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Farmers are sentinels for food security: Pranab

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The President, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, today said farmers are the sentinels of the country's food security and maintained the Union government attaches enormous importance to the well-being of the farming community.

"Kisan is the sentinel of our food security. Anna-daata Sukhibhava has been one of our fundamental civilizational values. My Government attaches enormous importance to the well being of farmers. This will need value-added ag-

riculture, market reform, use of technology and improving productivity in areas with untapped potential. The year 2015 has been designated as International Year of Soils," said President Mukherjee in his address to both houses of Parliament ahead of the Budget Session. The President said a Soil Health Card Scheme has been launched in view of the critical role of soil for productivity and farm output.

"Price stabilization fund with a corpus of Rs 500 crore has been set up for perishable commodities. To address the irrigation requirements of every village

in an effective and sustainable manner; Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai

Yojana, is being launched. Extension programmes have been devised targeting resource-poor, small and marginal farmers, particularly focusing on organic farming and green house technology," he said.

He said the 'Rashtriya Gokul Mission' has been launched with the objective of conserving and developing indigenous cattle breeds.

Mr Mukherjee said food processing has immense potential for generating employment in rural areas,

particularly for the landless poor.

"Creating infrastructure in rural areas to minimise supply chain losses is a priority. A special fund of Rs 2000 crore to provide affordable credit to the units in 72 notified food parks has been made operational," he said.

The President said the government attaches paramount importance to safeguard the interest of farmers and families affected by land acquisition.

"Utmost care" is being taken to protect the interest of farmers, he said, referring to the Right to Fair Compensation and Trans-

parency in Land Acquisition law.

"Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act has been suitably refined to minimise certain procedural difficulties in acquisition of land inevitably required for critical public projects of infrastructure and for creation of basic amenities like rural housing, schools and hospitals, particularly in remote areas," he said.

Hinting at the government's intent to seek a consensus on passing the land acquisition Bill, Mr Mukherjee said the interest of farmers and land owners has been protected in the fine-tuning of the Bill.