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Shri Narendra Singh Tomar chairs meeting with State Agriculture Ministers to review relief steps for farmers

Shri Tomar appreciates the efforts of States for their proactive role in undertaking agriculture activities even during the challenging time in wake of COVID-19 pandemic States told to sensitize field agencies about exemptions to farming related activities and allow movement of farm produce, farming products, fertilizers and farm implements & machinery Kharif National Conference will be held on April 16, 2020 through Video Conferencing, says Shri Tomar

The Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar held a meeting with the States through Video Conferencing here last evening. The MOS Shri Parshottam Rupala and Shri Kailash Choudhary, Secretary (AC&FW), Shri Sanjay Agarwal, Special Secretaries, Additional Secretary (Agriculture) and senior officers of the Ministry participated in the interaction held through VC.

The crucial issues related to farming operations and harvesting, agriculture marketing and Mandi operations, procurement at MSP, provision of inputs (seeds and fertilizers) and issues related to logistics and movement of agriculture/horticulture produce were discussed with Agriculture Ministers of the States, APCs, Secretaries and other senior officers of the States.

The Union Minister appreciated the efforts of States for their proactive role in undertaking agriculture activities even during the challenging time in wake of COVID-19 pandemic. He talked about the measures taken by the Ministry to facilitate the activities related to agriculture and allied sector during the lockdown period. Also, the exemptions notified by the Government of India for agricultural operations in view of harvesting and sowing season were discussed in length. The states were again informed about the various exemptions which are as follows:

- Agencies engaged in procurement of agriculture products, including MSP operations;
- Farming operations by farmers and farm workers in the field;
- ‘Mandis’ operated by the Agriculture Produce Market Committee or as notified by the State Government;
- ‘Mandis’ include direct marketing, facilitated by the State Government/UT Administration, directly from the farmers/groups of farmers. FPOs, Cooperatives, etc;
- Shops for Seeds, Fertilisers and Pesticides;
- Manufacturing and packaging units of Seeds, Fertilisers and Pesticides;
- Custom Hiring Centres (CHC) related to farm machinery;
- Intra and inter-state movement of harvesting and sowing related machines like combined harvester and other agriculture/ horticulture implements;
- Cold storage and warehousing services;
- Manufacturing units of packaging material for food items;
- Transportation for essential goods;
- Shops of agriculture machinery, its spare parts (including its supply chain) and repairs.
- Tea industry, including plantation with maximum of 50% workers.

A presentation was made and states were requested for the following:

- To sensitize their field agencies for facilitating smooth farming operations including sowing, harvesting and marketing.
- To ensure expeditious permission for movement of staff and labour and goods, machines and materials of agencies engaged in these exempted categories of activities.
- To issue authorization letters to companies/organizations having nation-wide supply chain of essential goods, allowing them to issue regional passes for easy movement of critical staff and workers in order to maintain their national supply chain.
- While undertaking these activities the norms of 'social distancing' should be followed and proper hygiene and sanitation should be ensured at all public places.

The Union Minister assured the States that all the necessary help and support would be rendered to the States during this period which would facilitate them in facing the emerging challenges.

The State Agriculture Ministers appreciated the efforts of the Union Ministry of Agriculture and expressed that the exemption provided for agriculture operations and activities have greatly helped the farmers and farming activities in the States. They also informed that strict adherence to norms of hygiene and social distancing are being maintained in various agriculture activities in the States.

It was informed that the Ministry has released e-NAM modules to enable the e-trading and bidding from source point by farmers, FPOs and Cooperatives. States may issue necessary instructions to give effect to the same which would facilitate the farmers in selling their produce at their doorsteps, ensuring availability of produce at consumption centers and decongesting mandis. Similarly, the intra and inter-state movement of harvesting and sowing related machines like combined harvester and other agriculture/ horticulture implements should be facilitated so that all states may benefit from it.

During the discussion various issues were raised regarding harvesting procurement, availability of inputs, credit, insurance and inter-state movement of agriculture produce, some of which were solved at once and instructions were passed on to the states. Other issues which required deliberations were noted and states were assured that it would be looked into and necessary instructions would follow in due course.

The Union Minister informed that the Kharif National Conference will be held on April 16, 2020 through Video Conferencing to firm up the field preparations for ensuing Kharif season and urged the states to make advance preparations for all the logistics and be prepared for the conference. He talked about the usefulness of Aarogya App and urged the states to popularize its use among the farmers and other citizens. Finally, he reiterated that all farming activities and operations should be done with strict adherence to the norms of social distancing and hygiene.

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