“India lives in farmers’ huts”. Mahatma Gandhi

“Nobody is qualified to become a statesman who is entirely ignorant of the problem of wheat.” – SOCRATES

“Agriculture is the most beautiful, most useful and most noble employment of men.” – George Washington

“When tillage begins, other arts follow. The farmers, therefore, are the founders of human civilization.” – Daniel Webster

“Agriculture is our wisest pursuit, because it will in the end contribute most to real wealth, good morals and happiness.” – Thomas Jefferson

“Once in your life you need a doctor, a lawyer, a policeman, a preacher but every day, three times a day, you need a farmer” - Brenda Schoepp, International Mentor

The whole world is locked down due to the deadliest threat to human existence because of novel Corona virus. The frontline fighters like health professionals and law enforcement officers are rightly celebrated as Corona Warriors.

It is thanks to the availability of enormous food reserves, the nation is able to step up the fight against this pandemic, feeding millions of the poor, particularly the displaced migrant population.

This achievement is made possible only because of the dedication, tenacity, hardwork and sacrifice of Indian farmers. So the Indian farmers are also to be appreciated as the warriors of all times.
Sacrifice of Farmers

From the times the nation was dependent on imports – "ship to mouth" to feed the people, now the country is not only producing sufficient food for the ever-growing population, but also has been able to export food.

But the condition of the farmer has been declining. The ultimate sign of distress is suicide. Thousands of farmers are forced to lead a life of poverty and even forced to commit suicide due to indebtedness.

In the last 25 years nearly 4 lakhs of farmers have committed suicide. According to the 2018 National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, the rate of farmer suicides in India has decreased over the last few years. This decrease comes even as overall suicide rates remained fairly constant and rural poverty shot up.

Let us first briefly discuss the various major types of agriculture from vedic times, before discussing the distressing conditions of the farming community and possible solutions.

Vedic Agriculture

India is basically an agricultural country and it is well-known that about 67% of its total population earns its livelihood from agriculture.

As food is the basic need of human being and for which a developed agricultural system is most essential, Vedic seers have also given top priority to Agronomy.

Everything in the universe is made of five elements – Panchabhutas. Agriculture depends on all the natural phenomena.

In the Vedas ploughing is regarded as an auspicious mark of happiness indicating prosperity.

Ancient Rishis gifted us with many secrets of agriculture and divine farming techniques. Many of these 'non-violent' bio-dynamic farming practices are resurging today in India and throughout the world, to improve crop quality and yield.

The aim of Rishi-Krishi Technique is to keep the soil alive forever with the help of cosmic energy, as it is the only source of plant growth.

The 'original organic fertilizer' used in India is called 'Panchagavya' meaning five substances. These are cow dung manure, cow urine, milk, yogurt and ghee. These sacred cow substances are combined with coconut water, jaggery, and ripe bananas, specially prepared over one months’ time, and then mixed into the soil. This is so rich in nutrients that it can make even the most barren, de-mineralized soil fertile again.

It actually has a medicinal effect on the plants. These same ingredients when mixed with water is called 'Amrit-pani'. This nutritious nectar is then used to water the plantings, yielding bountiful, healthy crops.

The Rishis taught that seeds should first be coated in ghee and honey before sowing to help them germinate, making them strong.
and resistant to disease for their lifetime. Additionally, cow urine and bitter neem are bottled, kept in the sunlight, and sprayed over crops for an effective, natural pesticide against insects.

The overall cost of these techniques is very little, and affordable to even the poorest of farmers. Thus we see how important a cow is to rural farming communities, and thus highly worshiped by the farmers.

**Rishi Kheti**

In ancient India, natural farming was called "Rishi Kheti". The Rishi Kheti uses cow products like buttermilk, milk, curd and its waste urine for preparing growth promoters. The Rishi Kheti is regarded as non-violent farming without any usage of chemical fertilizer and pesticides. They obtain high quality natural or organic produce having medicinal values.

**Spiritual Farming**

It is a variation on natural farming. It also called spiritual farming. The method involves mulching, intercropping, and the use of several preparations which include cow dung. These preparations, generated on-site are central to the practice, and said to promote microbe and earthworm activity in the soil.

