

## **“Enhancement in Productivity and Production can only be Achieved through Research”-**

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### **Agriculture Minister Addresses G-20 Agriculture Ministers meet at Istanbul**

“I first take the opportunity to congratulate Turkey on assuming the Presidency of G-20 Countries. I express my gratitude to the host country for extending a warm welcome and hospitality to all the delegates attending the meeting.

In the recent past, the contribution and role of G-20 countries has assumed vital significance to combat the problem of food insecurity and malnutrition globally. The responsibility on our countries has increased to support progress towards achievement of sustainable food systems.

The great recession faced by the World Community in 2008-09 drove a point that solution to Global problems and challenges lies in united action globally. Our leaders during the Seoul Summit under the Multi Year Action Plan on Development emphasized the need for increased investment and financial support for Agricultural Development and welcomed commitments made through the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP) and other bilateral and multilateral channels. During the French Presidency, an Action Plan on Food Price Volatility and Agriculture was formulated to address the impact of increasing World Food Demand and accompanying Price Volatility. A lot of progress has been made since these initiatives were launched especially the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS), Rapid Response Forum (RRF) and Emergency Humanitarian Food Reserves. The Food Security and Nutrition Framework endorsed by G-20 leaders at the Brisbane Summit identified three outcomes for long term priority objectives to address the challenge. The Turkish Presidency is also prioritising redressal of these global concerns.

India is of the view that our group direct itself more towards accountability and monitoring of ongoing initiatives rather adding more. It has always been the position of India that promoting agricultural production is central to addressing the problem of excessive food price volatility. It would not be possible to contain inflationary tendency in food prices without ensuring enhanced agricultural production. With reduction in the size of land for agriculture due to rapid urbanisation, India firmly believes that with shrinking resources, enhancement in productivity and production can only be achieved through research in this sector.

The concept of food security has now undergone considerable changes as food availability and stability were earlier considered good measures for ensuring food security and accorded high priority by developing countries. However, the same has not solved the problem of chronic household food insecurity. Now food energy intake at household level is given importance in assessing food security though the norms set for the same have also been questioned by Nutritionists. While formulating policy in the matter, a distinction need to be made between transient and chronic food security. The strategy to overcome this problem lies in intervention to raise the purchasing power of the poor to improve and ensure food availability to the poor.

Enhancement in production and productivity of Agriculture commodities is not the only area of concern, initiatives must be undertaken for reducing food waste and losses. An implementation plan for reducing food waste needs to be in place for which the concerns of the low income and

developing countries and not alone of G-20 countries should be kept in view. We should strive for research on produce storage and handling protocols, scale up investment in agriculture linked industry and jointly develop a Centre of Excellence in post-harvest and market linked supply chain. For increasing agricultural productivity, building infrastructure for agriculture, enhancing productivity and human capital in small holder agriculture and to curb food losses and wastages we have taken up comprehensive schemes for increasing general and cold storage capacities as well as set up Integrated value chains. This has resulted in reduction of wastages and food losses to some extent. India is of the view that technologies developed for minimising food losses and wastages should be commensurate to the needs of Low Income Countries.

Excellencies, agriculture and allied sectors in India account for 17.2% of the country's GDP and 14% of overall exports. Almost half of the population of the country is dependent on agriculture as the prime source of its income and it is also a principal source of raw material for a large number of industries. India, therefore, has to keep the momentum of growth of agriculture to achieve targeted growth of its economy and meeting the increasing and diverse demand of food. We have made rapid strides in our agriculture sector, which is manifested by the fact that our food grain production has increased from 197 million tonnes in 2000-2001 to 266 million tonnes in 2014-15, which not only meets our domestic requirement but also contributes towards global food security.

We believe that this strategy to spur growth in the agriculture sector by way of increasing public investment and by creating a conducive atmosphere for enhanced private sector participation will yield positive results. We are encouraging provincial Governments to increase investment in agriculture and allied sectors taking into account agro-climatic conditions, natural resources issues and technology, and integrating livestock, poultry and fisheries while providing more autonomy and flexibility to the states in planning and execution of schemes.

Many of our farmers are not able to get the optimal yields from their fields, as they are not aware of the soil conditions. Our goal is to communicate benefits of Soil Health to the farmers so that they can apply appropriate dosages of fertilisers to increase productivity and profitability. Our Government has launched a new scheme to provide every farmer with a soil health card which will be updated after regular intervals.

Government is committed to promote Organic Farming that improves soil health and leads to better quality crops. From the current financial year, 'Parampragat Krishi Vikas Yojna', a new scheme to develop organic clusters and make available chemical free inputs to farmers will be implemented. We have also launched a Gokul Mission, a dedicated intervention to improve cattle progeny so as to improve milk yields and farmers income. For achieving food and nutrition security and for increasing incomes of fish farmers our country has embarked on the path of bringing about a Blue revolution.

With a view to increase agricultural production and productivity and bring about an increase in the incomes of farmers as well as more output per drop of water, a new scheme "Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana", is being implemented in our country for providing assured irrigation to every farm.

In our quest for achieving sustainable food systems, which will respond equally well to enhancing the purchasing power of the poor farmers and checking price vitality, we are now in the process of initiating a barrier free National Agricultural Market. Along with bringing down provincial tariff and

non-tariff barriers, we plan to integrate the entire country on a national level e-platform that will provide the farmer access to markets across the country and consumers the best choice for sourcing for his consumption basket.

Almost 85% of farmers in India have small agricultural holdings. As the agriculture is being mechanised to enhance productivity, it has become more important and necessary to protect the interest of these small farmers. Many of them lack access to the resources and are critically dependent on government for support. Therefore, the family farming needs to be strengthened to save them from the grip of poverty and malnutrition and thus making them an asset instead of liability in the country. It may not be out of context to mention that we have introduced a pension programme for the elderly farmers in honour of our former Prime Minister Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee under the Atal Pension Yojana.

Before concluding my address, I would again like to thank our host, Government of Turkey for successfully organising this event and hospitality extended to all delegates. I look forward to fruitful deliberations today with our focus on food security needs of the global community and keeping interest of our farmers foremost in our approach.

Thank you".