



Restriction on Paddy Cultivation

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Why in News

Recently, the farmers from Haryana are protesting against the State Government's order under which farmers have to **diversify at least 50% of their last-year cultivated paddy (rice)** area by growing alternate crops.

Key Points

- **Government's Action**

- The restriction of cultivation is under the state government's **crop diversification scheme 'Mera Pani, Meri Virasat'** for replacement of paddy by alternative crops in 1 lakh hectare.
- According to the Government, the step is aimed at **water conservation** and **crop diversification**.
- Directed farmers to **sow alternative crops** such as maize, millet, and pulses.
- Offered Rs. 7,000 per acre to farmers shifting the paddy fields to other alternative crops.

- **Farmer's Response/ Stand**

- Farmers have started a '**Kisan Bachao-Kheti Bachao**' campaign against the government's decision under which they are demanding the **freedom to decide what is to be sown in the field**.
- Other options of agriculture are not much viable.
- The soil and climate is not conducive for alternative crops in most parts of the block.
- The compensation amount of Rs. 7000 offered by the government is inadequate.
- It is not the time for experiments in the farming system when the country is battling with **Covid-19**.

Mera Pani Meri Virasat Scheme

- The Haryana government had recently launched 'Mera Pani Meri Virasat' scheme, aimed at **crop diversification** to move away from water-guzzling paddy.
- Under the scheme, farmers sowing alternative crops other than paddy during the ensuing kharif season will get an **incentive of ₹7,000 per acre**.

Crop Diversification

- **Crop diversification** refers to the addition of new crops or cropping systems to agricultural production on a particular farm.
- **Benefits:**
 - Farmers can grow several crops even in areas where the variability of rainfall is high and adequate sources of irrigation are not available.
 - Diversification helps in enhancing nitrogen in the soil and replenishing the soil fertility.
 - This helps to generate employment as the farmers get the opportunity to cultivate different crops.
 - Higher earnings of farmers transforms to greater inputs to the crops such as fertilizers, insecticides and irrigation equipment.
 - Enable farmers to gain access to national and international markets with new products, food and medicinal plants.
 - Diversification can also manage price risk, since not all products suffer low market prices at the same time and increase the profitability of the farming community.

Way Forward

- There is a need for a paradigm shift towards a better farming system which may include transition towards improving water use efficiency, reducing leakages, recharging/restoring local water bodies, etc.
- However, It is more important to pay heed towards farmers' concerns in the coronavirus crisis by providing better compensations and other farming related assistance, rather than restricting or forcing upon anything which may compromise their earning avenues.

Source:TH