over the gestation period, equivalent to the amount he is getting now for his cereal crops (Govt will have to pay a transition "MSP" while the trees grow but even the short-term benefits will far outweigh the cost).
2. Formula: The Farmer is compensated per tree, and has to plant 10 times more saplings than the eventual survival rate (he is allowed to cull some of these as the land may not accommodate all the trees and sell them, while others may not survive). But he is compensated for the full amount.
3. Factors such as size and utility of the trees and the area they cover can also be taken into account while deciding the rate of compensation.
4. Similarly fruit farmers are free to sell their produce.
5. Verification for ascertaining compensation amounts can be done impartially by remote satellites. We have the technology.

In short, we have to switch from remuneration for only for crops/ cereals to trees. India can be reforested and the climate change crisis forestalled

Simultaneously we must reduce power generation through coal which is only heating up our landmass, and go in for nuclear energy in a big way. The US is also looking at reviving nuclear energy and China has progressed rapidly on this front too.

With best regards,

Smita Purushottam (Amb. Rtd)

Chairperson **SITARA**