**Natural farming**

It is an ecological farming approach established by Masanobu Fukuoka, a Japanese farmer and philosopher.

It is also referred to as "the Fukuoka Method", "the natural way of farming" or "do-nothing farming". The title refers not to lack of effort, but to the avoidance of manufactured inputs and equipment. Natural farming is related to fertility farming, organic farming, sustainable agriculture, agroecology, agroforestry, eco-agriculture and permaculture.

The system works along with the natural biodiversity of each farmed area, encouraging the complexity of living organisms—both plant and animal—that shape each particular ecosystem to thrive along with food plants.

Fukuoka saw farming both as a means of producing food and as an aesthetic or spiritual approach to life, the ultimate goal of which was, "the cultivation and perfection of human beings".

Fukuoka distilled the natural farming mindset into five principles: No tillage; No fertilizer; pesticides or herbicides; weeding and no pruning.

Natural farming recognizes soil as a fundamental natural asset. Ancient soils possess physical and chemical attributes that render them capable of generating and supporting life abundance.

It is argued that tilling actually degrades the delicate balance of a climax soil. Tilling may destroy crucial physical characteristics of a soil such as water suction, its ability to send moisture upwards, even during dry spells.

"Agriculture is the most healthful, most useful, and most noble employment of man."

-George Washington
Tilling over-pumps oxygen to local soil residents, such as bacteria and fungi. As a result, the chemistry of the soil changes. Biological decomposition accelerates and the microbiota mass increases at the expense of other organic matter, adversely affecting most plants, including trees and vegetables. For plants to thrive, a certain quantity of organic matter must be present in the soil.

Tilling uproots all the plants in the area, turning their roots into food for bacteria and fungi. This damages their ability to aerate the soil. Living roots drill millions of tiny holes in the soil and thus provide oxygen. They also create room for beneficial insects and annelids (the phylum of worms). Some types of roots contribute directly to soil fertility by funding a mutualistic relationship with certain kinds of bacteria (most famously the rhizobium) that can fix nitrogen.

Zero Budget Farming

Zero budget farming advocated by the well-known agri graduate farmer Subash Palekar is popular in different states of India. This method basically talks about mulching using agriculture waste generated from farm, mixed cropping with stressing importance of leguminous crops and also applying a set of preparations based on cow dung and urine of traditional Indian cow. This is called as Zero budget since all the required things can be cultivated at farm itself and hence no inputs has to be brought from outside.

ZBNF is a unique chemical-free method that relies on agro-ecology. The ZBNF method also promotes soil aeration, minimal watering, inter-cropping, bunds and top soil mulching, and discourages intensive irrigation and deep ploughing. Since farmers are not required to buy any inputs, the cost of production in ZBNF is reportedly zero.

The most popular preparation is Jeewamritha (microbial culture) which has cow dung, cow urine, pulse powder, jaggery and a handful of soil. It contains lot of microbes and hence decomposition of the mulch becomes faster and earth worm activity becomes more and land becomes fertile.

People who have used Jeewamritha see visible changes in the earth – earth worms can be seen within a week. One local cow is enough for 30 acres of land. Jeewamritha has to be applied once in a month per acre and local cow gives 10Kgs of cowdung per day which is sufficient for an acre in a day. So within a month all 30 acres can be completed once and cycle repeats.

To manage insects and pests, ZBNF recommends the use of ‘Agniastra’, ‘Brahmastra’ and ‘Neemastra’, which, like ‘Jiwamrita’ and ‘Bijamrita’, are based mainly on urine and dung of Indian cow breeds. The idea is that since these too, need not be purchased, farming remains practically “zero-budget”.

Subhash Palekar – Promoter of Zero Budget Natural Farming

“...The ultimate goal of farming is not the growing of crops, but the cultivation and perfection of human beings.”

—Masanobu Fukuoka
It is called zero budget farming, because whatever costs the farmer incurred on inputs and labour will be recovered through inter-cropping. The entire realisation from the main crop is profit.

Millions of farmers are practicing Zero Budget Natural Farming, in many parts of India.

Palekar has given a presentation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on zero budget natural farming.

