

WOTR MEMORANDA IN PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATION ON AGRICULTURE

Madam, I wish to submit the following for your kind consideration:

1. **Issue: Water, Drought and Climate Change** are among the key drivers impacting agriculture and constraining affecting its potential and productivity. Drought is becoming the new “normal” and is affecting increasingly larger swathes of land in our country.

Observation: There is really no better known technology and intervention to mitigate drought, attenuate the adverse impacts of **climate variability**, harvest **rain water** at scale, generate local employment and increase the primary productivity of agriculture, than undertaking integrated watershed development along hydrological lines (a ridge-to-valley approach).

Recommendation: Revive the Integrated Watershed Management Program (IWMP) of the GOI (included under the PMKY) and increase financial allocation to the same.

2. **Issue: Ground water** is the backbone of Indian agriculture and India is the largest extractor of ground water in the world. Ground water aquifers are depleting and water tables across the country, especially in rain-fed regions, are declining alarmingly.

Observation: There is need to move the perception and legal position of “water” from effectively being a “private good” to that of a “public good”/ “a common pool resource” by re-visiting legislation that confers this status and passing new legislation regarding governance of ground water resources. This effort should be supported by a sustained campaign to raise water literacy levels in the country and strongly promote the culture and practice of **Water Stewardship**.

Recommendation: Revisit the **Indian Easement Act of 1882** in order to make water a public good and pass legislation to govern access and use of groundwater.

3. **Issue: India’s soils** are in bad shape and vast areas are either severely degraded or in the process of getting there. There is need to improve the soil health and arrest land degradation by, amongst other interventions, adding more **organic material** into the soil.

Observation: India has committed to making India “Land Degradation Neutral” by 2030 and will be shortly announcing **Land Degradation Neutrality** targets during the forthcoming COP to be held in Delhi in September 2019. India is also running short of bio-organic material.

Recommendation: (1) Provide incentives (tax, etc) to entrepreneurs/ SMEs who are able to convert urban wet waste into safe organic manures that are affordable to farmers;
(2) Augment the budgetary allocation to the RKVY component pertaining to bio-fertilisers, manures, composting with a view to creating a large number of rural agripreneurs.

4. **Issue: Climate Change** is adversely impacting India agriculture, and causing huge losses every year estimated by the UN at over \$80 billion in the last 20 years! And these costs are expected to rise.

Observation: India has committed to the **Paris Agreement** and agriculture is a major emitter of GHGs. In addition, the Govt. has committed to doubling farmers' incomes by 2023. This is only possible if we make agriculture climate resilient, environmentally friendly and input efficient. NGOs in partnership with local government bodies are best placed to ensure last mile connects.

Recommendation: Give a one-time matching grant of Rs. 100 crores to NABARD (=Rs.200 cr) which it would further sustain through internal accruals. NABARD is well placed to undertake this role as it is India's National Implementing Entity (NIE) accredited under the UNFCCC and has over 2 decades of experience o successfully implementing community-based projects through credible NGOs, whose association would be necessary to successfully build the adaptive capacities of rural communities.

5. **Issue:** It is reported that following the Supreme Court's recent order regarding the Forest Rights Act, 2 million tribal and indigenous households (11 million people in all) will be evicted from their homes by July 24, 2019. (See <https://bit.ly/2IF7SUo>)

Observation: This judgement will have a horrific social, economic and cultural impact on those uprooted and can have serious social and political consequences.

Recommendation: GOI should file a review petition in the Supreme Court requesting quashing of the order and directing, instead, that implementation of the provisions in the FRA granting rights/ benefits to forest dwellers be accelerated in their favour.

Submitted to,

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By,

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