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**DAILY EDITORIAL
ANALYSIS**

TOPIC

**STRENGTHENING INDIA'S
AGRICULTURAL BACKBONE**

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STRENGTHENING INDIA'S AGRICULTURAL BACKBONE

Context

- Agriculture remains the backbone of India's economy, employing nearly 45% of the workforce and contributing about 16% to the nation's GDP.
- Recognizing its pivotal role, India has implemented several initiatives to strengthen this sector.

About the Agriculture Sector in India

- Agriculture serves as the **backbone of India's economy**, playing a pivotal role in ensuring *food security, providing employment, and contributing to overall economic development*.
- It is envisioned as one of the **four engines of development** (others are MSMEs, Investments, and Exports) in the recently announced **Union Budget of 2025-26**.
 - ♦ These engines are aimed at driving sustainable growth and achieving the vision of a **'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India) by 2047**.

Agriculture in India

- It is primarily a **State Subject in Schedule VII of Indian Constitution**. It covers *agricultural education and research, protection against pests, and prevention of plant diseases*.



- ♦ Some aspects like trade and commerce fall under the **Concurrent List**.
- **Article 48 of the Constitution (Directive Principles of State Policy)** directs the State to organize agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines.

Some Facts (Economic Survey 2024-25)

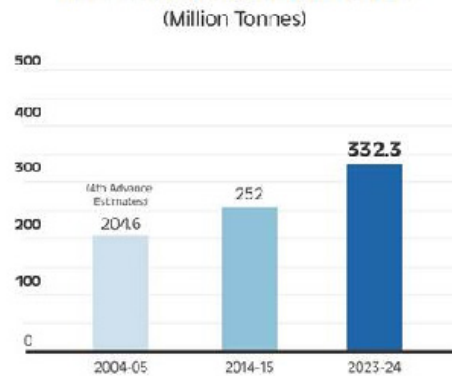
- **Irrigation:** The area under micro-irrigation schemes increased to approximately 8,000 hectares between 2015-2023.
- **Organic Farming:** Mobilization under the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana and the Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region has increased.
- **Fisheries and Livestock:** The fisheries sector registered a CAGR of 13.67%, and the livestock sector grew at 12.99% between 2015-2023.

Key Farmer-Centric Initiatives To Strengthen India's Agriculture Sector

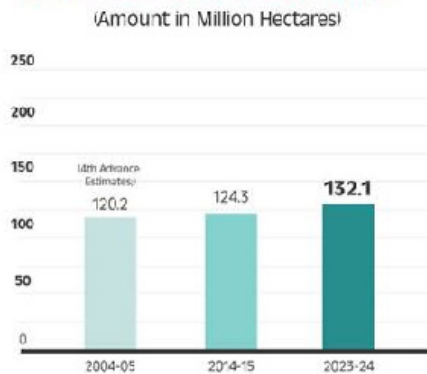
Increase In Budget



Production of Major Crops



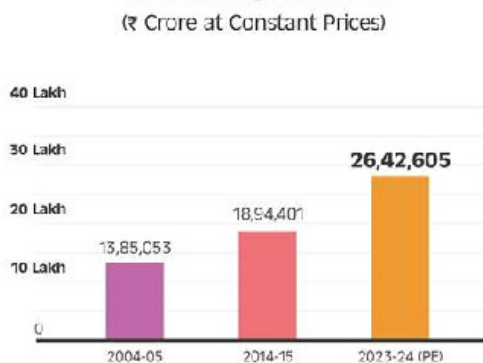
Gross Area Under Major Crops



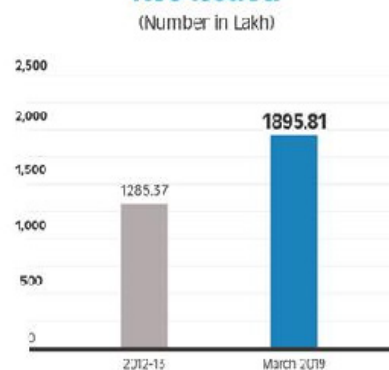
Annual Growth Rate of Real GVA in Agriculture



Real Gross Value Added (GVA) In Agriculture



KCC Issued



- The **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)** scheme has disbursed ₹3.46 lakh crore, while the **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)** has provided ₹1.65 lakh crore in claims.
 - ♦ The **Agricultural Infrastructure Fund (AIF)** has sanctioned ₹52,738 crore for over 87,500 projects to improve post-harvest management.
- **Minimum Support Price (MSP) Enhancements:** The MSP for paddy has risen from ₹850 per quintal in 2008-09 to ₹2,300 per quintal in 2023-24, while the MSP for wheat has increased from ₹1,080 per quintal to ₹2,425 per quintal during the same period.
- **e-NAM:** Integration of **1410 Mandis with e-NAM** since inception across 23 States & 4 UTs.
 - ♦ As on 31st December 2024, 1.79 Crore farmers & 2.63 lakh traders have been registered on e-NAM portal.
- **Millets (Superfood of India):** Millet production has increased in the last 1 year, reaching 175.72 lakh tonnes in 2023-24 (Final Estimate) from 173.21 lakh tonnes in 2022-23.