The Modi government sees Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) as a solution to the farm crisis. The 2018-19 Economic Survey recommended it and so did the 2019 Union Budget. In fact, Prime Minister Narendra Modi surprised many by asking farmers not to use chemical fertilisers during his Independence Day speech. But the scientific community does not seem to be amused.

NITI Aayog has studied it and is convinced that this concept is the solution to the farm distress. Over seven lakh farmers have committed suicide due to chemical farming. Not one has died due to ZBNF.

Subash Palekar says:

On his insistence on local cow breed

When I researched the dung and urine of local cow varieties, bullocks and western breeds, the microbial count in local breed cow dung was as high as 300 crore in one gram compared to about 70 lakh in the case of a Jersey cow variety, which also had significant pathogen bacteria. That is why I advocate local cow breeds.

On his preference for local seed varieties

In ZBNF local seeds treated with Bijamrut (seed treatment solution) deliver higher output. That being the case why should a farmer spend on costly hybrid and GM seeds?

On the fear of yield drop in the first year

If all aspects of ZBNF are followed, the farm will get recharged within three months. Humus creation will ensure that and the farmer will get a good yield right from the first year.

On market access

We are encouraging our farmers to sell directly to the consumers. That way, they can get better realisation. People are willing to pay a premium for naturally-grown farm produce. We have also started connecting buyers and farmers through Whatsapp.

On vested interests opposing ZBNF

Results on the ground show that ZBNF is the only way to make farming both profitable and sustainable.

Dr. G. Nammalvar, an Indian green crusader, agricultural scientist, environmental activist and organic farming expert best known for his work on spreading ecological farming and organic farming particularly in South India.
Other Major Agri Movements

There are several other farm movements, mostly advocating varying types of natural, spiritual, organic farming methods. They have all been rendering great service to millions of farmers in various parts of the country. For want of space, details are not being given here. Some of the major movements in different parts of the country are -

ISHA AGRO MOVEMENT  www.isha.sadhguru.org
SRI SRI NATURAL FARMING  www.artofliving.org
ZEN-FARMING  www.zen-farming.com
YOGIC FARMING OF BRAHMA KUMARIS'
ANASTASIA INSPIRED SPIRITUAL FARMING
PYRAMID MEDITATION AGRICULTURE
BIODYNAMIC AGRICULTURE
BIODIVERSITY FARMING
KHETI VIRASAT AGRICULTURE  www.khetivirasatmission.org
COOPERATIVE FARMING

DAMANHUR – Plants, Animals, Birds are part of our family

Damanhur, a ecovillage and a spiritual community is located at the foothills of Alps, near Venice in Italy. It is at an axis point where four of the 18 worldwide synchronic lines intersect.

The very ground breathes. Rocks, trees and plants resonate prana. Everything seems to be subtly energized. The effect of visit, is an unmistakable lifting of the human spirit.

They feel they are part of the larger community of plants, birds, animals and reptiles. All members have assumed their names of animal, birds and reptiles as their sir names to prove that they all belong to the same family.

Communication with the plants mainly involves the emotional sphere of both humans and plants. The plants seem to enjoy the sound and learn to produce the sounds themselves, through the technical instrumentation.

Plants and nature spirits are the beings who inhabit these worlds, and a large part of the research in Damanhur is dedicated to opening roads of deep contact with plants and all beings who inhabit natural environments. It’s no coincidence that one of the symbols of Damanhur is a flower, the dandelion.

Damanhur's Spiritual Vision gives great importance to communing with the physical and subtle forces of nature that are represented by plants.

The trees are large, living antennas of our planet. They hug the trees to say goodbye when they leave and when they return home.

Damanhurians communicate with plants. They being living organisms. Metabolism in plants can be greatly affected by music.

Plants are reported to respond differently to different music types and frequency.
Music not only accelerates the growth but also significantly influences the concentration of various metabolites, e.g., chlorophyll and starch are increased.

In simple terms, the vibrations produce movement in the plant cells, which stimulates the plant to produce more nutrients.

Researchers at a Canadian university discovered that harvest yields of wheat crops nearly doubled when exposed to high-frequency vibrations.

