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India – Government of India plans to fix rural distress

The Government of India, in consultation with state governments, proposes to launch a new price support scheme for farmers to prevent distress sales at prices below the minimum support price (MSP).

Under the proposed “market assurance scheme”, states will be free to procure all crops from farmers for which MSPs are announced, except rice and wheat, which are already being procured by the centre for the public distribution system.

The proposed scheme will ensure an assured price for the farmer, mitigating the price risks faced by farmers after harvest. Together with a prolonged spell of inadequate rains and two years of drought it has contributed towards rural distress.

Currently minimum support prices (MSPs) are announced for 23 crops but only paddy and wheat procurement is effective at 33 % of total production. Only 8 % of Pulse and 1% of Oilseed production is procured under MSP Support. The new scheme proposes to strengthen the procurement mechanism to ensure that farmers do not suffer from marketing inefficiencies, as commonly reflected in the prices ruling lower than notified MSP for many commodities. States will take ownership of the scheme, including which crop to procure and in what quantities, when wholesale prices drop below MSPs. State governments will be free to use the procured crops for targeted nutrition-support programme such as mid-day meals for schoolchildren, or sell them in the open market.

Under MAS (Market Assurance Scheme), the centre will compensate states for any losses due to procurement capped at 30% of the Procurement cost. For hill states and those in the North East, the ratio of compensation is proposed at 40%.

The proposed scheme comes against the backdrop of a record harvest of cereals and pulses in 2016-17, which led to wholesale prices plunging below MSPs. The price crash has led to protests by farmer groups across the country since June, with demands for remunerative crop prices and loan waivers. While states such as Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab and Karnataka have announced farm loan waivers that are at different stages of implementation, states like Madhya Pradesh have launched their own price support schemes for farmers growing pulses and oilseeds.

Source: <http://www.livemint.com>



Sri Lanka - NITF re-insures rising crop risk with Swiss Re

Sri Lanka's state-run National Insurance Trust Fund is re-insuring its agricultural cover amid rising claims. The NITF had made higher volumes payments for crop damage from natural disasters in recent months, requiring re-insurance. The cabinet of ministers had given the nod for NITF to re-insure crop cover with Singapore-based Swiss Re Asia (Pte) Ltd and J B Boda and Co (S) Pte Ltd, for LKR 258.7 Mn (USD 1.7 Mn). Sri Lanka has seen volatile weather in the last few years including droughts and floods at the same time in different regions of the island.

Source: <http://www.economynext.com>



Philippines - Agri sector absorbs P1.24-B (USD 20 Mn) storm damage

The two recent weather disturbances that lashed portions of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao resulted in more than a billion pesos worth of damage and losses to the agriculture sector. Based on a data from the Department of Agriculture (DA), the combined damage and losses to the agriculture sector due to by Tropical Storms Urduja and Vinta reached P1.24 billion (USD 20 Mn), affecting a total of 58,876 hectares of agriculture areas in Southern Tagalog, Bicol region, Central Visayas, Eastern Visayas, Western Mindanao, Davao region, Southern Mindanao and the Caraga region, with an estimated volume of production loss at 28,737 metric tons. The affected commodities are rice, corn, high value crops, cassava, livestock, poultry, and various agri-infrastructure and fisheries facilities. Rice crop production incurred the highest amount of damage estimated at P609.29 million (USD 12.09 Mn), equivalent to 6,048 metric tons (MT) covering 50,793 hectares. The agricultural damage to high-value crops was worth P443.91 million (USD 8.81 Mn), affecting 18,322 MT, while damage to corn was worth P103.73 million (USD 2.06 Mn), affecting 4,261 MT. Losses to cassava reached P5.44 million (USD 107,984) affecting 106 MT, covering 208 hectares. Meanwhile, livestock and poultry losses reached P6.6 million (USD 131,010). The DA pegged damage to agricultural facilities at P73.94 million (USD 1.47 Mn). As per the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), 'Urduja' has damaged over P1 billion worth of infrastructure in several regions.

Source: <https://news.mb.com.ph>



Sri Lanka - SANASA installing 35 weather stations, expanding index insurance for rice, pepper and cinnamon

SANASA Insurance Company Limited, a member of Sri Lanka's cooperative SANASA group, recently installed the first of 35 weather stations funded by a donation from Desjardins Financial Security, an insurer within the Canadian cooperative Desjardins Group. The stations expand an existing network supporting SANASA Insurance's provision of index insurance to rice farmers, whereby the farmers are paid when weather conditions are not conducive to healthy crops rather than based on individual insurance claims. The new stations are intended to improve the provision of insurance for rice farmers as well as allowing SANASA Insurance to expand to serving pepper and cinnamon farmers. The new weather stations are part of a project funded by Global Affairs Canada, a unit of the Canadian government, and carried out by Développement international Desjardins (DiD), another member of the Desjardins Group.

Source: <https://www.microcapital.org>



Pakistan – Now Drones hit Pest, Weeds in Crops in Punjab

Pakistan Government has first time across the country granted using UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle) drone technology in agriculture sector for the application of pesticides on crops, monitoring weeds, pests and nutritional deficiencies. Farmers would have to arrange or purchase their own drones for agriculture purposes. Drones equipped with hyper spectral, multispectral, or thermal sensors can identify any part of field, and will be major breakthrough in Pakistani agriculture in areas of crop and weed mapping, monitoring soil and field survey, predictive modeling, pest scouting, pesticide application, and irrigation management etc. Moreover, drones will also be helpful in managing natural disasters like storms, floods and earth quakes without risking human lives. The advent of such new technologies in era of computers and electronics will revolutionize the contemporary agriculture in Pakistan. The drone technology also helps to capture the differentiation in fruiting, color, growth of the plant – about what's going wrong and then the farmers are issued proper advisories by the scientists – whether it's about less watering, fertilizers, more or less chemicals etc. This is quite a next generation assessment of crops. The drone technology would remove the present defective spray techniques. The failure in curbing weeds and pest attack means saving all crops including cotton, wheat, sugarcane, mangoes and other crops from large scale damage

Source: <https://www.thenews.com.pk>

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