

CPI(M) Appeal



**Save
Farmers and
Rural Workers**

17th Lok Sabha 2019

Rural wage growth has fallen since 2014

NDA Jumla was
"Doubling the farm
income by 2022"

The promised Rs 6,000
per year would only
cover 3-5% of the cost
of production



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CPI(M) Appeal to **Kisans and Rural Workers**

Dear Friends,

The schedule for the elections to the Lok Sabha has been announced. As the *anna datas* of this country, you, the farmers, and you, the agricultural and rural workers, have high stakes in these elections. The last five years have seen the most historic struggles of kisans and rural workers. Your fight has shaken the political establishment and brought the issues of rural India to the forefront of national politics.

The CPI(M) has been with you in all these struggles. It is CPI(M) MPs who have raised your voice in Parliament. It is CPI(M) MPs who have moved private members Bills for your major demands for a law to guarantee fair minimum support prices for your produce and for your loan waiver.

But, at the same time, you have been the worst sufferers under the Modi regime. It has been a life or death struggle for poor and middle peasants and agricultural workers in India. At the last minute, in the face of your anger, the Modi Government suddenly announced a scheme to give 2000 rupees to farmers in their bank accounts this financial year. After betraying all its promises in five years, it is now giving just about three rupees a day on an average and that also excluding tenant farmers, tribal farmers and rural workers! This is like rubbing salt into your wounds.

Increase in Farmers' Suicides

The BJP's disastrous agrarian policies have led to a situation where the growth rate in agriculture is 2.6 per cent, the lowest it has been in the last 14 years. The agrarian crisis has intensified and there has been a sharp rise in farmer suicides. In the first four years of BJP rule, more than 48,000 farmers have taken their lives.

Remember the promises made by the BJP led by Narendra Modi in the 2014 elections:
Modi had said that he will ensure implementation of Swaminathan Commission recommendations on minimum support price.
All loans of farmers will be waived.
Full insurance will be guaranteed against crop loss.
Farmers will get subsidised inputs.
He said “no more farmers will commit suicide.”
Each and every one of these promises have been betrayed.

After just one year of BJP’s rule, data showed that farmer suicides went up *by 42 percent*. The government’s response? It stopped publishing figures of farmer suicides, not only to hide facts, but also to deprive distressed families of compensation.

As agriculture becomes less viable economically, millions of farmers are leaving agriculture. Census figures show that on an average, more than 2,000 farmers are leaving farming every day. They are moving out of rural areas in search of jobs that are not there. Farmers are also losing their land because of heavy debt and becoming tenant farmers and farm workers.

Betrayal on Vital Issue of Remunerative Prices

Why has farming become so unviable? Because the farmers get low prices for their products and because of the rising prices of what they have to buy as inputs. The Modi government, in all its five years, has done nothing to improve farm incomes. The single most important policy tool was the Minimum Support Price (MSP). In the 2014 elections, the BJP manifesto promised to implement the Swaminathan Commission’s recommendation of enhanced MSP to farmers. But, it betrayed this promise.

The Swaminathan Commission's recommendation was to fix the MSP of all crops at one and half times the total cost of production. In less than a year after the elections – in February 2015 – the Modi government filed an affidavit in an ongoing case in the Supreme Court saying that increasing MSP to one and half times the cost of production would distort the market. For the BJP, profits for agri-business are more important than farmers' interests.

BJP Cheated Farmers with a Sleight of Hand on MSP

After the upsurge among farmers against the BJP for its betrayal, the Modi government suddenly announced in 2018 that it would fix MSP at cost of production plus 50 per cent from the new kharif season.

Instead, by a sleight of hand in the formula for computing MSP, the Modi government's MSP is far lower than the Swaminathan formula – by Rs. 500/quintal to Rs. 1500/quintal – depending on the crop. The Swaminathan Commission formula included rent on land as well as cost of fixed capital. The Modi government removed rent and fixed capital from the MSP calculations. With this Modi MSP formula, farming became unprofitable for lakhs of tenant farmers, who pay significant amounts as land rent.

The BJP's betrayal of farmers can be seen from one simple number: under BJP, the MSP for paddy grew at an *annual rate of only 4.3%*, while in the previous decade it increased at *12% yearly*.

By not including fixed capital in the MSP formula, the BJP government is telling the farmers not to undertake any land improvements for improving agricultural productivity. Who then is going to do this job? Definitely not the BJP government! It has totally neglected agricultural infrastructure in rural areas, and made no investments worth mentioning to improve agricultural productivity.

It was only the LDF state government in Kerala that gave paddy farmers *an additional amount of Rs 700 per quintal over and above the declared MSP*, which helped the paddy farmers of Kerala to get Rs 2350 per quintal.