Damanhur gained fame in 1992 through the disclosure of their secret excavation of an extensive underground temple, the Temples of Humankind, which was begun in 1978 under complete secrecy.

Most citizens live in communities of 10-20 people each, in separate houses.

Damanhur is perhaps best known for its extraordinary subterranean work of art and architecture, a cathedral known as the Temples of Humankind. It has been profiled on international television as the "Eighth Wonder of The World."

In 2005, Damanhur received recognition from the United Nation's Global Forum on Human Settlements as a model for a sustainable society.

Damanhurians have deep respect for the environment as a conscious, sensitive entity and their citizens' commitment to co-existing with the plant and animal worlds (as well as intelligences that inhabit this universe) in a reverent and nurturing way.

One expression of this philosophy is Music of the Plants, in which communication with the plant world inspires concerts where the musicians are trees, and plants play music alongside human musicians.

I had the privilege of visiting Damanhur and stay there a couple of times. They gave me a six course lunch of uncooked raw food consisting of flowers, leaves, nuts, barks.

Amazing sculptures and paintings have been created by the Damanhurians underground. They believe that when the present world is destroyed, the future generations of humans should know the culmination of art and culture of their ancestors. They are so spiritual that Research was going on the impact and power of mantras like Namashivaya, Krishna and even Karthikeya.

I have seen their playing musical instruments to the plants and the plants responding through a technical arrangement – synthesiser. I had invited them to India and many had the privilege of witnessing their performance in Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai and also before the saint Vetahlthiri Maharishi at the Temple of Consciousness at Aliyar, Coimbatore. The programmes at Chennai and Aliyar were also covered live by the media.

Dr. Newton, a Pyramid Master and founder of the Quantum Life University, AP says,

Pyramid Energy affects the energy field of plant. This is the new innovation around the Globe. We put the seeds inside the pyramid for at least 21 days. Old imprint ts,
old template, old genetics exist inside that seed which gets corrected by the process. That seed is pyramidized seed. They are giving better yields. In the future everyone will wake up to the use of pyramid energy for having spiritual agriculture. www.qluglobal.org

Cooperative Farming

Dr. S.V. Balasubramaniam, Chairman of Bannari Amman Group of Institutions, a prominent industrialist, educationist also a successful progressive farmer says –

- Cooperatives have potential to double farmers income within a very short time if administered properly as in the case of Gujarat, Kerala etc.

- The issue of providing critical assistance to farmers including efficient mechanism to market their produce could be addressed in the short term by reviving the Cooperative movement.

- The cooperative movement has proved successful as an effective instrument to address majority of the maladies faced by Indian farmers. The advantage of cooperative movement is that it is a proven mechanism of success, the entire structure – the physical, hierarchical, administrative and human resources are already in place and functional.

- If these cooperative societies are insulated by suitable changes in the actual rules to enable the real stakeholders to assume management of the societies, it will revive the cooperative movement instantly and it is certain to produce excellent results in a very short time.

- The marketing network of cooperative societies, which is very comprehensive has tremendous potential to eliminate the middlemen between the producer and the consumer.

- Cooperative sector has ample potential to deliver goods and services in vital areas especially to farming community and consumers.

- Therefore a strong and transparent system of Professional Cooperative Management will be able to overcome the difficulties faced by the farmers at the grass root level.

- Therefore to revive the Cooperative movement in the country, appropriate amendments in the Acts\Rules\Bylaws have to be brought in immediately.

- The protection should be so strong that even if the state governments wish, they should not be able to dilute it. If this is done, it will be a great and eternal service to the poor, helpless and innocent farmers of our country.

- In order to ensure proper functioning of cooperative societies and managed only by the stakeholders, provisions should be made at the national level preferably in the Constitution itself in amplification of 97th amendment, in such a way that all cooperative societies are managed only by Users. www.bannari.com
Bio fertilizers for saving health of soil

Dr. GBK Rao, CMD of Pragati Green Meadows and Resorts, a progressive, successful and dynamic farmer says, -

The Indian Vedic way culture revolved around Cow and tree for a Healthy, wealthy and happy living.

