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Govt hikes wheat MSP by Rs 100/qtl; pulses by up to 550/qtl

Gram MSP has been hiked to Rs 4,000 per quintal, including bonus, from Rs 3,500 per quintal in the previous year, while support price of masur has been raised to Rs 3,950 per quintal from Rs 3,400 per quintal.

NEW DELHI: The government today increased the minimum support price (MSP) of wheat by Rs 100 to Rs 1,625 a quintal and pulses by up to Rs 550 per quintal to boost output of these rabi crops and check prices.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has given its approval for the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for all rabi (winter-sown) crops of 2016-17.

The CCEA has approved Rs 100 per quintal hike in wheat MSP to Rs 1,625 per quintal for the 2016-17 rabi crop against Rs 1,525 per quintal last year.

"Wheat has been hiked by 6.6 per cent, barley 8.2 per cent and including bonus, gram 14.3 per cent, masur 16.2 per cent, rapeseed/mustard 10.4 per cent, safflower 12.1 per cent," an official spokesperson said.

"Further, to incentivise cultivation of pulses and oilseeds, a bonus on these crops over MSP has been announced," he added.

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The Agriculture Ministry had proposed the support price of gram and masoor at Rs 4,000 per quintal each, including bonus, for the rabi season to boost domestic output, reduce the country's dependence on imports, and check prices.

Last year, gram and masur MSPs were fixed at Rs 3,500 and Rs 3,400 per quintal, respectively, after including Rs 75 per quintal bonus each.

The MSP is the rate at which government buys the grain from farmers. Rabi crops will be marketed in 2017-18 starting April.

Kisan centres to sell products developed by farm scientists

The ministry is setting up more than 2,000 centres, Kisan Suvidha Kendra, across the country where seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and soil testing facilities would be made available for farmers.

NEW DELHI: Chemicals and Fertilisers Ministry will enter into an agreement with the Agriculture ministry to market products developed by agri-scientists of government's research institutes ICAR and IARI, Union Minister Ananth Kumar said today.

The ministry is setting up more than 2,000 centres, Kisan Suvidha Kendra, across the country where seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and soil testing facilities would be made available for farmers, he said.

"We are ready to sign an memorandum of understanding (MoU) for commercialisation and marketing of products developed by scientists," Chemicals and Fertilisers Minister Ananth Kumar said while addressing a national symposium on Agrochemicals Research and Education in India'.

"We will keep your products in Kisan Suvidha Kendra," he told scientists.

Kumar said his ministry is also ready to sponsor research programmes related to agro-chemicals.

The minister stressed on the need to promote bio-pesticides and said that its usage should be increased from 3 per cent to 30 per cent.

He said the neem-coated urea falls in the category of bio-pesticides.

Highlighting the benefits of neem-coated urea, Kumar said this has helped in curbing diversion of urea up to 20 per cent which is worth Rs 12,000 crore.

"100 per cent neem coating of urea has led to reduction in consumption and higher yield," the minister said and stressed on balanced use of fertilisers.

Besides neem-coating, Kumar said the government has cut prices of phosphatic and potassic fertilisers that has helped in balanced fertilisation.

Demonetisation: Kharif farmers hit hard after RBI forbids DCC banks from accepting old notes

Farmers who wish to payback their crop loan early to become eligible for fresh loans, are now stuck.

MUMBAI: An RBI circular banning District Central Co-operative banks from accepting old currency has hit Kharif farmers in Maharashtra, who were looking to pay off their crop loan dues with the now-defunct notes, thus affecting recovery worth Rs 12,000 crore across the state.

The farmers who have started selling their Kharif produce are mostly paid in cash by wholesale traders. Now, the amount with farmers (mostly in denominations of Rs 1,000 and Rs 500) is rendered useless for crop loan payments.

"There are 31 District Central Co-operative (DCC) banks that have a huge network in rural areas (of Maharashtra) and are used as a gateway for rural funding, including crop loans and other lending. Most of the farmers have their bank accounts with such banks and at the end of every (crop) season, they deposit the money there and repay their loans.

"This has been the practice for more than four decades, which has now suffered a jolt with the decision of barring DCC banks from accepting Rs 1,000 and Rs 500 notes," Hasan Mushrif, Chairman of Kolhapur District Central Co-operative Bank, told PTI today.

Pramod Karnad, MD of Maharashtra State Co-operative Bank said, "Kharif crops generally mature by October and within a couple of weeks, it is ready for sale. Now, farmers who wish to payback their crop loan early so that they become eligible for fresh loans, are stuck.

"There should have been some provisions so that farmers can pay back their Kharif crop loans. The move has affected crop loan recovery worth Rs 12,000 crores across the state," he said.

A senior officer from another DCC bank said that traders do keep some cash with them for daily purchase of grains and pulses in large quantity.

