

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member countries adopts Smart Agriculture project

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On 12 May 2023, the 8th meeting of Agriculture Ministers of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member countries was held under India's Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Narendra Singh Tomar's chairmanship.

A number of SCO member countries, including Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, China, and Pakistan, adopted the Smart Agriculture project. The discussions among SCO Agriculture Ministers strengthened the multinational cooperation in food security and nutrition.

India's Union Minister Tomar said "India values its relations with SCO in promoting multilateral, political, security, economic and people-to-people interactions. In order to maintain the normal functioning of the food supply chain in the present conditions, there is a need for close contact and cooperation between various countries for food and nutrition security. India is the largest employer globally in the agriculture sector, where more than half of the population engaged in agriculture and allied sectors."

India has increased its budget allocation in the agriculture and allied sectors by over 5 times in 10 years from 2013-14. Simultaneously, India is registering significant growth in exports of agricultural and allied products, which crossing ₹14 lakh crore. India is a leading producer of many commodities like cereals, fruits, vegetables, milk, eggs, fish. India is also promoting organic farming and natural farming with emphasis on sustainable productivity, food security and soil health. To increase the economic potential of small and marginal farmers, India is initiating 10,000 Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs). For rural infrastructure ₹11 lakh crore fund has been allocated.

Indian agriculture ecosystem has been adopting digital technologies in order to help farmers access these and take advantage of them. Most of the agricultural schemes are being digitized and brought on a single platform, such as Agristack and India Digital Eco-system for Agriculture, National e-Governance Plan in Agriculture, and more.

Further, India is making persistent efforts in building a self-reliant agriculture sector coupled with innovation, digital agriculture, climate-smart technologies, the development of high-yielding, biofortified varieties, and agricultural research. Efforts are being made to improve the life and livelihood of the farmers by making their agriculture sustainable and friendly.

In addition, India has launched an Electronic National Agriculture Market to increase market access for farmers besides programs to create new irrigation infrastructure, conserve soil fertility including balanced use of fertilizers, providing farm-to-market connectivity, ICT linkages, and more.

**** ₹ 1 lakh crore = USD \$ 1 trillion**