



AIR Discussions (July 2nd Week)

AIR SPOTLIGHT: CABINET DECISIONS- EXPANDING HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE AND FOCUS ON FARMERS WELFARE

Expanding Health Infrastructure:

CONTEXT: Union Cabinet approved a new scheme 'India COVID-19 Emergency Response & Health System Preparedness Package: Phase-II' amounting to Rs. 23,123 crore for FY 2021-22.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- This scheme aims to **accelerate health system preparedness for immediate responsiveness for early prevention, detection and management, with the focus on health infrastructure development including for Paediatric Care and with measurable outcomes.**
- The Phase-II of the Package has **Central Sector (CS) and Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) components.**
- **Central and state share as under:**
 - Central Share of the ECRP-II –Rs.15,000 crore
 - State Share of the ECRP-II –Rs.8,123 crore

BACKGROUND:

- In March 2020, when the country was faced with the first wave of the COVID 19 pandemic, the a Central Sector Scheme of Rs. 15,000 crore for the "India COVID 19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Package" was announced.
- Since mid-February 2021, the country is experiencing a second wave with spread into rural, peri-urban and tribal areas.

CENTRAL SECTOR COMPONENTS:

- Support would be provided to Central Hospitals, AIIMS, and other Institutions of National Importance for **repurposing beds for COVID management.**
- **National Centre for Disease Control would be strengthened** by providing Genome Sequencing machines etc.
- Support would be provided for **implementation of Hospital Management Information System in all the District Hospitals of the Country.**
- Support would also be provided for **expanding the National Architecture of e-Sanjeevani Tele-consultation platform** to provide up to 5 lakhs tele-consultations per day from the present 50,000 Tele-consultations per day.
- Support would also be provided for **IT interventions, including strengthening the Central War room COVID-19 Portal, 1075 COVID help lines and COWIN platform.**

CSS COMPONENTS:

- The efforts are aimed at **strengthening district and sub district capacity for an effective and rapid response to the pandemic.**
- **Create Paediatric units in all 736 districts and also, to establish Paediatric Centre of Excellence in each State/UT.**
- **Augment 20,000 ICU beds** in public healthcare system
- Provide care closer to the community by **creating pre-fabricated structures for adding additional beds at the existing CHCs, PHCs and SHCs.**



- **Install Liquid Medical Oxygen Storage Tanks** with an aim to support at least one such unit per district
- **Augment the existing fleet of ambulances.**
- **Engage Undergraduate and post graduate medical interns and final year MMBS, BSc, & GNM nursing students** for effective COVID management.
- Flexible support to the Districts for meeting the requirement of essential medicines for COVID-19 management.

Focus on Farmers' Welfare:

CONTEXT: The Centre has decided to **allow state-run market yards to access financing facilities through its Agricultural Infrastructure Fund** to calm the fears of protesting farmers that such market yards are being weakened.

MORE ON THE NEWS:

- They will now be **eligible for interest subvention for loans up to ₹2 crore, with APMCs allowed to access separate loans for different kinds of infrastructure projects to build cold storage, silos, sorting, grading and assaying units in their market yards.**
- The **period of the financial facility has been extended by two additional years up to 2025-26, while the overall period of the scheme has been extended to 2032-33.**

What is APMC?

- Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) is a **system operating under the State Government since agricultural marketing is a State subject.**
- APMC is also **responsible for the regulation of agricultural trading practices.**
- This results in multiple benefits like: Needless intermediaries are eliminated, Improved market efficiency through a decrease in market charges, The producer-seller interest is well protected
- The APMC has Yards/Mandis in the market area that regulates the notified agricultural produce and livestock.
- **APMC ensures worthy prices and timely payments to the farmers for their produce.**

BENEFICIARIES: Under the scheme, **Rs. One Lakh Crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans to PACS, Marketing Cooperative Societies, FPOs, SHG, Farmers, Joint Liability Groups, Multipurpose Cooperative Societies, Agri-entrepreneurs, Startups, Aggregation Infrastructure Providers and Central/State agency or Local Body sponsored Public Private Partnership Project.**

BENEFITS:

- All loans under this financing facility will have **interest subvention of 3% per annum up to a limit of Rs. 2 crore. This subvention will be available for a maximum period of seven years.**
- Further, **credit guarantee coverage will be available for eligible borrowers from this financing facility** under Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) scheme for a loan up to Rs. 2 crore. The fee for this coverage will be paid by the Government.
- In case of FPOs the credit guarantee may be availed from the facility created under FPO promotion scheme of Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare (DACFW).
- Moratorium for repayment under this financing facility may vary subject to minimum of 6 months and maximum of 2 years.

BACKGROUND: Union Cabinet in July 2020 has approved a new pan India **Central Sector Scheme** called Agriculture Infrastructure Fund. The scheme shall **provide a medium - long term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management Infrastructure and community farming assets through interest subvention and financial support.**



NEED FOR AGRICULTURE INFRASTRUCTURE FUND:

- For **approximately 58% of the people of the country, agriculture and allied activities are the chief sources of income.**
- About **85% of farmers manage 45% of the agricultural land, being smallholder farmers** (less than 2 hectares of land under cultivation). As such, the annual incomes of most of the farmers in the country are low.
- **Low connectivity and limited infrastructure connecting farmers and markets** mean that 15 – 20% of the output is wasted, which is much higher than in other countries. Investment in agriculture has also been stagnant.
- All the above factors mean that a scheme dedicated to improving post-harvest management infrastructure and farming infrastructure is the need of the hour.