It is alarming to note that as per UNEP estimates 89.8% of agricultural land is contaminated with Arsenic, Lead, Mercury and the produce from which is very harmful for human life. The current chemical and input-intensive farming is not sustainable and takes a great toll on human beings, animals and environment health, posing serious sustainability issues and need urgent attention. If the situation continues further, the generations will lead a life like punctured tyres.

In natural farming, the farmer is considered only a facilitator and the real work is done by nature itself. In a natural farm, there are no good or bad organisms; all are vital for a balanced ecosystem.

Pragati’s Natural farming – an inspiring factor: PRAGATI has been proud to be an inspiring factor for many across the globe for replication of its Biodiversity model showcasing the vedic age Natural farming, innovative gardening, sacred herbal medicinal plants and desi cows. It has been playing a pivotal role, since its incorporation in 1994, to bring back the glory of Indian Vedic culture and Rishi Sanskriti where the Natural farming, sacred heritage herbal medicinal plants and cows were given utmost priority and flourished as self-sustainable living spaces with Health, wealth and happiness. PRAGATI has been vociferously striving to establish the link between the present and the glorious past of our Indian vedic way of living.

Natural farming is being practised at PRAGATI in the area of 2500 acres cultivating native sacred herbal medicinal plants, vegetables; fruits; millets, rice and trees. A wide variety of compost fertilisers including bio-fertilisers-Vermi compost, Cow dung, Green Leaf Mold, Bio pests, Neem, Tulasi, Ganuaga, Gow Mutra and cow-based products are generated and used productively here. Pragati Sanjeevani Nursery boasts of 1000 plus native sacred herbal heritage medicinal aromatic plants, 100 varieties of fruits, vegetables and 3.5 millions of trees. More than a billion seeds per day are produced from Mother Plants here. All in all Pragati has created one of its kind genome banks in the world for a wide variety of flora and fauna.

If we won’t wake up and motivate the farming community towards Natural farming, our future generations won’t excuse us for our grave mistakes and acts committed for the last several decades at the cost of the future of our generations to come. We need to correct ourselves and provide a path of Natural farming – the real way of farming. Website: http://pragati.resorts.com/
Most important among them has been the woes of the farmer - especially in India. The sudden lockdown left huge stocks of agricultural produce unsold and rotting in the farms. This has completely thrown off gear the farmer’s cash cycle - leaving him with the uncertainty of finding cash to plan the next crop cycle. Thanks to the non-availability of workforce to harvest crops, crops were left unharvested in the fields. Several farmers fed their livestock with tomatoes and cabbage and radish for want of a fair price and facilities to reach the end user.

What is sure to loom large in the horizon is an impending food crisis which could be more disastrous than the COVID 19 crisis. Siruthuli which is an NGO in Coimbatore of Tamil Nadu has been into water conservation activities since 2003. As a result of its activities, ground water levels which had dipped to abysmal levels have risen significantly bringing cheer not only to the Coimbatoreans and the farming communities, but has been admired as a model to be adopted all over. Website: www.siruthuli.com

Save Farming to Save Humanity

Even today the nation is facing crisis in agriculture. Media is full of sad news of farmers committing suicides all the time in some part of the country or the other.

The causes are many and too well-known to the entire nation. However, to mention very briefly some of the causes and possible remedies-

Farm crisis worsens during lockdown

If there was one need that was on top of people’s mind during the lock-down, it was FOOD.

Such a scenario would have meant a lottery for the food growers - the farmers - but the reality is far from it. It is ironical that people were desperate for food but farmers across India were not able to sell their produce, some even went to the extent of letting cattle feed on full grown crops. Unsold vegetables and fruits were being dumped on the roadsides by the frustrated farmers.

The short-term effect of COVID on farming has been that farmers have not been able to harvest their produce and take them to the market and consumer.

What is more frightening is the long term effect of the above. Since farmers have had inadequate cash flow during this lock-down, many will not be able to plan for the next crop. As a result, many farms may remain uncultivated.
This is almost certain to lead to a crisis larger than COVID - because of food shortage.

**Perennial Causes for Misery of Farmer**

After enormous input by way of materials and hardwork of the entire family throughout the year, crops fail due to drought, excess rain, untimely rain, pest, disease. Even when there is a good crop, there is no remunerative price for the agri product. The farmer is forced to distress sale. The consumer keeps paying more. It is the middleman who makes huge profit, with hardly any input on his part.

