

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON USHERING
SECOND GREEN REVOLUTION IN INDIAN AGRICULTURE
THROUGH PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP**

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1. Shri Tariq Anwar, Minister of State for Agriculture and Food Processing Industries, Shri Adi B. Godrej, President, Confederation of Indian Industry, Shri S. Gopalakrishnan, President Designate, CII and Executive Co-Chairman, Infosys, Shri Rakesh Bharti Mittal, Chairman, CII National Council on Agriculture and Vice Chairman and Managing Director of Bharti Enterprises, Shri Ajay Shriram, Vice-President CII and Shri Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII, and Ladies and Gentlemen,

2. I am happy to be here today to inaugurate the National Conference on 'Ushering Second Green Revolution in Indian Agriculture through Public-Private Partnership' being organized by the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the Confederation of Indian Industry.

3. I am particularly delighted to share my thoughts with this august gathering of intellectuals, scientists, policy makers and industrialists on a subject that is of critical importance to a country like ours that has nearly one half of its work-force working in this sector. It is, therefore, imperative that we rivet greater attention to

the issues that are bedeviling this sector because of its clear linkage to poverty that we have been struggling to eradicate. Despite the economic progress the country has made in the last six decades, we cannot ignore the majority of our rural population which depends on agriculture for their livelihood.

4. Agriculture is the heart and soul of this nation. It is the most fundamental of activities that the human race depends upon for its existence. The association of people with agriculture and the importance they give to it from the times of the yore can be gauged by the fact that important festivals in different parts of our country have taken their roots from this occupation.
5. In the course of our economic transition, the contribution of Agriculture to the nation's income has gradually declined. The Agricultural Sector contributed 23.4% to the GDP during the Ninth Five Year Plan period. This declined to 19% during the Tenth Five Year Plan period and to 15.2% during the Eleventh Plan period. This is a testimony to the fact that growth rates in Agriculture and Allied Sectors have lagged behind the overall growth rate of the economy. The average growth rate in the Agriculture and Allied Sectors was 2.5%, 2.4% and 3.3% during the Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Plan periods respectively. In contrast, the average

growth rate of the total economy in the corresponding time span was much higher at 5.7%, 7.6% and 7.9% respectively.

6. Close to 69% of the total population of India resides in rural areas. According to the Planning Commission Survey, the poverty ratio amongst the rural populace is about 34% as compared to the all-India poverty ratio of about 30%. Thus, to alleviate poverty, promote inclusive growth, promote food security, increase employment opportunities and boost rural incomes, it is vital that Agriculture grows at a much faster pace.
7. The growth rate of Agriculture and Allied Sectors during 2011-12 was 2.8%, which was substantially lower than 7% in the previous year but higher than the 0.4% and 1.7% growth rates in 2008-09 and 2009-10 respectively. Though the growth rate of 2.1% in this sector in the first half of this financial year is not very encouraging, I am hopeful that the second half will give us some cheer. The wide variation in agricultural growth is primarily on account of the vagaries of weather.
8. Reliance on good weather for a successful crop has been the bane of Indian agriculture. But if we are to realize a much higher growth in this sector, then we must make a concerted and deliberate strategy to liberate this sector from the fetters of the

nature to the extent possible like the advanced nations have done.

9. The aim of the first Green Revolution in India to achieve self-sufficiency in food grains was realized in the sixties through a combination of the use of high-yielding varieties of seeds, increased use of fertilizers and strengthening irrigation. We have successfully achieved that goal of self-sufficiency. In 2011-12, the total food grains production in the country was 257 million tonnes, which was above the target of 245 million tonnes set for the year. However, there are some lessons to be learnt from the first Green Revolution. The excessive use of chemical fertilizers became unsustainable in the long run as it gradually led to the decline in productivity. The use of high yielding seeds was confined to only food grains. Thus, the revolution touched only a limited percentage of India's total arable land.

