

‘Parampara’ and ‘pragati’ will be used to support farmers: Modi

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New Delhi: The central government is committed to doubling the income of farmers and is working on making agriculture more profitable as well as more sustainable, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi said on Wednesday.

In an interview, the PM also said his administration identified four pillars to make the lives of farmers better: lowering input cost, increasing the sources of income, better market prices and more use of scientific methods in agriculture.

“Both parampara (legacy) and pragati (progress) will be used to support our farmers,” Modi said.

During his first term, Modi first pledged to double the income of farmers by the 75th anniversary of India’s Independence. Since then, his government has repeatedly stressed on its commitment towards agriculture, showcasing schemes such as PM-KISAN, under which cultivators are paid ₹6,000 a year.

Modi also touched on the surprise repeal of three controversial farm laws, which sparked a yearlong protest by cultivator groups from Punjab, Haryana and Western Uttar Pradesh. The government and many experts said the reforms were long overdue and would help the cause of farmers. However, farmers believed that the laws would increase their dependence on the private sector.

“As far as the impediment in the form repeal of the agricultural laws is concerned, I would say that the path may be different. But our goal is the welfare of the farmers,” the PM said.

Modi said the government was promoting traditional farming techniques, organic farming, zero budget farming and natural farming. He also stressed on technology, mentioning the Kisan Drone initiative, which can help in crop evaluation, digitisation of land records and spraying of pesticides and nutrients.

“The bright future of India’s agriculture is also linked to the export of more and more agricultural products. Despite the coronavirus pandemic, agricultural exports are at a record level this year... this shows that the government’s efforts are paying off,” he said.

Agriculture has also been one sector immune to the pandemic, growing by 3.6% last year (2020-21) and estimated to expand by 3.9% in the ongoing financial year.

The PM said the government focused on an all-round strategy to increase the income of farmers. “For the first time, we have decided to keep the minimum support price (MSP) at 150% of the cost of the farmers. Apart from this, several facilities related to animal husbandry, fisheries as well as beekeeping and horticulture have been added... today, foodgrains are being purchased from farmers by twice the number of government procurement centres in the country compared to before 2016,” he said.

The PM said there was an “unprecedented difference” in agricultural procurement between the previous government and his administration. “In our time, there has been an increase of 78% in the purchase of paddy. We have broken all the previous records not only in the purchase of paddy, but also in that of wheat. Similarly, compare the last five years of the UPA [United Progressive Alliance] regime and the last five years of our government. The MSP payment in pulses has increased by 88 times,” he added.

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