

U.P. set to transform farming sector in 28 backward dists

World Bank is funding \$500 million UP AGRISE project

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LUCKNOW : Uttar Pradesh, India's leading agricultural state, is set to transform its farming sector with the help of a new Uttar Pradesh Agriculture Growth and Rural Incomes Ecosystem Strengthening (UP AGRISE) project that is scheduled to get Cabinet nod very soon before the launch, people in the know of things said.

Backed by the World Bank funding, the \$500 million (around Rs 4,000 crore) ambitious project aims to enhance the productivity and economic viability of agriculture in the state, which plays a crucial role in national food production.

"The project will cover 28 backward districts comprising eight divisions under eastern UP and Bundelkhand, focusing on improving crop yields and boosting the income of marginal and small farmers," said a senior agriculture department official.

"The proposed scheme is expected to be approved by the Cabinet next week," he added.

The World Bank, according to him, has agreed to fund the project and will provide an amount of Rs 2,800 crore to the state for this purpose while the state government will bear the remaining project cost of Rs 1,200 crore.

Despite its significant agricultural output, Uttar Pradesh faces challenges such as low productivity, limited value addition and poor export performance. The UPAGRI project, managed by the Uttar Pradesh Diversified Agriculture Support Project (UP DASP), aims to address these

issues by implementing climate-resilient farming practices, developing high-value crop clusters, and promoting local agricultural enterprises.

The new project is expected to create local employment, improve food security for Uttar Pradesh's 240 million residents, and establish a digital agribusiness network to facilitate better information exchange among stakeholders. It will also work on improving post-harvest management, processing and market support systems.

"Key initiatives include the adoption of advanced agricultural technologies, the formation of 30,750 Farmer Producer Groups and the development of a digital agribusiness platform. Additionally, the project will improve fish production facilities and implement environmental and social safeguards," the official said.

Along with this, at the local level, efforts will be made to reduce costs and increase productivity through farmers' groups/clusters, thereby improving the financial situation of farmers while maintaining environmental balance.

State and district-level committees will oversee the project's implementation and progress.

Uttar Pradesh is primarily an agricultural state, with about two-thirds of its population living in rural areas and dependent on agriculture and related activities for their livelihood.

The agricultural sector plays a major role in the state's economy, contributing about 25% to the state's total GDP.

The total geographical area of the state is 241.70 lakh hectares, of which 165.38 lakh hectares (68.42%) is under agriculture and 143.92 lakh hectares (87.02%) is net cultivated area.

Globally, 10% of land area is



PIC FOR REPRESENTATION

DISTS TARGETED UNDER THE PROPOSED SCHEME

Jhansi, Lalitpur, Jalaun, Chitrakoot, Banda, Hamirpur, Mahoba, Mirzapur, Sonbhadra, Bhadohi, Varanasi, Chandauli, Ghazipur, Janupur, Gorakhpur, Deoria, Maharajganj, Kushinagar, Azamgarh, Mau, Ballia, Basti, Siddharthnagar, Sant Kabir Nagar, Gonda, Bahraich, Shravasti and Balrampur.

used for agriculture, while in India it's about 45%. In Uttar Pradesh, around 68% of land is used for agriculture.

Irrigation is crucial for agriculture. Globally, only 21% of agricultural land is irrigated. In India, 55% of agricultural land is irrigated, while in Uttar Pradesh, about 87% of agricultural land is irrigated.

"These statistics indicate that Uttar Pradesh has the potential to be a food basket not just for India but for the entire world," the official said.

Uttar Pradesh holds a prominent position in India in production of wheat, rice, sugarcane, potato, milk, fruits and vegetables. It ranks first in India in the production of wheat, sugarcane, potato, mango, peas, muskmelon, watermelon, gourd and peas.

The state's share in the export of processed vegetables is 5% and in the export of processed

fruits is only 0.4%. Similarly, Uttar Pradesh's contribution to India's total food grain production is about 20% but the average productivity of major crops is less than the leading states of India.

"It is clear that there is a high possibility of increasing the average productivity of crops in the state. Eighty-one percent of farmers in Uttar Pradesh fall under the marginal category and 12% under the small category, with average landholdings of 0.40 hectares and 1.40 hectares respectively. Due to small landholdings, their financial situation is weak and they are unable to make adequate investments in farming," the official added.

As a result, the production/productivity level of crops grown by them is comparatively low. Due to low income from agriculture and allied sectors, farmer families are migrating to urban areas.

Financially capable farmers' next generation is prioritising higher education and working in other sectors, leading to a continuous increase in the number of absentee landlords in rural areas.

It is proposed to develop the productivity of major crops along with qualitative growth in specific agricultural products, post-harvest management/value addition activities and market support systems by targeting the shortcomings of agriculture and allied sectors through the U.P. Agriculture Growth and Rural Incubation (UPAGRI) project.

"The project will create employment opportunities at the local level by developing storage/food processing and related allied management facilities for agriculture and allied sectors, which will lead to the desired increase in farmers' income," he claimed.