BJP's MSP Formula for Paddy

Swaminathan Commission formula: Rs 2,340 per quintal

Modi government formula: Rs 1,750 per quintal

With no state procurement in most of the country, farmers get: Rs 800-1000 per quintal

Pushing down the Farm Prices Further – Through ‘Zero’ Import Duties

The BJP regime slashed the import duty on wheat to ‘zero’, and significantly reduced import duties on a number of other agricultural items. Farmers, already in crisis, were confronted with cheap imports from rich countries that heavily subsidise their agriculture. Similarly, the dairy farmers were forced to compete with cheap dairy imports from abroad. The milk prices became so low that dairy farmers threw milk on the streets in protest.

BJP Policy: Red Carpet for Agribusiness, No Support for Farmers

While agricultural prices have stayed low, thanks to lower MSP and cheap imports, the cost of inputs like seeds, fertilizers and pesticides have risen sharply. Over the years, the government has also withdrawn from agricultural research and supply of scientific inputs to agriculture. The government-funded research institutes, that had earlier provided improved seeds during the Green Revolution, have now been systematically starved of funds.

This has forced the farmers to be at the mercy of big agribusiness MNCs such as Monsanto. Today, farmers cannot store seeds: they have to buy expensive seeds every sowing season from these

companies. Without proper scientific inputs, the agents of these companies give 'advice' that benefits the companies, not the farmers. The unscientific use of pesticides and fertilizers, and the high cost involved, is the direct result of government's withdrawal of technical support to farmers.

Lollipops to Big Business, Nothing for Farmers

The high farming costs and negative incomes have forced the farmers to borrow for survival. About 86% of landowning farmers and 80% of tenant farmers are deep in debt today. Indebtedness has always been the immediate trigger for farmer suicides in India.

In dire straits and unable to pay back their loans, farmers have naturally been demanding loan waivers.

How did the Modi government react to this demand? It refused to even consider a farm loan waiver, despite its election promises. Modi even went so far as to mock the loan waivers to farmers as 'lollipops'. Yet the BJP government had no qualms in giving the selfsame 'lollipops' to BJP's favourite crony capitalists like Ambani and Adani. Some of the largest corporates and richest individuals, owe the banks *unpaid loans worth over Rs. 11 lakh crore*. Including absconders like Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi.

While CPI(M) recognises that loan waiver is not a permanent solution to the problems of agriculture, it sees that farmers need this essential relief in the current crisis. That is why CPI(M) demands a one-time loan waiver of farmer loans.

BJP Government: Loan waivers to a handful of crony corporates; but no loan waivers to crores of farmers.

The peasant movement supported by CPI (M): One-time waiver of all loans, and fair price for farm produce.

BJP's Fasal Bima Yojana: Scam for Corporates, not Scheme for Farmers

In 2016, BJP announced its Fasal Bima Yojana with fanfare and advertisements, supposedly to protect the farmer from losses in the event of crop failure. A laudable aim, but who really benefited from this scheme? BJP's favourite corporate cronies, six private insurance companies!

Instead of giving money directly to the farmers to pay for their crop losses, the Modi government handed over the money to private insurance companies. These companies have kept nearly 21% (Rs. 8,713 crore) of the total insurance premium of Rs.42,114 crore paid to them in 2016-17 (kharif 2016, rabi 2016-17 and kharif 2017). RTI replies revealed that 11 insurance firms earned over 15,000 Cr. Rupees in first two years of PFBY This with virtually no investment on their part.

One shocking example: Parbhani district in Maharashtra

In this district, the farmers paid a premium of Rs. 19 crore and the central and state government paid Rs. 144 crore – a total of Rs. 173 crore for crop insurance to Reliance Insurance. After crop failure, Reliance Insurance paid out just Rs. 30 crore to the farmers, securing a *net profit of Rs 143 crore* without investing a single rupee.

Demonetisation: A Surgical Strike on Rural India

The Modi government's demonetisation affected 86% of all the cash in circulation, completely destroying the rural economy. This Modi-made disaster could not have come at a worse time for farmers. They were recovering from two consecutive years of drought; they had just brought their kharif harvest to the mandi; and they had also begun their rabi sowing.

The sudden disappearance of cash at this crucial juncture meant complete disruption. Cooperative banks that farmers depend on were barred from exchange of demonetised currency, making it difficult for farmers to get the new currency for essential purchases and transactions. As a result, farmers suffered for want of seeds and fertilisers; agricultural workers suffered for want of wages; and daily supply network of perishable fruits and vegetables collapsed for want of cash with the traders and consumers.

