

# Walmart to invest Rs 180 cr to improve farmers' livelihood

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Lucknow, Sep 27 () As part of its initiative to support sustainable livelihood for farmers in India, the Walmart Foundation Thursday announced investment of Rs 180 crore over the next five years in the country.

"The Walmart Foundation, working beyond the Walmart India supply chain, will invest approximately Rs 180 crore (USD 25 million) to improve farmers' livelihood over the next five years," Walmart International CEO Judith McKenna said.

She was speaking at a meeting with local farmers in Kasimpur village on the outskirts of the state capital.

Walmart India CEO Krish Iyer, Walmart India Chief Corporate Affairs Officer Rajneesh Kumar and Flipkart Group CEO Binny Bansal accompanied McKenna when she toured a vegetable farm and evinced keen interest in the cultivation going on there. Walmart Vice President of Global Public Policy and Government Affairs Paul Dyck was also present.

The high-level delegation Wednesday discussed with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath various matters related to investment by Walmart in the state.

At the meeting, the chief minister spoke about focussing on agriculture sourcing, food processing industry and One District One Product (ODOP) to support local traditional art forms.

McKenna Thursday said Walmart India will grow its direct sourcing from farmers to 25 per cent of produce sold in its 'Cash & Carry' stores over the same period to ensure more income to them and to cut down the role of middlemen.

Besides, it will lead to accelerated market access and reduction in transportation costs for producers, she said.

Walmart will also seek to source from a local farmer producer organisation in every state where it has stores.

Deepening its commitment to smallholder farmers in the country, she said these farmers are the backbone of the Indian economy, with more than 50 per cent of the total workforce employed in the sector.

This, she said, is aimed at bolstering the efforts of the NDA government at the Centre to improve food security in the country and boost the overall economy and to meet the ambitious goal to double farmers' income by 2022.

The new funding from the Walmart Foundation expands its ongoing efforts to develop and scale strong farmer producer organisations to help raise rural incomes.

The new funds will be used to support farmer organisations to develop knowledge of sustainable farming practices, share business best practices, add value to primary agricultural commodities and improve access to finance and markets.

Krish Iyer said the key to improving the livelihood of farmers and enhancing their income, is to strengthen the entire agricultural supply chain.

"A robust supply chain that provides market linkages, logistics support, and helps farmers get fair price for their produce as well as reduces food wastage is crucial to promote sustainable agriculture in India," he said.

Eliminating the systemic barriers that prevent farmers from increasing their productivity and market access, therefore, must attain priority, which is why the Walmart Foundation also has been involved in making farmers market savvy by partnering with many organisations since many years.

Binny said: "We are very excited to have this partnership with Walmart. Flipkart is currently helping to give market access to many small suppliers and local manufacturing companies and bringing affordable and high quality products to even remotely parts of the country through our e-commerce marketplace platform."

"We have also started grocery business in some cities and as it grows, lot of fresh produce from our farmers and farmer-producer organisations will get on to the marketplace," he said.

The Walmart Foundation will work with well-established non-government organisations to support farmer producer groups and develop best practices and demonstration sites that can be shared across India, the US retail major said in a release.

The aim is to eventually empower multiple farmer organisations and connect them into a nationwide farmer-support network.

McKenna said: "We are pleased to help create more opportunities for smallholder farmers in India through Walmart's strengthened commitment to local sourcing."

"There are incredible benefits for our communities and our customers when we help give farmers opportunities to learn and expand their access to markets," she said.

Farmers' incomes can grow and they can create new business opportunities for local entrepreneurs and help improve access to high-quality produce in their villages and beyond, the Walmart CEO said.

"All of this adds up to a stronger supply chain, stronger local businesses and better lives for smallholder farmers and their families," she said.

Walmart sources 95 per cent of the goods sold in its Best Price Cash & Carry stores in India from local companies and offers access to technical assistance and training programmes to improve farming efficiency.

Walmart has stores in 28 countries, employing more than 2.3 million associates and doing business with thousands of suppliers who, in turn, employ millions of people.

**Source:** <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/walmart-to-invest-rs-180-cr-to-improve-farmers-livelihood/articleshow/65978172.cms>