"Some amount of their actual trade always remains unaccounted. The demonetisation move has prompted traders to distribute defunct currency notes on priority, chiefly to farmers in form of purchase price," he said.

"Farmers had assumed that they could deposit the same currency notes into their DCC bank accounts and repay their loans. Many farmers are now left in the lurch as nobody is accepting the scrapped notes, including fertiliser and pesticide vendors besides farm equipment sellers and others," the officer said.

Raghunath Patil, a senior leader of farmers' organisation from Sangli, said DCC banks were the backbone of rural economy in Maharashtra.

"Such a decision of banning DCC banks is certainly anti-farmer. It also shows the approach of the Union government towards rural populace and farmers," he said.

NGT says no to farming on polluted Yamuna land

The farmers' body had contended that they do not use polluted water from Yamuna for cultivation of crops and instead use fresh water extracted out of borewells for irrigation purposes.

Why should the farmers be allowed to grow vegetables on the land along polluted Yamuna, the National Green Tribunal asked today while refusing to permit a farmer to carry out cultivation on his farm along the river.

"Why should you (farmer) be allowed to cultivate vegetables on the land along Yamuna? Do you even know how much polluted the river is? It contains heavy metals and other high pollutants. People buy these vegetables from you and fall sick by eating them.

"Delhi Jal Board is not going to clean the river and we are not going to permit anything on the river. We wish you could understand the impact of the produce on the health of people," a Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Swatanter Kumar said.

The observations came during the hearing of a plea filed by a local farmer seeking NGT's nod for cultivation on the ground that the only source of his livelihood was farming.

Refusing to modify its earlier order prohibiting cultivation of edible crops and vegetables on the floodplains of Yamuna here, the green panel said no activity can be permitted in that area till the time Yamuna is restored and made pollution-free.

The NGT in January last year had prohibited farming on Yamuna banks, saying: "It is an established fact that presently, vegetables, fodder grown and allied projects at the flood plain of river Yamuna are highly contaminated. Besides containing ingredients of high pollutants, such produce is even found to contain metallic pollutants."

The direction was passed during the hearing of a plea by Delhi Peasants Multipurpose Society and others who had moved the tribunal last year with a prayer that they be permitted to carry on agricultural and farming activities on Yamuna banks.

The farmers' body had contended that they do not use polluted water from Yamuna for cultivation of crops and instead use fresh water extracted out of borewells for irrigation purposes.

It had also averred that there was no specific report submitted before the Tribunal that any particular pollutant was found in the samples collected from crops cultivated by the members of the society.

West Bengal to transfer money directly to bank account of farmers for procurement of paddy

With the introduction of the mechanism of direct transfer of money to their respective accounts, they do not have to wait for the cheque to get cleared.

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West Bengal food and supplies department has decided to transfer money for procurement of paddy directly to the bank account of farmers. The step has been taken so that farmers do not get unnecessarily harassed while collecting cheques and again while depositing them in the branch where they have their accounts.

With the introduction of the mechanism of direct transfer of money to their respective accounts, they do not have to wait for the cheque to get cleared. They just need to go to their banks and update their pass books to check whether the money is showing in the available balance of their account or not.

The state food & supplies Jyotipriya Mallick said: "The new system of transferring money directly to the account of farmers would get introduced by mid December."

Meanwhile, the state food & supplies department has constituted four vigilance squad teams for inspection of godowns in different districts. At the beginning of every Kharif season, the department needs to inspect the store houses in districts

to tally the report given by them on the remaining stock of food grain and the reality.

This time four teams have been constituted and they started the inspection from Friday. The officials found that the report given on the remaining stock was correct during the inspection that was carried out in South 24-Parganas on Friday.

Maharashtra to bring sugarcane area under drip irrigation, likely to give interest free loans

India's sugar production is expected to grow at 3% per annum and to increase productivity from restricted area.

Maharashtra government is about to formulate a policy to bring all the cin the state under drip irrigation and is thinking over giving zero interest loans to farmers instead of handing over the subsidies to the drip irrigation companies.

"We recently had a meeting with Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadanvis. We are thinking of paying the interest rate on the loan that the farmers will have to avail to purchase the drip irrigation systems instead of the existing system of giving subsidy to the companies," said Nitin Gadkari, union minister of transport.

However, former union agriculture minister Sharad Pawar argued that if drip irrigation is made mandatory then it will be tough to implement in the areas, which are dependent on canal water for irrigation. "Farmers will have to invest in laying pipeline, storage structure to get water. They will have to get access to uninterpreted power supply," he said.

India's sugar production is expected to grow at 3% per annum and to increase productivity from restricted area and to save water in the light of frequent droughts, the industry has been looking at technological solutions like micro irrigation and improved cane varieties.