

PRESS RELEASE

April 04, 2015

Reacting to Government of India's blatant refusal to provide adequate compensation for damaged crops to farmers and unilateral diktat qua arbitrary procurement standards, Randeep Singh Surjewala, Incharge Communications, AICC has issued following statement to the Press today:-

“Untimely rains, hailstorms and high velocity winds have destructed over 170 lakh hectares of Rabi crops in 14 States causing damage of over Rs.40,000 crore.

Modi Government's deplorable decision, as disclosed by Niti Aayog Vice-Chairman - Shri Arvind Panagariya, expressing inability of the Finance Ministry to adequately compensate the farmers for damaged crops is a severe body blow to the farming community already reeling under severe distress. Coming as it does on the heels of the draconian Land Acquisition Ordinance yesterday, it reaffirms the inherently ingrained anti-farmer prejudice of Modi Government.

What is equally shocking is the statement of Union Minister for Agriculture - Shri Radha Mohan Singh absolving the Central Government of responsibility to pay compensation by asking the States to first pay compensation to farmers from State Disaster Response Funds (SDRF) and then use 'Contingency Funds' at the State level. According to Agricultural Ministry, it is only thereafter that demands for relief from National Disaster Response Funds (NDRF) may be sent to Government of India by State governments. This is a classic case of 'putting the cart before the bullock' and expression of a clear intent to not pay any compensation to farmer. Assertion of Vice-Chairman of Niti Aayog refusing to pay adequate compensation to farmers reaffirms the same.

To add insult to the injury, an 'Inter-Ministerial Group', headed by Union Home Ministry – Shri Rajnath Singh and comprising of Union Agriculture Minister – Shri Radha Mohan Singh and Finance Minister – Shri Arun Jaitley have summarily rejected the demand of farming community and landless labourers, duly recommended by Food Ministry of Government of India, to enhance wheat allocation to the affected families under the Public Distribution System in areas, where crops have seen extensive damage on account of vagaries of weather.

Final body blow on the farming community has come in shape of the latest circular dated 24th February, 2015 issued by Ministry of Food and Public Distribution, Government of India (copy of which is attached herewith) specifying that wheat crops containing moisture in excess of 12% to 14% has to be rejected and not purchased by procurement agencies. According to the same circular, even 'slightly damaged grains' beyond 4% and 'shriveled and broken grains' beyond 6% have to be rejected and not procured by

Government agencies. While issuing this unilateral diktat, Modi Government lost sight of the fact that pursuant to the current rains, almost the entire crops, including the undamaged one, will have moisture of 20% to 30% on the average. This order of Modi Government will ensure that no procurement of wheat and other Rabi crops takes place by the procurement agencies leaving the farmers at the mercy of market forces once again.

This multi-pronged attack on the bread, butter and livelihood of India's farmer will not only lead to a drop in agricultural productivity for the first time after 10 years of Congress rule but has reaffirmed the universal slogan echoing in India's farm sector – '*Kisan Virodhi – Narendra Modi*'."

RANDEEP SINGH SURJEWALA