

# **Suggested Policies and Programmes for Consideration of Congress Government (2014-2019): Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**

## **Preamble**

It has been the privilege of the Indian National Congress to have provided the political leadership that heralded significant achievements in the agriculture sector. The Green Revolution was initiated by Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru and consolidated by Indira Gandhi ji. The Revolution transformed India from an economy that was a heavy importer of food grains to a self-sufficient Nation that provided food security to its population and progressive opportunities for its farmers.

The Indian National Congress has stress on achieving rapid growth which involves faster growth in agriculture, and especially in rain-fed areas where most of the poor live. We have focused on making farming a profitable occupation. Programmes for agricultural diversification, agri-processing and rural industrialization have been pursued systematically. Dairying, aquaculture, fisheries, horticulture and sericulture have also received a boost.

During 2010-11, inclement agro-climatic conditions affected several parts of the country interfering with agricultural production process. However, due to pro-active intervention, the detrimental impact could be nullified leading to a record agricultural production in the year.

## **The Open Manifesto Process**

The Indian National Congress has pioneered an entirely new way in which political party election manifestos are prepared. It is our firm belief that the Indian National Congress Manifesto must reflect the voice and aspirations of the people and a new vision for the country. There were several consultations held across the country over a five-month period (from October, 2013 to March, 2014) with different stakeholders, to get their inputs on India's future growth, development and inclusion agenda.

Series of consultations were organized with farmer organizations, small and marginal farmers, women farmers, movements and experts from the field.

In addition to this a dedicated website ([www.incmanifesto.in](http://www.incmanifesto.in)) was established to invite suggestions from all citizens for the Manifesto.

We received many suggestions through these consultations on the websites and social media platforms, phones, emails, etc. These suggestions were carefully considered and have been included, wherever feasible.

We believe this unique exercise has made the Manifesto inclusive and fully reflective of the voice of the people of India.

### **Major Achievements of the Congress Party for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**

1. Due to the forward-looking reforms instituted by the Indian National Congress, the agriculture GDP growth went up from 2.6% (under the NDA) to 3.1% under UPA-I and further to 4% under UPA-II.
2. Today, we produce 263 million tonnes of food grains. Ten years ago, we produced 213 million tonnes of food grains. A similar trend of increased production is true for oilseeds, sugarcane, cotton, potatoes etc.
3. The Congress-led UPA government has endeavoured to make agriculture profitable and support farmers through (i) increasing Minimum Support Prices (MSP); the MSP for wheat went up from Rs. 640 per quintal in 2004-05 to Rs. 1400 per quintal in 2013-14 (ii) by waiving farmer loans and (iii) by increasing credit from banks and reducing interest rates on crop loans and (iv) improving irrigation infrastructure.
4. Several programmes for land development have been undertaken. The Desert Development Programme (DDP), Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP) and Integrated Wastelands Development Programme (IWDP) have been integrated into a comprehensive Integrated Watershed Development Management Programme (IWMP).
5. The Congress-led UPA focused on increasing access to inputs. The Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) has been introduced w.e.f. 1.4.2010, replacing the erstwhile concession scheme, for P&K fertilizers.
6. Accelerated Pulses Production Programme was introduced in 2010-11 in 16 States covering about 1 million ha area to boost the production of pulses.
7. Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna was launched in 2007. This Programme has been at the core of the agriculture development in the last few years, particularly for sectors like animal husbandry, dairying and fisheries sectors.
8. Livestock Insurance Scheme was launched in 2006 to provide protection to the farmers and cattle rearers against any eventual loss of their animals due to death.

9. National Horticulture Mission was launched in 2005 to enhance horticulture production, support technological innovations through an area based regionally differentiated strategies. Per capita availability of fruits and vegetables has increased to about 169 gms/person/day and 332 gms/person/day respectively.
10. The seminal Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 - a key campaign promise of the Indian National Congress in 2009 - was enacted in 2013 after two years of nationwide consultations. This law was a historic victory for our brothers and sisters working in the agriculture sector. The law ensures that land cannot be acquired without the land owners consent, promises up to four times the prevailing market value as compensation and repeals the draconian Land Acquisition Act of 1894.