BJP's Twisted Priorities: Gauraksha on the Back of Farmers

BJP Government's priorities for rural India have been promoting state patronage to Gaurakshaks who lynch cattle traders, Muslims and Dalits in the name of the cow.

The activities of Gaurakshaks have virtually killed cattle trade, and forced the farmer who keeps a few head of cattle to spend his already meagre finances on costly feed for useless cattle. The dairy farmer is already in crisis due to the slump in milk prices caused by cheaper imported dairy products. Instead of controlling imports and helping the farmers, the government, in the name of 'prevention of cruelty to animals', has been helping Gaurakshaks to extort money and attack cattle traders.

This has forced milk producers to resort to public protests. Though the government withdrew the restrictions on cattle trade in the face of the protests, its patronage of Gaurashaks continues. Farmers in many states now face the problem of huge loss because of stray cattle destroying their standing crops.

BJP Government Helps Corporate Land Grab

Not satisfied with pushing agriculture into a crisis, the BJP government has helped big corporates take over farmers' lands, paying very little compensation. The Modi government tried to completely weaken the Land Acquisition Act, 2013. The Act was a hard-fought victory for

the farmers movement. It made land acquisition conditional on the consent of landowners, social impact assessment, and impact on environment and food security, apart from providing higher compensation, and more humane rehabilitation and resettlement provisions.

Through the ordinance route, the BJP government exempted industrial corridors, defence and a number of other such land use from all the important provisions of this Act. The opposition from the farmers movement and the lack of majority in the Rajya Sabha forced the government to let the ordinance lapse. But on the ground, the government has weakened its implementation completely. It has also used the BJP state governments to amend this law at the state level, diluting the provisions that safeguard farmers' interests. This has made it possible for the big corporates to grab thousands of acres of farm and common land in the name of industrial corridors, freight corridors and bullet train projects at virtually *one-tenth the real price of these lands*.

Trampling the Forest and Land Rights of Adivasis

The BJP government's attitude towards land acquisition has extended to the forest rights of the Adivasis as well. In the last five years, the BJP Government has amended several laws which dilute or eliminate the protections given to the adivasis under the Forest Rights Act (FRA). These amendments include the Mining Act, the Compensatory Afforestation Act and several notifications from the Ministry of Environment and Forests, all of which dilute the FRA.

Under BJP, the community Forest Rights are not being recognized and land occupied by adivasis is being handed over to big companies for various projects, including mining.

According to the latest figures available (December 2018), of the

42.19 lakh claims made by Adivasi families under the FRA, only 18.89 lakh claims have been accepted. This means that 23.30 lakh adivasis and traditional forest dwellers are vulnerable to eviction.

The recent Supreme Court judgement ordering the eviction of adivasis and other traditional forest dwellers whose claims had not been accepted was extremely unfortunate. It happened because the Modi government failed to represent the interests of adivasis in the court. The Central government betrayed the rights of Adivasis, in connivance with those who petitioned against the adivasi rights. Although the Supreme Court later stayed its own judgement till July 2019, the Damocles sword of eviction still hangs over lakhs of adivasi peasants.

Agricultural/Rural Workers – No Work, Abysmal Wages

Landless rural workers who make up over half of the population involved in farming, have been the worst hit by the agrarian crisis under BJP rule. Besides being very low, agricultural wages have been practically stagnant during five years of Modi Sarkar. Between 2014 and 2018, wages for agricultural work increased by only 6%. Adjusting this to price rise, the increase is negligible – less than 1% per year. But the Modi government is supremely indifferent to this. There has been no revision of minimum wages for agricultural work. The ranks of agricultural or rural workers are swelling all the time as small and marginal farmers seek work, unable to manage on their small land holdings. So, many of these workers seek work in construction, brick kilns, salt pans etc. or migrate to urban areas for manual labour. Meanwhile, unemployment levels in India as a whole, and in rural India in particular, are at a 45-year high. Among the rural youth, unemployment is as high as 15%.

Destruction of MGNREGS

In this serious unemployment situation, the government is underfunding MGNREGA, which is a lifeline for the vast number of

impoverished rural households.

Narendra Modi began his term by openly scoffing at MGNREGA. He followed this up by starving it of funds. As a result, expenditure for MNREGA has reduced from 0.51% of GDP in 2010-2011 to 0.38% in 2017-2018. In the current year, 19 states have spent more than they received from the govt. for MGNREGS, and the combined deficit of all states is a whopping Rs.3972.4 crore!

As 2018-19 ends, 9.06 crore persons sought work in the scheme, indicating the scale of rural distress. But only about 7.56 crore were given jobs, and 1.5 crore job seekers were turned back. The Modi govt.'s stubborn refusal to give more funds for the scheme is the only reason for this tragic state of affairs.