The cost of inputs keep steeply increasing year after year. The system prevents the farmer getting a fair price for his product. So the prevailing scene of indebtedness continue to force farmers to commit suicide.

The phenomena of indebtedness will recur as long as policies to depress agricultural prices continue,” said Sharad Joshi, founder of Shetkari Sanghatan, a leading farmers’ rights organisation.

**Polluted land and polluted food**

In the market today, everything ranging from turmeric, sesame, coriander to milk, vegetables and fruits are adulterated or unnatural. Farmers understood manifold effects that chemical farming has, on soil and even on consumers. Now, they have agreed to give natural agriculture a shot, cultivating their trust in yet another technique once more.

With this technique, all Indian farmers will have a good output, save a lot with less investment, save plenty of water, and actually generate profits from farming. And most importantly, the population of India will shine brightly with naturally grown healthy food.

**Revolution should begin with consumers**

The farmers are on the verge of starting a new revolution that will recreate India’s lost glory.

The support of consumers will help these farmers to succeed. We can choose to reject an adulterated supply of milk, grains, and fruit. Instead, choose to support nutritious and wholesome meal. It all begins with our choice of going in for organic food. Revolution starts with us.

Agriculture and allied sectors contribute 10% of the total Gross State Domestic Product (GDSP) and provide direct employment to 69% of the population of the State. Growing awareness of health and environmental issues in agriculture has focused on production of safe food which is also emerging as an attractive source of rural income generation. While trends of rising consumer demand for safe natural products are becoming evident, sustainability in production of crops has become the prime concern in agriculture development. The present socio-economic...
situation of farmers across the country is not a healthy one. He is trapped in a vicious cycle of high cost agriculture, and uncertain returns both production wise and price realization wise. The problem gets worse with inclement weather conditions.

In the last few decades, the plant protection chemicals including all pesticides like fungicides, insecticides, weedicides were used extensively to protect plants from pest and diseases.

Scientific surveys and evidences indicate that particles of pesticides, sprayed or used over crops leave undissolved and harmful elements which are transferred to human and other living bodies through grains, vegetables, fruits and grasses, causing a number of diseases, ailments and harmful effects on our health. To overcome the ill effects of chemical based farming, organic farming was advocated. But Organic farming is also proving to be costly and farmers are again falling in trap of industry. Thus a more sustainable farming system is required which can enhance farm income and also reduce dependence on external inputs.

**Promote Only Natural Farming**

To overcome the ill effects of chemical based farming as well as organic farming, introduction of Subhash Palekar Natural Farming- is a viable and sustainable option. As per concept, all essential as well as micronutrients required by the crop/plants are present in soil but are in unavailable form. Plant use nutrients from soil through mineralization and billions of microorganisms are available in soil for this job. But continuous use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides has reduced population of these useful microbes and need to be rejuvenated. Cow dung and urine of domestic Indian cows is good source of these microbes and its use has given promising results.

**Government should Support:** Govts, NGOs, Scientists, proactive farmers to take up a proactive role to promote and encourage the natural farming which had been our way of farming right from vedic ages. This needs to be brought back again in the interest of the health and wealth of the fellow citizens and especially to preserve the germination capacity of the soil and also conservation of biodiversity, which is the need of the Hour, as well. The Budgetary allocations and the incentives and orientation to farmers on Natural farming has been meagre. This needs to be heavily strengthened and the mission of Natural farming has to be on war footing.

**Immediate Measures to save farmers and Food Security of the Nation** -

As one born in a village in an agricultural farm, I was always concerned with the problems of the farmers. Even when I was holding high positions in the State and Central governments, the farming
community always approached me with various issues during their crisis. I have also attended meetings of local leaders and addressed rallies and farmers conventions, as the founder president of the National Agriculturalist Awareness Movement and founder president of a farmer’s magazine – WE Farmers.

www.naamfarmers.org

I had to intervene again and again at highest levels and met successive Prime Ministers, agriculture ministers, water resources ministers of the government of India and also successive Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka voicing grievances of farmers, for over 30 years.

