



Policy Bias Against Rainfed Agricultural Area

Recently a **new rainfed agriculture atlas** was released highlighting the **policy biases that are making farming unviable for many in these areas**.

- There has been **negligence toward rainfed areas** which is leading to lower incomes for farmers in these areas.
- Further farmers in rainfed areas are **receiving 40% less of their income from agriculture** in comparison to those in irrigated areas.

Key Issues

- Even though **rainfed agriculture contributes to 60 percent of the value of agriculture GDP of India**, there is a clear-cut bias towards irrigated areas when it comes to public investment in agriculture in the country.
- This neglect, together with unsuitable programme design, has ensured that potential of rainfed areas remains unrealized.
- In terms of procurement over the **decade between 2001-02 and 2011-12**, the **government procured ₹5.4 lakh crore of wheat and rice**. On the other hand, **coarse cereals**, which are **grown in rainfed areas**, only had **₹3,200 crore** worth of procurement in the same period.
- **Flagship government schemes**, such as seed and fertiliser subsidies and soil health cards, are designed for irrigated areas and **simply extended to rainfed farmers without taking their needs into consideration**.

Way Forward

- **More balanced approach** is needed, to give rainfed farmers the same research and technology focus, and production support that their counterparts in irrigation areas have received over the last few decades.
- There is an **urgent need to do more R&D in rainfed agriculture** and bring in more policy perspective like tweaking of government schemes by considering the needs of rainfed agricultural areas.
- In the long run, cash incentives and income support like the **PM-KISAN scheme** announced in the interim budget 2019 are better than extensive procurement as they are inclusive in character, and doesn't distinguish between farmers in one area or another, growing one crop or another.
- Along with income support to help farmers through the current crisis, it is now the time to **design better structured interventions for the future**.
- Like the ease of doing business, **ease of doing farming** should be done on the parameters of seeds, soil, water in rainfed areas to make agriculture attractive in the long term.