

# Indian Coordination Committee of Farmers' Movements

Road No. 2, A – 33, Mahipalpur Extension, New Delhi – 110 037, India  
Tel: 011 - 26783000, 26784000; Fax: 011-26785001; Email: yudhvir55@yahoo.com

18 March 2013

To,  
Dr Manmohan Singh  
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India  
New Delhi

**Sub: Demands to the Government, from Kisan Khet Mazdoor Mahapanchayat**

Shri Manmohan Singh ji,

Farmers and agriculture workers from across the country have come all the way to New Delhi to show their collective commitment and get your governments attention to reverse the grave agrarian crisis in India. The Indian Coordination Committee of Farmers' Movements (ICCFM) and the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) along with other people's movements have joined hands in a "Kisan Khet Mazdoor Mahapanchayat" to defend our land, water, forest and agricultural livelihoods.

The current obsession of the central and state governments of India with liberalization reforms, runaway industrialization and consumerism is a dangerous trend for Indian farming populations and the poor. Agriculture has been turned into a losing way of life: our lands, the primary resource for our livelihoods, are being grabbed for private non agricultural purpose; there is no assured income for farmers, cost of cultivation is increasing, farm debts are rising, prices don't cover cost of production, and markets are being opened up to favor big international agribusiness through FDI in retail and Free Trade Agreements, with very little stacked in our favour. Such orchestrated efforts by the government are displacing the agrarian masses. Millions of *Anna Daatas* are being forced to either commit suicide in lakhs or abandon agriculture and leave the villages in search of insecure, unavailable jobs. At this rate, there will be only a small number of farmers left in the country very soon. Our agriculture will be controlled by a handful of private corporations which exploit nature and people in order to maximize their profits. Is this is a sensible route to take in an age of a deep environmental crisis, when thousands are dying of hunger and need a secure livelihood? If the Indian government continues to promote unharnessed industrialization and elite consumerism then where will the water and electricity come from for such large industrial projects and what will be the impact on nature and the poor? Infrastructure and industrial projects such as DMIC must be suspended until a final decision with consent of the farmers evolves.

It is time for India to defend agriculture for the survival of our communities, for the well being and health of all rather than the greed of a few, for the protection of mother nature for our future generations. We have five demands that we put before the Indian government:

1. **No land acquisition. We demand land rights. / *bhu adhigrahan nahi bhu adhikaar chahiye***
  - ⌚ We demand a complete moratorium on land acquisition across the country, until the government produces a white paper on all the land acquired (utilized and unutilized) as well as

resettlement and rehabilitation for the project-affected people. Subsequent to this, a complete land use plan should be developed keeping in mind the food security needs and employment and livelihood opportunities for people dependent on the agrarian sector.

- ⌚ We do not accept acquisition of land by the government for private parties and private purposes as recommended by the Parliamentary Standing Committee.
- ⌚ We oppose the diversion of agriculture land for non-agrarian purposes.
- ⌚ We demand resettlement and rehabilitation for the people displaced due to land acquisition in the past by any Act.
- ⌚ We demand the establishment of the National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Commission to correct the irregularities of resettlement and rehabilitation in past projects and to ensure strict monitoring and justice to the project-affected persons.
- ⌚ We demand that prior-informed consent of the Gram / Basti Sabha for any land acquisition be mandatory before the approval of any project.
- ⌚ We demand that all 16 central Acts under which land acquisition is taking place are brought under the new act.
- ⌚ We demand that the government stops forceful land grabbing and illegal demolitions in urban areas, and protects land rights of the urban poor. The government must bring in a separate act to deal with urban land acquisition or include it more strongly in the current bill. It should guarantee full consent, proper rehabilitation and resettlement wherever urban land is acquired for public purposes.

