

Significance of Legal Framework for Sustainable Agriculture in India

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Abstract

Out of three essentials of human life : *Roti, Kapda aur Makaan*, i.e. food, clothing and housing, first two are the produce of agriculture. Classically housing was also based on agriculture products. Conventional items meant for education, i.e. paper, pencil, rubber, etc. are agriculture products. Agriculture in India is one of the rapidly growing sector, generating handsome revenue over the last few years. There is considerable growth of investment in agriculture sector that has lead the growth of the sector. Structured and strategic endeavour by the Government of India has produced satisfactory results and increased the investment in agriculture sector. Various schemes such as National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), and Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY) introduced for the welfare of all stake holders of agriculture has made overall development of the sector. There have been significant awareness among farmers regarding all sorts of agriculture activities, be it weather condition, climatic impact, organic farming, irrigation as well as agriculture management. This paper aims to signify the importance of the law and policy that plays vital role in promotion and development of sustainable agriculture.

Keywords: Sustainable Agriculture, Legal Framework, Farmers' Law

Introduction

Agriculture is one of the oldest activity and profession in the world. Not only human being but all the creature on the earth survives through agriculture. Agricultural activities in India traces back in Indus civilization. In addition to the food, i.e. vital element of life, it also provides employment and ease of life. Agriculture is quite important sector in the economy of any country. Through the foreign exchange and spawning job opportunities, agriculture plays principal role in economic system. Over and above the food requirement, agriculture also yield raw material for many industries. There is huge potential in forestry, animal husbandry, fisheries, food as well as cash crops for the development of the country. However, this potential needs to properly channelize to get the desired growth and prosperity.

Nashir Akinola defined agriculture as both a science and an art or rather a technology for the exploitation of the primary, secondary and tertiary products of photosynthesis. In addition to planting, and harvesting, agriculture also includes forestry, fisheries,

animal husbandry, food and cash crop, supply chain, etc.

The agriculture industry consist of companies and firms which are involved in cleaning, processing, packaging and storing every kinds of agriculture produces. These products are classified as fibres, foods, raw materials, etc. Fish farming, cattle and animals, dairies, etc. are also included in agriculture industry. There is a considerable size of mechanical industries engaged in manufacturing of farm equipment.

Sustainable Agriculture

Various authors, legislations and policy papers have defined sustainable agriculture in their own way. Neil Hamilton (1993) has is defined as developing agricultural practices which protect the environment while preserving the economic profitability of farmers. The basis of the concept is that no agricultural system can be successful in either the short or long term unless it is designed to sustain the resources necessary for its operation. These resources include both physical resources, of soil, air, and water, and also human and social resources of farm

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families, rural communities, and the economic structure necessary for an agrarian system to function. Keeping the combined concern for an environment and economics of farming activities, the goal of sustainable agriculture along with profitability can be harnessed. The Leopold Center under Iowa Code defines sustainable agriculture as 'the appropriate use of crop and livestock systems and agricultural inputs supporting those activities which maintain economic and social viability while preserving the high productivity and quality of Iowa's land.' Agriculture activities and practice are carried out in the environment. It also maintains the eco-system and ecology of the place.

Need for Legal Regulation

Agriculture law includes various legal provisions and regulations concerned to the production and selling of agriculture goods. It deals with legal matters related to seeds, water, irrigation, fertiliser, pesticides, packing, processing and transportation of agriculture materials. One of the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of sustainable development is broad public participation in decision making of which farmers is one. Integrated agricultural development which involves consciously formulated, systematic and multi-sectoral programme to attain the integration of the people in the mainstream of income groups in a country is essential for national policy.

Agricultural practice and development activities take place on the environment. The environment therefore represents a complex system of interconnections (Sands, 2003). The interconnections between the environment and agricultural practices cannot be treated as discrete (Goodie, 1993). This interconnection poses legal challenges as to how to develop and apply a comprehensive and effective set of legal requirements aimed at preventing environmental damage when engaged in agricultural practice. Agriculture-led development is fundamental to sustainable national development as it helps to reduce hunger, poverty, burden of food import as

well as the generation of economic growth and the opening of new way to an expansion of exports. The agricultural sector can be likened to the chicken that lays the egg for the development of any nation, the neglect of which is capable of rendering life to be meaningless. (Erhun, 2019). Uncontrolled expansion of agriculture poses threat on forests and wetlands. Application of pesticides causes damage to fauna and flora as well as soil erosion. Chemical insecticides and artificial spray pollute the air and environment. Air pollution also occurs due to conventional practice of burning natural vegetation and husks.

