

Editorial

The agriculture and allied activities sector have been a significant contributor to India's growth and development. India is projected to witness GDP growth rate between 6.0 to 6.8 percent during 2023-24. The agriculture sector has been growing at an average annual rate of 4.6 percent over the last six years. India has also emerged as a net exporter of agricultural products, with 6 percent growth in exports in 2022-23 over the previous year. The agricultural sector contributed to 19.9 percent of the country's GDP and employs a significant portion of the country's labour force, accounting for 45.5 percent during 2020-21. Despite the agricultural sector's importance and its positive growth during the COVID-19 pandemic, farmers in India often find themselves at the bottom of the economic pyramid. Farmers face various challenges in production, including inconsistent policy frameworks, unsustainable cropping patterns and limited access to technology and irrigation facilities, inadequate market linkages and vulnerability to exploitation by intermediaries. Addressing these issues and improving the economic condition of farmers for sustainable livelihood and growth is essential. The National Commission on Farmers headed by Dr. M.S. Swaminathan recommended that the Minimum Support Price (MSP) should be at least 50 percent more than the weighted average cost of production. However, when the National Policy for Farmers, 2007 was finalized by the then government, this recommendation of providing 50 percent returns over cost of production was not included. The Union Budget for 2018-19 announced the pre-determined principle to keep MSP at a level of one and half times the cost of production. Accordingly, the government has increased the MSPs for all mandated *Kharif*, *Rabi* and other commercial crops with a return of at least 50 percent over all India weighted average cost of production from the agricultural year 2018-19. In line with the same principle, the government has announced an increase in MSP for all mandated *kharif* crops of year 2020-21 on 1st June 2020 and for all mandated *rabi* crops of year 2020-21 on 21st September 2020. Farming systems are transitioning from a subsistence orientation to a market orientation in response to changing food demands, technologies, and policies. In India's dryland regions, watershed development, among several other initiatives, has been a critical driver of these transitions, but their outcomes are poorly understood. Globally, farming systems are transitioning from subsistence-orientation to intensive or specialized market-oriented systems in response to several factors, including increasing food demands, availability of technology and inputs for production, and development policies. While transitions towards intensification and specialization in agriculture have increased food output and income for some households, concerns about environmental and socio-economic sustainability are growing. A range of development initiatives to support small-holder agriculture exist in India. Intensive and specialized farming systems may impair the potential of development strategies, such as the Watershed Development Programme, aimed at environmental conservation, and may pose a risk for households regarding their ability to cope with disturbances in the long term.

Editor-in-Chief



Debashis Sarkar