- ◆ Productivity has increased by 7% from 1248 Kg/ha to 1337 Kg/ha between 2019 and 2024 (Final Estimate).
- **Promoting Sustainable Practices:** Initiatives like the promotion of millet production and the establishment of a second Gene Bank to safeguard genetic resources for future food security are steps in the right direction.

Kye Focus Area in Union Budget 2025-26

- **Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana:** For developing agri districts programme, covering 100 districts with low productivity, moderate crop intensity and below-average credit parameters, to benefit 1.7 crore farmers.
- **Building Rural Prosperity and Resilience:** To address under-employment in agriculture through skilling, investment, technology, and invigorating the rural economy.
 - ◆ Phase-1 to cover 100 developing agri-districts.
- **Aatmanirbharta in Pulses:** Government to launch a **6-year 'Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses'** with focus on **Tur, Urad and Masoor.**
 - ◆ NAFED and NCCF to procure these pulses from farmers during the next 4 years.
- **Comprehensive Programme for Vegetables & Fruits:** To promote production, efficient supplies, processing, and remunerative prices for farmers to be launched in partnership with states.
- **Makhana Board in Bihar:** To improve production, processing, value addition, and marketing of makhana.
- **National Mission on High Yielding Seeds:** To strengthen the research ecosystem, targeted development and propagation of seeds with high yield, and commercial availability of more than 100 seed varieties.
- **Fisheries:** For sustainable harnessing of fisheries from the **Indian Exclusive Economic Zone and High Seas**, with a special focus on the **Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands.**
- **Mission for Cotton Productivity:** A **5-year mission** announced to facilitate significant improvements in productivity and sustainability of cotton farming, and promote extra-long staple cotton varieties.
- **Enhanced Credit through KCC:** The loan limit under the **Modified Interest Subvention Scheme** to be enhanced **from ₹ 3 lakh to ₹ 5 lakh for loans** taken through the KCC.
- **Urea Plant in Assam:** A plant with **annual capacity of 12.7 lakh metric tons** to be set up at **Namrup, Assam.**

Key Concerns/Challenges & Related Suggestions (Post the Union Budget 2025-26)

- **Implementation of New Schemes:** While the budget introduced several new schemes like the **Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana** and the **Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses**, the effective implementation of these programs remains a challenge.
 - ◆ Ensuring that the benefits reach the intended beneficiaries and addressing any bureaucratic hurdles will be crucial.
- **Access to Quality Seeds and Technology:** Despite efforts to enhance access to quality seeds and modern technology, many farmers still face difficulties in obtaining these resources.
 - ◆ The adoption of high-yielding, climate-resilient crop varieties needs to be accelerated to improve productivity.
- **Infrastructure and Storage:** Improving post-harvest infrastructure and storage facilities is essential to reduce wastage and ensure better prices for farmers.
 - ◆ The budget has allocated funds for this purpose, but timely and efficient execution is necessary.
- **Credit Availability:** While the budget has raised the Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loan limit, ensuring that farmers have easy access to credit without cumbersome procedures is vital.
 - ◆ Financial literacy and awareness among farmers about available schemes can also help in this regard.
- **Market Access and Fair Pricing:** Farmers often struggle with getting fair prices for their produce due to market inefficiencies and lack of direct access to markets.
 - ◆ Strengthening market linkages and promoting farmer producer organizations (FPOs) can help address this issue.

- **Climate Change and Sustainability:** With changing weather patterns, adopting sustainable agricultural practices becomes imperative.
 - ♦ The budget's focus on climate-resilient crops and practices is a step in the right direction, but continuous support and education for farmers are needed.

Conclusion

- Strengthening India's agricultural backbone is crucial for the country's socio-economic development.
- By implementing farmer-centric initiatives, enhancing budget allocations, and promoting sustainable practices, the government is working towards ensuring food security, providing employment, and boosting overall economic growth.

Source: PIB

Mains Practice Question

How can the various farmer-centric initiatives and budget allocations outlined in recent government policies effectively strengthen India's agricultural backbone and ensure sustainable development?

