

National level Multi-state cooperative seed society

India with only 2.3% share in world's total land area has to ensure food security of its vast population, which is 17.7% of world population. In view of the fact, that the area under cultivation is unlikely to increase, thrust will have to be on raising productivity per unit of cultivated land.

2. Substantial increase in yield and quality of crops depends upon a number of factors viz. seeds, fertilizers, irrigation, plant protection measures and suitable agronomic practices. The response of all other inputs depends on quality of seeds to the large extent. It is estimated that the direct contribution of quality seeds to the total production is about 15-20% depending upon the crop and it can be further raised up to 45% with efficient management of other inputs. The use of poor quality seeds nullifies the utility of all agronomic practices and every other input applied to the crop.

3. For long, Indian farmers were mostly dependent on traditional varieties and seed requirements were met through Farm Saved Seeds (FSS) that resulted in low replacement rates. The use of traditional varieties of seeds coupled with FSS, also results in reduced crop production.

4. There are 8.54 Lakh registered cooperatives in the country having more than 29 Crore members. As farmers are both primary producers and consumers of seeds and as majority of the Indian farmers are members of at least one cooperative institution, these cooperatives can also be engaged for achieving desired Seed Replacement Rate (SRR) and Varietal Replacement Rate (VRR) by providing proper institutional support. Thus, the strength of cooperatives, as available to them by virtue of its large membership base amongst farmers can be harnessed for purpose of production, expansion of upgraded testing facility and seed variety trials, which may be instrumental in reducing yield gaps.

5. Three leading national cooperatives viz. Indian Farmers Fertiliser Co-operative Limited (IFFCO), Krishak Bharati Co-operative Limited (KRIBHCO) and National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED) along with two statutory bodies, viz. National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) and National Co-operative Development Corporation (NCDC) have joined hands to contribute ₹50 crore each and become promoter members for establishing a national level multi-state cooperative seed society. This society will be registered under MSCS Act and Rules, 2002 and will be notified as a national cooperative society by amending Second Schedule under section 116(1) of the MSCS Act.

6. The society will have an authorized share capital of ₹500 Crore and it will be established with initial paid-up share capital of ₹250 Crore. Initially, the office of the proposed society will be located in Delhi. It will have area of operation all over the country. Cooperatives at all levels, including from primary to national, which are interested in seed business will be eligible to join the proposed society as members. The society will function in accordance with cooperative principles for social and economic betterment of its members.

7. The proposed society will function through Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS), Multi-State Cooperative Societies (MSCS) and federations at district, state and national level by involving all forms of cooperative structures and all other means to increase the SRR, VRR by ensuring the role of farmers in quality seed cultivation and seed variety trials, production and distribution of certified seeds with a brand name as well.

8. The proposed society will perform its activities with focus on production, testing, certification, procurement, processing, storage, branding, labelling and packaging of all three generations of seeds i.e. breeder, foundation and certified through PACS by leveraging various schemes and policies of different ministries of Government of India in a focussed manner through 'Whole of Government Approach'. Special support would be provided by Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare through its agencies such as Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), National Seeds Corporation Limited (NSC) and related agencies for production and distribution of quality seeds in general and development of new varieties through latest techniques in particular. This will also help in achieving the goal of "Sahakar-se-Samridhi" through the inclusive growth model of cooperatives where the members would benefit both by realization of better prices by production of quality seeds, higher production of crops by use of High Yielding Variety (HYV) seeds and also by dividend distributed out of the surplus generated by the society.

9. The proposed society will help to increase the seed replacement rate, varietal replacement rate, ensuring the role of farmers in quality seed cultivation and seed variety trials, production and distribution of certified seeds with a single brand name, by utilizing the network of all levels of cooperatives. The availability of quality seeds will help in increasing agricultural productivity in strengthening food security and also increasing the income of the farmers.

10. The Indian traditional natural seeds (मीठे बीज), are being gradually replaced by genetically modified high yielding variety seeds. These traditional seeds would soon become out of practice. In order to prevent these seeds from being extinct, the society would also develop and put in place a system for preservation of these seeds.

11. As per Agricultural Statistics 2020 published by Directorate of Economics & Statistics under Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India, contribution of agriculture sector is approx. 42.60% in total employment of country. Further as per data published by National cooperative Union of India (NCUI), approx. 13.30% of direct employment is generated by cooperative sector. Quality seeds production through this proposed society will increase the agriculture production in the country thereby leading to more employment in the agriculture and cooperative sector. Processing, marketing and distribution of quality seeds will also generate additional employment in these sectors, thus providing boost to rural economy, promoting "Make in India" and leading to Atmanirbhar Bharat.