### **The Detailed Action Plan 2014 - 2019**

*The Indian National Congress will continue to provide an impetus to agricultural growth productivity and incomes. We will also stay focused on providing all possible support for all farmers, in particular women and small and marginal farmers.*

1. The Indian National Congress instituted schemes like the RashtriyaKrishiVikasYojana. As a result of these measures, the agriculture GDP growth went up from 2.6% (under the BJP) to 3.1% under UPA-I and further to 4% under UPA-II.
2. The historic decision by the Congress-led UPA government to allow Foreign Direct Investment in multi-brand retail will transform the agrarian economy as it will create a beneficial value chain from farm to fork, creating rural infrastructure for sorting, grading, packing, cold storage facilities and ware housing. It will ensure that the farmer gets a much higher value for his price.
3. We will continue to nurture private-public partnerships for increasing investments in value chains, cold storage facilities, grading and standardization, quality certification and warehouses. This will greatly aid in increasing agriculture exports.
4. We will add 1 crore hectares to irrigated area by completing the radical Water Reforms Agenda of the 12th Plan, which is based on Irrigation Management Transfer to Water Users Associations of farmers. This will ensure Gross Irrigated Area crosses 100 million hectares in India.
5. The current water use efficiency in irrigation is 40%. The Indian National Congress will actively support more efficient water use technologies including reuse and recycling of water. We will complete the historic aquifer mapping and groundwater management programme launched by UPA-II over the next five years to ensure sustainable utilisation of groundwater to secure the

livelihoods of lakhs of our farmers, particularly in regions where groundwater depletion has taken place.

6. Small and marginal farmers own more than half the country's total cattle and buffalo. However, only 12% of the total expenditure on agriculture is on livestock development. The Indian National Congress will place a special emphasis on livestock, fisheries, opening of veterinary schools and centres, fodder development through animal husbandry programmes and schemes like MGNREGA. MGNREGA will also be harnessed to support the construction of poultry shelters and water bodies for fisheries.
7. The Indian National Congress will increase spending to ensure access and quality in agriculture education, including increasing the amount for and number of post-matric scholarships and research fellowships and for veterinary students.
8. The Indian National Congress will increase coverage of crop insurance schemes, from the current 25% to 50%, particularly among the small and marginal farmers and non-loanee farmers. Settlement of claims on time, better crop yield estimation to determine premiums etc. and involvement of private sector will be other areas of focus.
9. The Indian National Congress will allocate special funds to agriculture research to develop new technologies for disease management of crops and livestock, high yielding varieties of crops, etc.
10. The Indian National Congress will promote resource conservation technologies and agriculture practices like integrated farming, zero tillage, organic farming and develop wastelands for dry land farming.
11. We will cover 250 lakh hectares as watersheds, as part of the dramatically reformed Integrated Watershed Management Programme launched by UPA-II.
12. There are lakhs of families in our coastal belts that depend on fishing for their livelihood. To enhance their welfare, a new Ministry of Fisheries will be established and all steps will be taken to further enhance their livelihood security.
13. The Indian National Congress honouring the commitment made in the 2009 Manifesto enacted the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013. The Indian National Congress will ensure fast and fair implementation of the Act such that farmers and landowners get adequate compensation for their acquired land.
14. The Indian National Congress has more than doubled the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for

wheat and paddy from 2004-05 to 2013-14. The MSP for other cereals increased three-fold. We will continue our endeavour to provide higher MSPs for farm products to increase profitability of agriculture.

15. The Indian National Congress will provide concessional loans to groups/collectives of small, marginal farmers and women farmers upto Rs. 5 lakh to enable them to gain better access to inputs and services.
16. The Indian National Congress will strive to lower interest rates for farmers to ensure they are able to access extension services and agriculture inputs like seed, water, fertilizers etc.

