

Talk on agriculture and future challenges

Sehgal Foundation hosted a talk by Ramkrishna Mudholkar on July 26, 2017, on "Agriculture and Future Challenges in India" discussing the status of existing agriculture policies in India and the challenges and opportunities for Indian agriculture. Here are some excerpts from the discussion:

Indian agriculture delivers food self-sufficiency, is a net foreign exchange earner, and has a diverse crop landscape. In all, 120 million farmers cultivate 180 million hectares of gross crop area, and 520 million people are indirectly dependent on agriculture. The average landholding in India is 1.41 hectares (the world average of 3.7 hectares). Indian agriculture has low mechanization and low input intensity.

India has very strong cereal and food grain production, strong vegetable and horticulture production, and rapidly growing poultry meat and dairy production. Agricultural budgets have seen a three-fold increase in the past three years, and several supportive agricultural policies such as

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (Prime Minister's crop insurance scheme), *Soil Health Cards (SHC)*, *Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana* (Prime Minister's agriculture irrigation scheme), *eNAM* (the National Agriculture Market trading platform), and *Minimum Support Price (MSP)*, have been introduced.



Yet despite the above achievements, India faces multiple challenges such as low yields compared to world averages in most key crops, less than 2 percent share in world agriculture trade, and 30 percent food wastage during storage and distribution. There is a need for a long-term vision and strategic approach in agriculture rather than the current focus on short-term temporary solutions.

Ramkrishna Mudholkar suggested possible solutions to this dilemma that included charting a twenty-year vision and implementation roadmap for building and organizing supplier power, creating a vision document to link farmer growers and food consumers, establishing global standards for technology upgradation and research, and reducing dependence on agriculture from 60 to 30 percent, and investing in state-of-the-art infrastructure for agriculture.

(Compiled by Padmavathi S, professional assistant to the CEO)