

Agriculture, farmers' welfare get over Rs 44K-crore push

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NEW DELHI: Drawing lessons from the Bihar poll debacle, Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led NDA government has tried to win back the rural population by presenting a "pro-poor" Union Budget 2016.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, who presented his third Budget on Monday, made an attempt to give a golden handshake to farmers by doubling allocation to agriculture and farmers welfare to Rs 44,485 crore from the last year's Rs 16,646 crore. Besides, Jaitley has also imposed a Kisan Kalyan cess at 0.5 per cent on all taxable services from June to fund agri-initiatives.

Though, the Budget has been hailed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his all Cabinet colleagues, including Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh, experts don't find it much enough to address the woes of farmers.

Speaking to *Millennium Post*, Singh said: "No doubt, the Budget is exemplary, which will revamp the agriculture sector in the country. The Budget is so pro-poor and pro-farmer that even Opposition parties would not like to criticise it."

The Minister added: "In this Budget, we have taken care of each and every segment, starting from irrigation, maintaining health of soil, fertiliser subsidy, crop insurance, organic farming, loan amount, etc. Our mission is to help farmers in producing quality produce with low expenditure."

However, Jaitley's pro-farmers' Budget has not gone down well with agriculture experts.

Farmers' leader Sudhir Panwar said, "Allocation-wise, it is a good Budget, but not good enough to handle the current



Jaitley's colleagues and BJP leaders hail the Budget as pro-farmer and pro-poor, but the announcements made in the farm sector has not gone down well with agriculture experts

crisis being faced by farmers. Given that all schemes are futuristic, it won't help in addressing the rising woes of the agrarian community."

Panwar added, "The incumbent NDA government has made so much hype about the welfare of farmers, but the allocation is not in that proportion. The allocation in farm sector is just 1.8 per cent of the total allocated budget, which is not enough to meet the needs of 60 per cent of the population."

"Also it is not yet clear as what will the usage of the fund collected from the Kisan Kalyan cess. The Budget allocation may prove to be a record for the government, but definitely not for farmers," he added.

"For the last several days, it was expected that the Budget will bring cheer to farmers, but I am sorry to say that there is nothing to celebrate for farmers in this Budget. Like previous years, this Budget too is

an attempt to make them feel happy by playing with numbers. Through this Budget, the Modi government has tried to benefit insurance companies and other corporate houses," alleged Bharatiya Kisan Union's national spokesperson Rakesh Tikait, while talking to *Millennium Post*.

Tikait added that the Budget would not help reduce cases of farmer suicide, albeit it will increase manifold.

However, industry has hailed the Budget.

"The Jaitley's focus on agriculture in the Budget was keenly awaited and will enhance expenditure on the rural and agriculture sectors. Although the soil health card scheme, crop insurance and common e-market platform will help in improving the agriculture sector," said Shivendra Bajaj, executive director at Association of Biotechnology Led Enterprises, Agriculture Group (ABLE-AG).