Need for Promotional Policy

Every country planning to achieve goals of sustainable development in various sector has to first focus on the sustainable agriculture. Sustainability begin from the ground and agriculture being activity of ground is the most important to realise sustainable development in any other sector. Sustainable agriculture integrates sustainability of environment as well as social need of the nation.

The legal policy about agriculture-infrastructure, agri-finance, agri-insurance, etc. affects directly farmers in the every nook and corner of the country. Farmers and farming also depends upon the various rights of farmers as individual and professional laid down in constitution as well as statues passed by legislature. Every state has separate land laws governing the affairs of the land acquisition, maintenance, fragmentation and transfer. Well-designed policy and proper legal provisions are instrumental in promotion and development of sustainable agriculture system for any country.

Legal Framework and Policy in India

As per the Constitution of India, Agriculture is the subject matter of the state. The state governments are primarily responsible for the growth and development of agriculture sector as well as designing perspective plans for their respective states. State is also responsible to ensure effective

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implementation of the programmes/schemes. Nevertheless, central government also supplements the efforts and actions of the state governments through various schemes as well as programmes. Some of the scheme are Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, National Bee and Honey Mission, FPOs Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana, etc. The center also provide share in budget, institutional credits, Agri Infrastructure Fund, Agri Infrastructure Fund, etc. Central government also has control on fixing MSP (Minimum Support Price), procurement from farmers, soil health card as well as Neem coating on Urea.

Government has taken several steps for increasing investment in agriculture sector such as promotion of scientific warehousing infrastructure for increasing shelf life of agricultural produce; setting up of Agri-tech Infrastructure Fund for making farming competitive and profitable; developing commercial organic farming, enhanced institutional credit to farmers etc. Government is implementing various schemes for supply of farm inputs, like seeds, fertilizers, agricultural machinery and equipment, irrigation facilities, institutional credit, etc., at subsidized rates to the farmers in the country. Government has recently taken several steps for increasing investment and growth in agriculture sector which include creation of Long Term Irrigation Fund (LTIF), Micro Irrigation Fund for water use efficiency, promotion of commercial organic farming, etc.

Government of India has launched the Central Sector Scheme of financing facility under Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) to boost Agriculture Infrastructure relating to post harvest management and community farming assets. Under this scheme entities such as farmers, agri entrepreneurs, starts up, Central/ State agency or local body sponsored public private partnership projects etc. can take benefit for setting up eligible infrastructure projects. Under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) Scheme of

Ministry of Agriculture, grants-in-aid is given to state governments on the basis of the projects approved in State Level Sanctioning Committee Meeting (SLSC). States can take up projects for the development of Agriculture and allied sector in Public Private Partnership (PPP) for Integrated Agriculture Component.

The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme is being implemented with a view to provide income support to all landholding farmer families across the country, to enable them to take care of expenses related to agriculture and allied activities as well as domestic needs. Further, Government of India has launched the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (ABA) to strengthen Infrastructure, Logistics, Capacity Building, Governance and Administrative Reforms for Agriculture.

Conclusion

Apart from the legal framework and policies, the foremost driver of sustainability is education and research. Every policy and legal provision remain on paper only unless they are been properly implemented and executed which requires awareness of the same among the stakeholders. Farmers shall not change their practice of farming to protect the environment unless they have information and knowledge regarding the new techniques and practices that yield better. Sustainable agriculture does not deal merely with soil, crop, water or price but also concern farmers, their families and rural communities.

Sustainable agriculture promotes the coherent, practicable, rational and comprehensive use of the environment in such a manner that it remain live-able for next generations also. Sustainable farming requires conservation of resources, social support and economic viability as well as safe for an environment. Therefore, there has to be strict compliance of the legal provisions and regulation. Through the legal sanctions and directives, farming can be practised for increased produced, economically profitable,

and socially equitable without damaging the environment.

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