10. Dr. Norman Borlaug, the Nobel Peace laureate and the father of the Green Revolution, had stated in 1970 that "food is something that is taken for granted by most world leaders despite the fact that more than half of the population of the world is hungry". Of course India, with its socio-economic compulsions, has never taken food security for granted. In fact, there is an increasing realization that high growth in Agriculture and Allied

Sectors would be the catalyst for rural development in the country. Thus, another Green Revolution is definitely a necessity of the times.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have to admit that there a number of focus areas which vie for our attention. But, we would have to give no less importance than any other area to increasing the productivity in agriculture. The agricultural growth in the Eleventh Plan period was also driven by improved agricultural prices. But this scenario has undergone a change in the Twelfth Plan period as demand for major crops is projected to decline. To meet the Twelfth Plan growth target of 4% per annum, emphasis should be placed on improving productivity. Assigning priority to high yielding crops is a strategy that needs to be promoted with greater vigour. We must stress on improving seed replacement rate, use hybrid seeds that yield higher productivity, improve water management practices and promote balanced use of fertilizers and pesticides as well to achieve this goal.

11. In India, farmland holdings are small. Those with less than 2 hectares comprise 83% of all holdings and 41% of area. This makes it imperative for us to adopt innovative schemes to increase productivity. In the context of advanced agricultural food

supply systems in the world, it would be worthwhile to consider creating structures for greater farm-firm linkages. But more importantly, innovation through research and technology development for devising economically viable solutions to enhance productivity of small farms is the need of the hour.

12. Farmers are at the cutting edge in the agricultural value chain.

It is, therefore, necessary to ensure that they are adequately protected from the uncertainties of weather and market. To manage risk from the failure of crops due to natural calamities, pests and diseases, a National Agricultural Insurance Scheme was introduced in 1999-2000 to extend financial support to such distressed farmers. If prevention is a better measure to contain risk, then increased reliance on satellite communication for more accurate weather forecasts and better dissemination of such information would be crucial.

13. It is also critical to control post-harvest wastages as this would

improve access of farmers to markets to enable them obtain better prices for their products. The effective use of information technology to increase the reach of agriculture extension programmes would not only help to spread knowledge about agriculture, better practices and know how, it would also assist in building a valuable database of such knowledge in the country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Finance Minister, I had outlined as part of the Union Budget for 2010-11 a four-pronged strategy for agriculture growth. It envisages the extension of the green revolution to the Eastern region of the country, to reduce the huge wastage on account of poor storage facilities, improving credit availability to the farmers and providing a further impetus to the development of the food processing sector.

14. Progress in these areas is already visible. There has been significant increase in the production of paddy to the tune of 7 million tonnes in Kharif 2011 in the States of Eastern India. This achievement has been acknowledged internationally by organizations such as International Rice Research Institute.

15. To create additional food grain storage capacity in the country, the Government has taken concrete steps. For instance, 2 million tonnes of storage capacity in the form of modern silos have already been approved for creation. Further, nearly 15 million tonnes of storage capacity is being created through private entrepreneurs and warehousing corporations.

16. To enable affordable credit to farmers in a timely manner, the target for flow of agriculture credit has been enhanced in the

successive Union Budgets, from Rs. 3,75,000 crore in 2010-11 to Rs. 5,75,000 crore in 2012-13.

17. To develop the food processing sector, farm proximate state-of-the-art infrastructure with strong backward and forward linkages are being created through the Mega Food Park scheme, introduced in the Eleventh Plan.
18. Thus, some elements of the next generation revolution in the Agriculture sector are already taking place. But I would like to envision a Second Green Revolution in Agriculture that is more holistic and widespread. Such an initiative should be accompanied by development of rural infrastructure, human development and increased sensitivity to ecology and environment. Given the gargantuan task ahead, it is imperative that the Government should seek the right partnerships by building innovative structures that adequately encourage the involvement of the private sector in this area.
19. I understand that the contribution of Agriculture to the country's GDP is declining and is lower than the Services and Industry sectors today. But I would exhort you to resist any temptation to be persuaded by some arguments to give only proportionate importance to this sector. Nothing could be more wrong. Giving

agriculture the importance in proportion to its contribution to GDP may be as fallacious as attaching to the heart the importance in proportion to its weight in the human body.

20. The linkage that the Agriculture sector has to almost all the facets of the society is indisputable. Its growth can spawn the much-needed social and economic transformation without which economic growth in other areas and that of the nation as a whole would lose its meaning.

21. I am confident that pragmatic solutions to the problems that the agriculture sector is facing would emerge from this conference. I wish the conference great success and congratulate the organizers for taking the important initiative to hold this Conference.

Jai Hind