



Alliance for Sustainable Holistic Agriculture (ASHA)

Food • Farmers • Freedom

A Farmers' Manifesto for 2019

Please note that the definition of Farmer is as per India's National Policy for Farmers 2007.

1. Income Security for all Farming Households

a. Assure that the average farm household will make an income of at least Rs. 18000/- per month, with the government focusing various policy measures to achieve this income level, such as prices, disaster compensation, insurance, credit, lowering the cost of agriculture, and direct income support as a last resort to certain categories of farmers who fall short of the income level. (This income level is on par with the legal minimum wages for agricultural workers, and the entry level salary for Pay Commission beneficiaries).

b. Set up of a statutory Farmers' Income Commission, produce annual estimates of farm household income and a farm income index, and make recommendations to achieve minimum living income – including all policy measures such as prices, insurance, input subsidies, and allied activities.

2. Registration and Entitlements for all Farmers including tenants and sharecroppers

a. Establish a system to identify and register all farmers in the country and issue them Kisan Cards – including tenant farmers, sharecroppers, women farmers, adivasi farmers, landless cultivators and livestock-rearers, who are all defined as “Farmers” in the National Farmers' Policy 2007. The Kisan Card holders should be entitled to get agricultural credit from banks, crop insurance, disaster compensation, and all government schemes. Enact a law based on the A.P. Licensed Cultivators' Act (with further improvements) in all states to support tenant/lessee farmers and share-croppers.

b. Set up a Credit Guarantee Fund to improve bankers' confidence in implementing RBI guidelines for extending credit on the basis of crop value as collateral.

3. Guaranteed and Remunerative Minimum Support Prices for all Farm Produce

a. Announce remunerative Minimum Support Prices (MSP) which provide at least 50% margin above the Comprehensive Cost of Cultivation (C2). Implement in all crops and agricultural produce.

b. Make an MSP Guarantee Act which will ensure that the announced MSPs are realized by all farmers as a right, with various mechanisms such as Public Procurement, Market Intervention, Price Deficiency Payments, and ensuring that the auctions in any APMC markets or eNAM markets do not start below MSP.

c. Establish a large Fund for MSP operations and Market Intervention at Central and State levels.

4. Comprehensive Agricultural Debt Relief

- a. Going beyond one-time Loan Waivers, a comprehensive **Agricultural Debt Relief Act** should be made so that we do not need to periodically resort to large loan waivers.
- b. A **Farmers' Disaster and Distress Relief Commission** should be established under the Act, which identifies Distressed Areas and Distressed Crops in every season, and recommend concrete measures to provide debt relief for the distressed farmers. This would extend to not only bank loans but also private loans. These measures would include various options such as rescheduling of loans with zero interest, restriction on interest, partial or complete waiver of loans in extreme situations.
- c. Institutional Credit should be guaranteed to all real cultivators under this Act.
- d. Existing Money Lending Regulation Acts should be implemented strictly to curb predatory lending. Debt-Swap schemes should be implemented at a large scale to convert private loans into bank loans.

5. Promotion of Ecologically Sustainable Agriculture

- a. Large scale promotion of climate resilient agro-ecological agriculture, using advances in organic and natural farming which reduce input costs and increase economic viability for small farmers.
- b. Ban the pesticides that have been internationally banned, and gradually phase out synthetic agro-chemicals in a time bound manner.
- c. Stop the release and promotion of any GM seeds and foods in India. Disallow patents on Seeds and genetic material.
- d. Establish a large scale local seed diversity revival programme all over the country. Revive crop diversity and uncultivated foods to make agriculture a key pathway to address malnourishment.

6. Women Farmers' Rights and Entitlements

- a. Ensure recognition and provide full entitlements/support to women farmers on par with male farmers. Special schemes and support systems for single-women heading farm families.
- b. Provide land rights and pattas to women, with special drives for measures such as joint titling of land in the names of husbands and wives, and mutation of land in the name of women successors.

7. Land Reforms and Land Use Policy

- a. Adopt a comprehensive Land Reforms and Land Use policy on the lines of the Draft Land Reforms Policy, 2013 prepared by the Ministry of Rural Development.
- b. Ensure implementation of Land Ceiling laws, transfer of surplus land and other available land to landless poor and Dalits, ensure development and protection of Assigned Lands.
- c. Implement special programs for increasing land ownership by Dalits and women below poverty level, including various approaches such as Kudumbasri, land purchase, transfer of surplus land

d. Protection of Common Property Resources especially common land for use by the community.

8. Land Acquisition: Stop forcible land acquisition and ensure full implementation of Land Acquisition (RTFCLARR) Act 2013 in all states.

9. Protect farmers from natural calamities of various kinds by improving crop insurance products and disaster compensation mechanisms significantly.

10. Adivasi Agriculture: Protect Adivasi agriculture and food systems, by proper implementation of PESA and FRA, by establishing a locally appropriate ecological agriculture paradigm and by altering the revised draft Forest Policy to make diverse forests and forest dwellers rights as the primary focus points of the policy.

11. Agriculture and Free Trade Agreements: Remove Agriculture from the scope of Free Trade Agreements including RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership). Review existing FTAs.

12. Agriculture as a pathway to address malnutrition: Crop diversity, including traditional varieties, would be revived so that agriculture can be made a key pathway of addressing malnourishment, both for under-nourished and the ones afflicted by some Non Communicable Diseases.

12. Improve the infrastructure and delivery of public services for health and education as these are central to the well-being of rural households. Ensure quality, delivery, transparency, accountability and micro-level compatibility for all schemes and services meant for rural households and improve rural administration and governance significantly to address issues of equity and resource scarcity.

13. Support the collectivisation of farmers into Farmer Producer Organisations on a large scale by investing on organising, capacity building, working capital and infrastructure for storage, processing and value addition. Support farmers' direct marketing efforts and participatory price determination.

14. Provide comprehensive social security to all farm households including retirement, health, disability and maternity benefits. A monthly pension of at least Rs. 5000/- should be instituted for elderly farmers including farm workers.

15. Provide relief and rehabilitation to survivors in farm suicide families promptly and comprehensively. Women farmers in farm suicide families should be made debt-free.

16. Ensure decentralised procurement of all food crops including millets, pulses and oilseeds in addition to rice and wheat, at MSP and distribution at subsidized rates through the PDS. Make it mandatory that nutrition schemes like Mid Day Meal Scheme and ICDS meals come from local procurement at remunerative prices (including cereals, pulses, vegetables and eggs).

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