2. **We demand a Farmers' Income Guarantee Act and a Farmers' Income Commission** : The government should be directly accountable for improving the net incomes of farming households (tenant cultivators and agriculture workers' included). We seek to measure the performance of the government and all its agri- and livelihood interventions in terms of net household income, not in production or yields, increase in funds spent, and especially not on loans. When Indian farmers are ensured a dignified livelihood from agriculture, the productivity of our farming will automatically rise. A National Farmers' Income Guarantee Act should be created which will assure a guaranteed income to farmers, tenants and sharecroppers by making farming remunerative. It should have a combination of fair and remunerative prices (FRP) which include a profit above the cost price to meet living wages. This must replace the flawed MSP calculated by the CACP, which currently does not even cover the cost of production. The Farmers' Income Guarantee Act will work with a basket of measures, including a Price Compensation Scheme, Crop Insurance with appropriately designed products, full coverage of crops and cultivators, as well as setting up of Marketing Infrastructure starting from village level, which **Farm Producer Organizations (FPOs)** can use for improving their livelihoods. An important part of the effort should be creation of the FPOs.

There is an urgent need to end corruption in the support schemes for farmers. This can be ensured by including farmers and community organizations in the implementation of all schemes. The current CAG report of the farm loan waiver scam clearly shows us that the most needy do not receive support from schemes designed for them. Small and marginal farmers are not receiving the majority of the large credit allocations that the government likes to praise itself about, these mostly benefit agribusiness and other allied industries.

To address the problem of farm workers availability, include agriculture in the list of MNREGA work, something which will increase the number of days of work for the workers and also end the workers deficit during the agrarian season. Farmers could be asked to pay the amount beyond the MNREGA wages, so that workers get market rate wages but not below minimum wages.

3. **We demand that the government takes immediate measures to put an end to Farmer Suicides.** It is a grave national shame that people who are keeping us alive kill themselves because farming has become unremunerative and undignified. One farmer commits suicide every 30 minutes in India.
  - ⌚ The Indian government is in denial when it comes to farmer suicides. There is a need to immediately acknowledge all farmer suicides instead of differentiating between 'genuine' and 'not genuine', 'eligible' and 'not eligible'.
  - ⌚ A proper relief and rehabilitation package should be provided by the central government to the families of suicide victims to be able to rebuild their lives.
  - ⌚ We demand a special and joint session in the Parliament to discuss farmer suicides so that the nation can collectively recognize and acknowledge the root causes of this widespread social issue and take up corrective steps to rid the country of this unconscionable situation.
  - ⌚ We question the credit base in the recent budget that the Finance Minister made and we assert our right to fair and just prices for agricultural produce, to prevent indebtedness and farmer suicides.
  
4. **We oppose new legal frameworks that threaten farm livelihoods and food sovereignty :** The government cannot treat food and farmers as a commodity, a source of profit for private corporations, or for speculation or hoarding. The primary purpose of agriculture must be food and livelihood provision. In this light,
  - ⌚ We reject commodity and futures trading in food commodities which lead to an increase in food price volatility, which drives hunger and poverty.
  - ⌚ We reject free trade in agriculture, whether through Free Trade Agreements or the WTO. These favor agribusiness rather than farmers and dump agricultural produce in our country, driving down local prices and putting local producers out of business.
  - ⌚ We oppose Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in retail. This threatens the livelihoods of small farmers, small retailers and street vendors. The experience of most countries where such retail giants exist shows that they have come to monopolize the food chain from procurement to distribution. They drive down farm gate prices due to their sheer size and they are not interested in sourcing from small farmers.
  - ⌚ We demand universal Public Distribution System (PDS) and procurement for all crops in order to give local farmers an assured market for their produce.
  
5. **We demand ecologically sustainable agro-technologies. We say YES to Agro-ecology and NO to Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and agro-chemicals**
  - ⌚ Promote agro-ecology: Agro-ecology is a science that values nature's processes, farmers' innovations and local knowledge. India has a massive experience with such sustainable

agriculture, natural farming, local knowledge, local seeds and plants, which should be promoted. There are many successful models that are working on the ground and should be scaled up, such as Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture of Andhra Pradesh is now practiced in 2.5 million acres. It has successfully improved farmers' incomes, restored the ecology, and improved health and livelihoods of the communities. Areas which are still untouched by agro-chemicals should be conserved and here, agro-ecological agriculture should be intensified.