**The promises detailed above reflect the Indian National Congress' commitment towards agriculture and farmers welfare, in response to the wide range of aspirations articulated by this community in our consultations. We recognize that there are some more expectations expressed by these groups, which will continue to guide the Indian National Congress' efforts towards their development. The Indian National Congress is committed to finding a way forward towards meeting all such expectations of these groups, by putting in concerted efforts, as detailed below.**

1. Review feasibility of linking subsidies to the size of land holdings to ensure equitable access of government welfare spending for small and marginalized farmers
2. Transfer ownership and funds for management of downstream water canal networks to gram panchayats
3. Ensure access of soil moisture measuring sensors for all farmers
4. Set up debt recovery tribunal to resolve disputes related to farmers' loans.
5. Provide subsidized loans to cooperative societies to purchase farm machinery
6. Provide 50% subsidy for crop insurance premiums
7. Institute Government program to appoint agriculture graduates to provide training and support to small farmers in villages. Provide soil card for all agricultural land
8. Regulate commission chargeable on agriculture produce sale
9. Provide advance information on MSPs to farmers to enable informed sowing decision-making
10. Make provision for farmers to sell produce throughout the week to supplement weekly market which functions on one day only

11. Ensure protection of farmer interests in the Seeds Bill
12. Provide substantial subsidy on knee length boots and rubber gloves to guard against snake bites, electrical short-circuits, finger bruises etc
13. Implement crop insurance/risk mitigation system to prevent debt servitude
14. Provide increased subsidy on milch machines for women dairy farmer
15. Improve data collection/management for crop survey methods, installation of rain gauge etc
16. Ensure improved input services and infrastructure such as electricity supply, irrigation works, welfare schemes etc.
17. Bring a KisanSwaraj Policy to ensure economic security and viability of agriculture based livelihoods, ecological sustainability to preserve productive natural resources, people's control over agricultural resources, ensuring non-toxic/diverse/nutritious/adequate food for all
18. Allow farmers to sell produce in open markets and not just designated mandis
19. Ensure adequate representation of farmers in the Agricultural Prices Commission
20. Ensure easy access to tractors through collateral-free loans and provision of tractors at factory rates
21. Reduce the role of middle men between farmers and consumers where possible
22. Policy on export-import of agricultural products to be made in consultation with agricultural ministry
23. Provide usage-linked subsidy on electricity bills for small farmers
24. Establish a National Farmers Commission to advance the interests and development of farmers
25. Eliminate harmful chemicals and provide safe alternatives to prevent and treat health problems in farmers
26. Introduce agriculture as a subject in rural schools for classes 6-10
27. Provide for a separate agriculture budget
28. Ensure protection of Western Ghats and the interests of farmers of the region
29. Safeguard farmers interests while entering into trade agreements
30. Encourage crop diversification in response to declining water tables

## Appeal

We appeal to all our farmer friends to support the INC so that we can fulfill the promises made in the Election Manifesto

For the Indian National Congress, a Manifesto is more than a catalogue of promises and pledges to be forgotten after elections are over.

It is an agenda for governance to be followed diligently and meticulously.

It is an agenda for good governance on which progress must be reported to the people of the country, regularly, in a transparent manner.

It is in this spirit that the Congress-led UPA government has been releasing a “Report to the People” every year. This will continue.

The 2014 Lok Sabha elections will offer stark choices.

On the one side is the Indian National Congress with its long track record of achievements and accomplishments, with its vision and values bequeathed to it by a most remarkable generation of Indians led by Mahatma Gandhi.

On the other side is an ideology of hate, bigotry and prejudice, an ideology that negates the very idea of India that has been cherished by us for centuries.

On the one side is the Indian National Congress, which celebrates and rejoices in the multitude of diversities of India.

On the other side is an ideology that seeks to impose uniformity in the name of unity.

A vote for the Indian National Congress is a vote for fulfilling the aspirations of the youth of our nation, for ensuring that women lead a life of dignity.

Economic growth, social harmony, empowerment of weaker sections and strengthening of democratic institutions have to all go hand-in-hand.

It is only the Indian National Congress that will, by its very character, ensure that this happens.