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Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation (SMAM) has been started in the year 2014-15 to promote agricultural mechanisation: Shri Radha Mohan Singh

The additional demand for energy for agricultural works should be met through agro mechanisation and for this, the agricultural mechanisation sector needs to grow rapidly: Shri Singh

Ensuring availability of adequate farm power for small farms will be a big challenge: Shri Singh

Shri Radha Mohan Singh addresses Inter Session Meeting of the Consultative Committee at Sher-e-Kashmir International Conference Centre in Srinagar.

Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Shri Radha Mohan Singh said agricultural mechanisation is one of the important factors for sustainable development of the agricultural sector which helps in increasing production through agricultural works, reducing the deficit, reducing the cost of various agricultural works through the better management of costly inputs, increasing the productivity of natural resources and help reduce the difficulties related to various agricultural activities. This was stated by the Minister during the Inter Session Meeting of the Consultative Committee held at the Sher-e-Kashmir International Conference Center. The subject chosen for discussion during this meeting was 'Farm Mechanisation'. On this occasion, Union Minister of State for Agriculture, Sudarshan Bhagat, and members of the Consultative Committee were also present.

Shri Singh said that in the last few years there has been a shift has been towards the use of mechanical and electrical sources of power. While in 1960-61, about 92.30% farm power was coming from animate sources, in 2014-15 the contribution of animate sources of power reduced to about 9.46% and that of mechanical and electrical sources of power increased from 7.70% in 1960-61 to about 90.54% in 2014-15.

Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister said that the degree of farm mechanisation is expressed as a ratio of mechanical power to cultivable unit area, which in India during last 43 has increased at a very slow pace from 0.48 kW/ha in 1975-76 to 1.84 kW/ha in 2013-14. However, from the year 2014-15 to 2016-17, it has been increased to 2.02 kW/ha which is mainly due to concentrated efforts for promotion of agricultural mechanisation through various schemes of the Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare.

Shri Singh said that there has been a record production of food grain this year. However, the demand for food grain is increasing and it has been estimated that by 2025 we have to produce more than 300 million tonnes. According to the 2011 census, 263 million people (54.6%) are engaged in the agriculture sector, which is likely to declined to 190 million (33%) by 2020. Shri Singh said that these figures show that during important seasons such as sowing and harvesting there will be a decrease in the work force and it will have an adverse effect on production. Thus, the additional demand of energy for various agricultural works need to be completed through the medium and for this, the agricultural mechanisation sector needs to grow rapidly.

The Minister said that due to continuous shrinkage in the average size of the agricultural lands, more lands will fall in the adverse category, which will make individual ownership of agricultural machinery gradually and more informal. Therefore, ensuring availability of sufficient farm power for small farms will be a big challenge. The other challenges in the field of agricultural mechanisation are how to overcome skill barriers to provide adequate support to modern technology. In future, it is necessary to establish a link between the possibility of sustainable development of agricultural mechanisation without neglecting the lack of energy and environmental degradation due to low availability of fossil fuels and its high cost.

Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister informed that in the years 2012-13 and 2013-14, two small schemes were being run on agricultural mechanisation for which the allocation of the fund was only Rs 24.10 crore and Rs.38.49 crore respectively. But considering the importance of agricultural mechanisation the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare started the Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation in the year 2014-15 with an objective to promote agricultural mechanisation among small and marginal farmers and in the areas where the level of mechanisation is very low.

In addition to the Agricultural Mechanisation Submissions (SMM), farm mechanisation is also promoted through various other schemes and programmes of the Ministry such as RKVY, NFSM, NHM, NMOOP etc.

Shri Singh said that the SMAM not only includes the traditional component of training, testing, demonstration of agricultural machinery and procurement subsidy but also includes-Farm Machinery Banks for Custom Hiring, Hi-Tech High Productive Equipments Centres on custom hiring model, and Farm Mechanisation in selected villages for enhancing productivity and creating ownership of appropriate farm equipments among small & marginal farmers. Establishment of Farm Machinery Banks and High-Tech Hub for custom hiring services are supported with financial assistance @40% of the project cost under RKVY and SMAM.

The Minister said that during the last three year more than Rs.3088 crore have been allocated to the State Governments for farm mechanisation under various schemes of the Department. During the current year 2017-18, the allocation for SMAM has been increased more than two times as compared to the previous year (Rs. 577 crore). It has been observed that Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana etc. have achieved good progress in the field of agricultural mechanisation by utilising the allocated fund.

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