Even though the demand for work has increased because of increased rural unemployment, the average workdays in MGNREGA during the Modi regime is less than half of the mandated 100 days. The number of families that got the legally guaranteed 100 days of work under MGNREGA dropped sharply – from 46 lakh households in 2013-14 to just 30 lakh households in 2017-18.

Even for workers employed under MGNREGA, the government owes months of wages as arrears. Though the law states that the workers should be paid an unemployment allowance if they are not given work within 15 days, no such allowance has been paid in the last five years. Neither has any wage increase been given under MGNREGA.

The BJP government's five-year rule has seen a deep agrarian crisis; a collapse of rural livelihoods; complete apathy of the government; and decimation of MGNREGA, the one government programme for rural employment. We see the consequences: farmer suicides and distressed migration from rural areas, with no hope in the urban areas either.

CPI(M) Support to Kisan and Rural Workers' Struggles

In these five years, it is the CPI(M) and the class and mass organisations of the Left, the All India Kisan Sabha, the All India Agricultural Workers Union and the Centre of Indian Trade Unions, who have given voice to the distress and demands of farmers and rural workers throughout India. **Not Suicide but Struggle** was the militant slogan when the red flag mobilized farmers and rural workers in villages across the country.

The huge mobilization and marches of farmers and workers in the capital shook the government and exposed the real anti-farmer face of the Modi Government. There were big struggles in the states as well: the Kisan Long March in Maharashtra, the sustained marches and sit ins in Rajasthan, the gheraos in Mandsaur, Madhya Pradesh, the huge mobilization of adivasis in Jharkhand, and the jathas in West Bengal in response to the repression of the TMC-led State Government. All these changed the mood of rural India: from despair to resistance. In Parliament, the MPs of the Left raised the voice of rural India. Both in and outside Parliament, the red flag fought for kisans and rural workers.

The Modi Government tried to suppress these struggles. There were police firings in many states run by the BJP, leading to the killing of numerous kisans. Hundreds of false cases were foisted on Kisan leaders. Many were locked up in jails. But none of this has dampened the resistance.

Communal Divide

To conceal its anti-farmer policies, the Modi Government tried to divide farmers with communal slogans and hate speeches in the name of religion. There were lynchings and manufactured communal incidents to sow division among communities in rural India, all engineered in the name of cow protection. There were attempts to

divide Adivasi farmers in the name of religion. Dalits have been attacked to protect the hated caste system. But these conspiracies were resisted by the united struggles of farmers and their organisations.

Elections and Your Vote

This is the situation in which you are going to vote.

You have your own experience of the lies of the Modi government, and its betrayal of farmers and rural workers. The CPI(M) appeals to you on the basis of this experience: Not one Kisan Vote to this Government, not one Rural Worker vote to them. Vote out the BJP Government.

The CPI(M) has put up candidates in seats where we have fought for your rights and the rights of the working people.

We appeal to you: Vote for the CPI(M) and the Left parties. The red flag is the only true friend of the poor and the middle kisans and agricultural workers. Only when the Left parties and the CPI(M) have a good number of members in Parliament will your voices be heard, your demands defended, and your concerns advanced.

Save India, Defeat the BJP!

Strengthen the CPI(M) and the Left in Parliament!

Ensure a Secular Government!

The CPI(M) shall:

- Amend the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013 to ensure its universal application on all laws requiring land acquisition, rigorous definition of public purpose, full and prior informed consent from all affected persons, binding social impact assessment and compensation and R&R in such manner as to ensure a far better quality of life and share in enhanced land value.
- Enact suitable policies to adequately compensate all dispossessed and displaced farmers.
- Reverse the current thrust to dilute land-ceiling laws; speedy and comprehensive steps for implementing land reforms.
- Prevent the encroachment and takeover of common lands like pastures, community forests, scrublands, etc.
- Protect all government and public sector land held in public trust from transfer by lease, sale, diversion or any other manner to the private sector.
- Takeover and distribution of all surplus land above ceiling and handing over of cultivable wasteland to landless and poor peasant households free of cost, with priority to SCs and STs; joint pattas to be distributed including equal right of women to the land.
- Provide house sites and homestead land to all sections of the rural and urban landless.
- Record tenancy and protect the rights of tenants in all states where this has not been done.
- Prohibit land grab for real estate speculation.

(from the CPI(M) Election Manifesto,
17th Lok Sabha 2019)

Vote CPI(M)



Defeat the BJP alliance

**Increase the Strength of the
CPI(M) and the Left**

For an Alternative Secular Government

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