



## Indian Agriculture: Battling COVID-19

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Crises, and the challenges that come with them, may offer up a slew of new opportunities. Agriculture and related industries are critical to the Indian economy. It employs almost half of the workforce and generates approximately one-sixth of national income. It is critical for the nation's food security and has an impact on the growth of the secondary and tertiary industries via its forward and backward linkages. The success of the agricultural industry has ramifications in many other sectors. According to the World Bank's 2008 World Development Report, agricultural development is at least twice as effective as non-agricultural growth in alleviating poverty. Agricultural development indirectly reduces poverty by providing employment and reducing food prices. As a result, the agricultural sector benefits the whole Indian economy. The global and Indian economies were already faltering when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. The new Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has rapidly spread across the world, affecting millions of people's lives and livelihoods. On January 30, 2020, India saw its first breakout, prompting authorities to take urgent measures to halt the epidemic. Because COVID-19 is so contagious, a national lockdown was imposed on March 25, 2020. Initially, all non-essential activities and businesses, including retail shops, educational institutions, and places of worship, were prohibited. Following that, most of the country's restrictions are gradually being lifted. Several analyses have shown that India's GDP may fall in 2020-21. This is important since a higher GDP serves to raise living standards, reduce poverty, and improve other socioeconomic indicators. COVID-19 may have worsened the declining trend, as shown by a variety of factors. During the present corona virus outbreak, the urgent goal was to reestablish vital commodities delivery networks while relieving migrant worker suffering. While the pandemic's challenges

have been successfully handled, seizing the opportunities it offers is important.

COVID-19 wreaks havoc on agriculture and supply networks. Certain harvesting activities are being hampered by a shortage of migrant labour, particularly in northwest India, where wheat and pulses are harvested. Transportation, for example, disrupts supply networks. Wheat, vegetables, and other goods are usually more expensive to consumers. The closure of hotels, restaurants, confectionery stores, and tea shops as a result of the lockdown is already hurting milk sales. Meanwhile, misinformation, particularly on social media, has harmed poultry farmers by suggesting that birds are sick. COVID-19. The economic implications of the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic have increased the agricultural sector's need to feed and employ thousands of people who may have lost their employment. Agriculture is still promising and cushioning the economy at a time when other sectors of the economy are allegedly strained. The total area sown for all major kharif crops is expected to be higher than the previous year. Because agriculture is one of the few bright spots in this pandemic, it should be prioritised to ensure a rapid economic recovery. The government has assisted needy migrants via various programmes such as the Prime Minister Garib Kalyan Yojana and MNREGA. During COVID, FPOs successfully established supply networks in many regions of the country. From exotic avocados to perishable fruits and vegetables, the concept of farmer organisations transporting food directly to gated communities and societies is popular across metros. The logistics network is operational, but it is lacking in depth and breadth. A knowledge-based institutional boost may result in the creation of livelihoods at many levels. Government lockup limitations on agri-

cultural companies and supply networks must be lifted. The preservation of supply networks is important to food security. To protect farm populations against the coronavirus, farm populations must be screened and social distance must be practised. Farmers must keep their market access. This may be a hybrid of private and public markets. Small poultry and dairy farmers need immediate help with pandemic-related input and market access problems. Farmers and agricultural workers should be included in the government's crisis-relief strategy. As the number of lockdowns has increased, so has the need for grocery delivery and E-commerce. This proclivity should be fostered. The government should work to avoid export and import restrictions.

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