I also raised all these issues in public before the UPA chairperson Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, when she came to address the Hindustan Times leadership summit, soon after the UPA came back to power in 2004. She wrote down all the points made by me and promised to attend to all those long pending problems of farmers very soon.

Many of the issues are yet to be solved. Some of the more important issues are -

1. **Remunerative Price**
   Remunerative prices for each of the agro products should be determined and announced well in advance. The formula should be as recommended by the National Agriculture Commission headed by Prof. M.S. Swaminathan – cost of cultivation plus 50 percent.

2. **Crop Insurance**
   Effective crop insurance should be implemented. When the farmer has put in lot of effort and spent much on inputs, and when for no fault of his, the crops fail due to factors beyond his control, he has to be compensated. Otherwise he will fall into debt trap and will not be able to raise crops again. This can be due to no rain, more rain, incidence of pest or disease. Only crop insurance can save him from committing suicide.

3. **Linking of Rivers**
   To initiate and implement immediately linking of rivers project, so that the extensive land tracks do not go barren in some parts of the country and at the same time extensive areas in some other parts of the country do not sustain enormous damage due to excessive floods.

4. **NAFED Intervention to ensure price**
   When the coconut copra prices fell very low, the coconut farmers approached me again and again, after they failed to get any relief by repeated representations to their elected representatives. When they were about to commit suicide, I took up the matter with the Prime Minister Vajpayee government repeatedly and persuaded them successfully to get the effective market intervention of NAFED.

5. **Creation of Storage**
   To create enough storage and cold storage facilities in various theatres of production, so that the farmer has the capacity to retain his product till he gets remunerative sale price.

6. **More Budget Allocation for ZBNF**
   The Govt. of India has been promoting Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF) as a means to double farmers’ income. However, the budgetary allocations for
the promotion of the farming have been very meagre. On the contrary, subsidies on chemical fertiliser were increased by almost Rs 10,000 crore to Rs 79,996 crore in the 2019-20 budget. Out of this, Rs 53,629 crore is towards urea subsidy and Rs 26,367 crore towards nutrient-based subsidies. This trend needs to be reversed. Instead the Government should ensure huge budgetary allocations are made to promote ZBNF in order to bring in the rapid change from our conventional cultivation to Natural farming not only to protect the land, the farmers and the present generation and future generations of consumers.

7. PROMOTION OF MILLETS – Food of present and Future:

We need to motivate and encourage the farmers to undertake the cultivation of Millets and Herbal medicinal plants through (ZBNF) Zero Budget Natural Farming, to protect the health of the present and future generations to come.

Millet was our prime food habit right from Indian Vedic ages. It is evident that millets have been mentioned in some of the oldest Yajurveda texts, identifying foxtail millet (priyangava), Barnyard millet (aanaava) and black finger millet (shyaamaka), thus indicating the consumption of Millets, pre-dating to the Indian Bronze Age. Even until 50 years ago millets were the major grain grown in India. Millets are very hardy crops that can fight climate change with lesser water source.

8. To modify MGNREGA scheme to ensure availability of labour for farm activities

Most of the people available at the villages prefer to work for MGNREGA, because the workload is very little. Hence, worker availability for farming operation is reduced. To address this issue, this scheme has to be modified in such a way that the workers are attracted to go to the farm to earn their wages. In every village MGNREGA will have an office or a designated officer. MGNREGA Officer’s duty is to allocate the available workers who approach his office. The farmers also will approach him for their requirements of farm labour. The farmer will pay 50% of the wage and the balance 50% of wages or even more of wages can be paid through MGNREGA fund. By implementing such a system, while the worker will be provided with the job, the farmers requirement of labour also will be fulfilled. This is only way to ensure availability of labour for agricultural operations.

9. To deal effectively with the menace of alcoholism

The quality of available farm labour has come down drastically in recent days due to the rural farm workers getting addicted to Alcoholism. They are in poor health increasingly. They are unable to work continuously like the people in earlier days. They are addicted to...
Alcohol, and not able to work. They are unable to work hard and for longer hours. Their output is low. Due to addiction they torture their wives at home and also beat up the children. Whatever they earn by way of wages is mostly spent in liquor shops. Their family life also is badly affected. Hence opening liquor shops and making them available everywhere has done lot of damage to rural life, farming and also poor families.

