Farmers Distress Index

Why in News?

- The **Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture (CRIDA)**, an institution under the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR),** is developing an Early Warning System called **"Farmers' Distress Index", a first of its kind for India.**

What is the Farmers' Distress Index?

- **About:**
    - The index tries to anticipate the Agrarian distress and prevent its **spread from a few farmers to the village or block level.**
    - It will enable various entities such as the central government, state governments, local bodies, and non-governmental agencies **to receive early warnings about impending farmers' distress,** thus facilitating proactive interventions.
- **Objective:**
    - The index aims to minimize the agrarian distress in the form of **crop loss / failure and income shock.**
        - Farmers' exposure to shocks have increased in the recent years, with an increase in extreme climate events as well as market and price fluctuations, many times driving them to death by suicides.
- **Methodology for Monitoring Distress:** The development of the index **involves multiple steps.**
    - Local newspapers, news platforms, and social media are scoured to identify instances of farmers' distress, including debt repayment issues, suicides, pest attacks, droughts, floods, and migration.
    - This information is **then supplemented by telephonic interviews** with small, marginal, and tenant farmers in the area.
    - These interviews incorporate **21 standardized questions designed to detect early signs** of distress.
    - The responses are then **mapped against seven indicators,**
        - Exposure to risks
        - Debt
        - Adaptive capacity
        - Landholding
        - Irrigation facilities
        - Mitigation strategies
        - Immediate triggers
        - Socio-psychological factors.
- **Interpretation of the Index:**

- Based on the collected data and responses, the index will assign a value between **0 and 1** to indicate the level of distress.
  - **0 to 0.5: Low distress,**
  - **0.5 to 0.7:** Moderate" distress
  - **Above 0.7:** Severe" distress.
- If the distress level is severe, the index **identifies the specific component contributing the most to farmers' distress** among the seven indicators.
- **Significance:**
  - Different agencies can then **carry out interventions to prevent income shocks to farmers** depending on the severity of distress.
  - The current solutions that are being thought upon are direct money transfer, mid-term release of claims under the government's crop insurance scheme in case of crop failures etc.
  - For instance, the insurance claims under **PMFBY (Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana)** are only given **when a full survey is completed but,** in this case, if the index suggests severe distress in the coming few weeks, then the **government can provide interim relief under the scheme.**

What are the Government Initiatives to Mitigate Farmers' Distress?

- **PM Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)**
- **PM Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY)**
- **electronic National Agricultural market (e-NAM)**
- **Soil health card**
- **Neem-coated urea**
- **In the 2022** budget, various steps were taken to support the farm sector.
- **Rythu Bandhu Scheme (Telangana)**
- Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) scheme **(Odisha)**

Conclusion:

The index's implementation **holds the potential to mitigate farmers' income shocks** and contribute to the well-being of the agricultural community.

Source: DTE

PDF Refernece URL: https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/farmers-distress-index