OBJECTIVES OF THE FUND:

Farmers

- **Increase value realization** by allowing farmers to sell directly to a larger base of consumers because of improved marketing infrastructure.
- **Reduced post-harvest losses and a smaller number of intermediaries** because of investment in logistics infrastructure. This will make farmers more independent and give them better access to markets.
- **Improved realisation because of modern packaging and cold storage system access**, since farmers would be able to decide when to sell.
- **Community farming assets for improved productivity and optimization of inputs will result in substantial savings.**

Government

- This will **boost innovation and private sector investment** in agriculture.
- Due to improvements in post-harvest infrastructure, the government will further be able to **reduce national food wastage percentage** thereby enabling the agriculture sector to become competitive with current global levels.
- Structure viable PPP projects for **attracting investment in agriculture infrastructure.**

Agri Entrepreneurs and Startups

- **Push for innovation in the agriculture sector** using new technologies such as AI, IoT, etc.
- **Improve avenues for collaboration between entrepreneurs and farmers.**

Banking Ecosystem

- With Credit Guarantee, incentive and interest subvention, **lending institutions will be able to lend with a lower risk.**
- **A greater role for cooperative banks and regional rural banks (RRBs)** through refinance facilities.

Consumers

- A larger share of the produce will reach the market and therefore, **consumers will be able to benefit from better quality and prices.**

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1733841>

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1733828>

<https://vikaspedia.in/schemesall/schemes-for-farmers/agriculture-infrastructure-fund>

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/agriculture-infrastructure-fund-loans-to-boost-apmcs/articleshow/84253788.cms>



PRELIMS SPECIAL: NEWS IN BRIEF

STI-led BRICS Innovation Cooperation Action Plan (2021-24)

- **BRICS countries agree to STI-led BRICS Innovation Cooperation Action Plan (2021-24) proposed by India.**
- The Action Plan was proposed by India during the 12th Meeting of BRICS S&T Steering Committee.
- India had proposed the plan to facilitate sharing of experiences of each other's innovation ecosystem and networking of innovators and entrepreneurs.

<https://newsonair.com/2021/07/09/all-brics-countries-agree-to-sti-led-brics-innovation-cooperation-action-plan-2021-24-proposed-by-india/>

National Fish Farmers Day

- National Fish Farmers Day is **observed on 10th July every year in honour of scientists Dr. K. H. Alikunhi and Dr. H.L. Chaudhury.**
- These two scientists had **successfully demonstrated the technology of induced breeding (Hypophysation) in Indian Major Carps on 10th July 1957 at the erstwhile 'Pond Culture Division' of CIFRI at Cuttack, Odisha.**
- The event aims to draw attention to changing the way the country manages fisheries resources to ensure sustainable stocks and healthy ecosystems.

<https://newsonair.com/2021/07/10/21st-national-fish-farmers-day-observed-in-manipur/>

Avicennia marina

- In a first-of-its-kind study, the scientists at the DBT-Institute of Life Sciences, Bhubaneswar have **reported a reference-grade whole genome sequence of a highly salt-tolerant and salt-secreting true-mangrove species, Avicennia marina.**
- In order to achieve efficient crop improvement, the application of accurate genetic information contained in diverse germplasm resources is essential.
- The study conducted is significant as agriculture productivity globally is affected due to various factors including limited water availability and salinization of soil and water.
- According to the study, the **genomic resource will pave the way for researchers to study the potential of the identified genes for developing drought and salinity tolerant varieties of significant crop species of the coastal region important for India.**
- **A reference genome is a digital nucleic acid sequence database, assembled by scientists as a representative example of the set of genes in one idealized individual organism of a species.**
- Referred to as **grey mangrove or white mangrove, Avicennia Marina is a shrub or tree belonging to the Acanthaceae family that are generally 10–14 m long.**
- Found in all mangrove formations in India, Avicennia marina is the most prominent salt-secreting mangrove species that grows optimally in 75 per cent seawater.

<https://newsonair.com/2021/07/10/dbt-deciphers-genome-of-salt-secreting-mangrove-species-avicennia-marina/>



India's First LNG Facility Plant

- Union Minister inaugurated India's **first LNG facility plant at Nagpur, Maharashtra.**
- Liquefied Natural Gas is a **clear, colourless and non-toxic liquid that forms when natural gas is cooled to -162°C (-260°F).**
- The cooling process shrinks the volume of the gas 600 times, making it easier and safer to store and ship. **In its liquid state, LNG will not ignite.**
- When LNG reaches its destination, it is turned back into a gas at regasification plants.
- It is then piped to homes, businesses and industries where it is burnt for heat or to generate electricity.
- LNG is now also **emerging as a cost-competitive and cleaner transport fuel, especially for shipping and heavy-duty road transport.**

<https://newsonair.com/2021/07/11/nitin-gadkari-inaugurates-countrys-first-private-lng-plant-in-nagpur/>