While it may be too late in the day to ask for prohibition because so many people are addicted to alcohol. State governments also depend on revenue out of liquor trade. Political parties also may not support bringing in prohibition. Tourism may also be an excuse.

Sale of alcohol may be prohibited at least in rural areas to save the farming, farm labour and their families from the menace of self-destruction.

Instead, Toddy from palm and coconut trees should be made available. Toddy is not as injurious to health as the spirit being offered at TASMAC or similar outlets. In fact, it is claimed that if Toddy is consumed in the limited quantity it will add to one’s health and improve the person’s capacity to work hard. This will also help coconut/palm tree farmers to earn considerable income.

By implementing this, the availability and quality of the manpower to the farming would increase very much, apart from bringing harmony at home. This would also bring down the overall cost of labour because of higher output expected from a healthy person.

10. Role of Middlemen in Marketing to be eliminated

The farmer grower doesn’t get remunerative price. The consumer pays too much. It is the middlemen who makes the money. Hence the role of middlemen should be minimised.

Farmers marketplace should be developed close to the State or National Highway to make the market accessible both to the farmers and outsiders. So also storage (including cold storage) should be available.

11. Commodity Trading in Agricultural Products must be banned.

Indiscriminate import of agri commodities should be banned, to save farmers by sudden fall in the demand and price.

Sometimes the price goes up, when the production falls short due to seasonal changes, insufficient rain etc. When the production is less, the cost of production will not go down.

Even if the price of any commodity goes up a little bit, government should not straight away starting import such products to bring down the price. That will be injustice to the grower, as then

“The farmer is the only man in our economy who buys everything at retail, sells everything at wholesale, and pays the freight both ways.”

—John F. Kennedy
the price will go below the cost of production causing misery to the farmer.

In case, the importation becomes inescapable, the farmers who have produced those products should be compensated for the price loss by the Government.

12. Bio-farming to be the focus

All Agricultural colleges must focus equally on Bio-farming. Even now daily in All India Radio agricultural programs, Department of Agriculture is still giving guidance to the farmers as how to apply inorganic fertilizer and the use of chemical pesticides to grow our food. Very little is talked about organic farming. Organic farming is the only sustainable way for our food security and quality of food.

13. Advise Farmers on cropping pattern

The State Govt. should localise the cropping pattern according to the climate, availability of water, type of soil condition etc so that only a particular crop is cultivated in a large area and thus the agricultural products can be marketed to the advantage of farmers without intermediaries.

14. Drip Irrigation to be implemented

The entire cost of Drip Irrigation should be funded by the Govt. irrespective of the land holdings. This is the only way to ensure the most economical use of water, which is becoming less and less. Even though improving Irrigation potential is a long-term issue, in the short term by resorting to efficient use of available water through strengthening micro irrigation systems the irrigation area could be doubled.

15. Provide Organic Manure/Pesticide

The Govt. should support the manufacture of organic manure in large quantities which will improve the soil condition thereby productivity of the crop would increase in the years to come. The Govt. should encourage and subsidize the organic pesticides as chemical pesticides deteriorates the land health and thus affecting the crop growth for a larger extent.

16. Agri Engineering Enterprise

Agri Engineering Enterprises should be encouraged at Taluk level so that mechanisation can take place by renting out agricultural implements to the farmers and thus, minimizing the manual labour which is no longer available, when they are badly required at the critical times of sowing, weeding, harvesting and marketing operations.

Care for the Farmer who Feeds Humanity

Agriculture is the most important sector, that provides the highest employment and ensures food security of the nation.

If the above proposals are implemented immediately and totally, most of the problems facing Indian farmers and farming and rural crisis since decades can be solved.

As this newsletter goes to print, the government of India have made many announcements, incentives and reforms for agriculture and related rural activities. They are widely welcomed by the long-suffering farming community. If implemented totally and immediately, most of the long pending issues will be solved for the good of the nation.

“When tillage begins, other arts follow. The farmers, therefore, are the founders of human civilization.”

—Daniel Webster