- ⌚ We oppose GMOs – GMOs are not a silver bullet to solve Indian agrarian crisis. They are a false solution which will only exacerbate the agrarian crisis in numerous ways. GMOS are proven to be harmful to the environment, as well as human and animal health. The technology and seeds are corporate-controlled in monopolistic ways that demand high royalties from farmers, which puts severe financial burdens on them. Further, this reduces choices for farmers and consumers. Most importantly, Bt cotton has failed in India – it has turned Vidarbha into a suicide belt and has not resulted in decrease of pesticide use. We oppose the establishment of more biotechnology research centers in various parts of India. GMOs are a costly distraction and misinvestment. We demand that the government refrain from thrusting this unwanted, unneeded, undesirable technology in our food and farming systems.
- ⌚ We will not allow the Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India Bill to be enacted – in fact, this is a Bill that ought not to be tabled at all. This is a Bill seeking to promote GMOs in the garb of regulation. When a majority of countries of the world have banned GMOs due to compelling evidence of harm, our government is trying to fast-track their entry through this Bill. We need to first have a national debate on whether GMOs are even needed in the first place. The Bt Brinjal moratorium shows that the Indian farmers and consumers have already rejected GMOs.
- ⌚ We also reject external-input driven, resource-degrading toxic chemical agriculture. This has only resulted in poisoning our land and people, while increasing cost of cultivation, making agriculture un-remunerative. We reject such technologies in the light of evidence and experience on alternatives that exist.
- ⌚ We demand water rights. There is a serious shortage of water and there are constant droughts due to exploitation and climate change. Already there are countless examples of bore wells going dry which is a serious problem for rural communities, especially women. In this light, it is absolutely crucial to ensure that people first have secure access to water for domestic, drinking and irrigation purposes to produce food. There should be an immediate ban on projects that divert water away from these vital needs (such as large infrastructure projects, recreational projects or thermal power projects that are one of the main causes of river pollution). When land is acquired from farmers for such projects, priority over water and power should be given to the farming community. Serious efforts need to be put in place to promote community-level control and management efforts to restore ground water and promote traditional water harvesting systems. Farming technologies that conserve water need to be promoted, thus agro-ecology should be even more emphasized as through agroecological methods farmers not only use less water, but also recharge ground water.

- 🕒 **Seed Sovereignty:** We demand that that the government upholds India's and communities' Seed Sovereignty. India has an impressive biodiversity in agriculture and livestock. Such diversity has been carefully bred by our farming communities over centuries. These need to be preserved in the hands of our farmers and pastoralists, adivasis and other agrarian people, especially women. We need seed sovereignty in order to ensure that the basis of our food and farming is in our own control. Proprietary rights accruing to others, for their profits in the name of IPRs, is unacceptable to us.

We demand the Prime Minister and the UPA Government to show political will to address the agrarian crisis and rebuild Indian agriculture.

Signed by:

Rakesh Tikait (Spokesperson, BKU)	Chamarasa Mali Patil (President KRRS)	Medha Patkar, Narmada Bachao Andolan;
Ajmer Singh Lakhwal (BKU Punjab)	KS Puttanaiah (KRRS)	Ulka Mahajan
Yudhvir Singh (General Secretary, BKU)	Nandini Jairam (KRRS)	Suniti S R
	Chukki Nanjundaswamy (KRRS)	Vijay Diwan, NAPM Maharashtra;
Rajesh Chauhan (Vice president, BKU)	Vijay Jawandhia ( Shetkari Sanghatna, Maharashtra)	Madhuresh Kumar (NAPM)
Gurnam Singh (BKU Haryana)		Prafulla Samantara, NAPM Orissa;
	Sellamuthu (Tamilaga Vyavasaigal Sangam)	
SS Gill (BKU Himachal Pradesh)		J. P. Singh, Rupesh Verma, Kisan Sangharsh Samiti UP;
Jagdish Singh (BKU, Madhya Pradesh)	S Kannaiyan (SICCFM)	
	CK Janu (Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha)	Bhupender Singh Rawat, Bhumi Bachao Andolan
Diwan Singh Chaudhry (BKU, UP)		
SS Cheema ( BKU, Uttrakhand)	Raveendranath (Kerala Coconut Farmers Association)	Dr Sunilam, Kisan Sangharsh Samiti

