

Govt to use tech for accuracy in Agri Census

Field work in August; digital land records and apps to be used for data collection

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The nationwide Eleventh Agricultural Census (2021-22) was launched on Thursday by Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar. Field work will start next month. For the first time, the government is using technology and also taking into account digitised land records to ensure better accuracy in data.

The computation of data will bring huge benefits in a vast and agricultural country like India, said Tomar, while urging officials to carry out the census with full dedication.

Agriculture Census, started in 1970-71, is conducted once in five years. The last one was

done in 2015-16. Data collection could not be started in time for the 11th round following outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic.

Key challenge

A major challenge for the Census will be to estimate the number of farmers in the country correctly as all the policies and financial allocation depend on it. As per the last Census, the number of farmers was estimated at 14.65 crore based on operational land holdings. In several States, the number of farmers estimated was found to be far below the actual number, which came to light after launch of PM-Kisan scheme that is based on Aadhaar-linked verification of land owning farmers.

For instance, the Census has put the operational holdings at 10.93 lakh whereas PM-Kisan data show there was 23.76 lakh, which excluded in-



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eligible farmers. The government has maintained that the basis of data collection will continue to be on operational holdings and not on ownership holding.

“As the technology infusion in crop insurance has yielded better results, the government has decided to use it in Census operation, too. Using drone and validation with the digitised land records will help reduce manual discrepancies in data

as well as foolproof the statistical methodology,” said an official.

Increasing income

The agricultural census is the main source of information on a variety of parameters, such as the number and area, operational holdings, their size, class-wise distribution, land use, tenancy and cropping pattern.

“The use of digitised land records and the use of mobile

apps for data collection will enable the creation of a database of operational holdings in the country,” the statement said. The minister said that the government is focusing on increasing farmers’ income.

“Besides, there is a need to change their standard of living, organise small farmers in order to empower them, attract them towards remunerative crops and ensure the quality of the produce at par with global standards,” he said, adding the country is rapidly moving towards digital agriculture.

Tomar said the agriculture census should be thought of in a broader perspective as it can also contribute to the mapping of crops. He released the “Handbook on Operational Guidelines for Census” for the use of States and Union Territories while launching the ‘Data Collection Portal/App’.