

# Explores new boundaries in agriculture

**WELCOME MEASURES.** Improving nutrition security, resource use efficiency, data integrity, and digital land records



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The Budget, rightly recognises 'Productivity and Resilience in Agriculture' as the first of the nine priority pillars for a Viksit Bharat.

Apropos nutrition security for the consumers, the incentive to transit from carbohydrate-centricity to nutrition-focus is seen in the commitment to a mission-led focus on pulses and oilseeds, besides cluster-based large-scale vegetable cultivation and fisheries. Financial support to start-ups, FPOs, storage and marketing besides digital technology can be expected to result in robust supply

chains, benefiting both farmers and consumers.

Secondly for negotiating the impact of climate change, one of the major announcements aims to bring 10 million farmers under the practice of natural farming, supported by establishment of 10,000 bio-input centres. In promoting low-input-sustainable agriculture practices, securing consistent productivity growth is a must, particularly in the context of rising population and inelasticity of arable land. Hence, natural farming must be backed by R&D. One can hope that comprehensive review of agricultural research and emphasis on developing climate-resilient varieties, including millets, will not only ensure sustained growth but also promote adaptation and mitigation interventions.

Thirdly, the resource use efficiency,

which is being addressed through soil health card, micro-irrigation, nano-fertilizers, biological approach to pest management, etc., will now get a boost with major attention the Budget pays to deployment of digital technology across the agricultural value chain. The proposed digital public infrastructure (DPI) will prove advantageous not just in respect of resource use, but also in planning for market intelligence-led production matrix, negotiation of production- and post-production-centric risks. It will also facilitate forecasting of weather, rainfall, pests and diseases, as also prices, and sharing of real-time advisories with the farmers, helping them in minimising production and profit losses. One of the critical and persistent inadequacies has been inaccurate assessment of area and crop coverage. Being eye-estimates, the data

points are a wrong reflection of the reality. Data integrity is important in achieving price equilibrium by balancing supply and demand. The proposed digital crop-survey covering 400 districts is bound to generate more accurate data sets, and pave way for a more diligent production planning, arable land usage, import-export management as also food distribution under the food security law.

The new growth engines are horticulture, animal husbandry and fisheries. These sun-rise sub-sectors find support through 'Horticulture Clean Plant Program,' NABARD-financing of shrimp production and export. The spin-off effects would be diversified production basket, higher farmers' incomes and agri-share in the GVA.

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