

Pawar calls for strengthening international research institutions

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Recently while speaking at the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations, the union agriculture minister, Sharad Pawar mentioned that the agriculture is a critical sector of Indian economy, providing employment to nearly 60% of our population. "Nearly sixty percent of our cropped area is rainfed with no assured source of irrigation which inhibits the realization of full yield potential. It is challenging to meet the demands of our growing population for food, feed, fibre and fuel with limited natural resources, mainly land and water, and more frequent climatic variability," he had mentioned.

Pawar further said, "We have embarked on a path breaking journey to intensify support to our farmers, 85% of whom have operational holdings below 2 hectares. We have initiated a slew of policy and programmatic measures to increase investment in Agriculture, create opportunities for private sector through marketing reforms and launched a focus on food security in a mission mode approach for increasing production of food."

Agriculture minister said that while efforts are being made to bridge the yield gaps to increase agricultural production, it is a matter of concern that there is stagnation in realizing the higher yield potential in different crops. He explained, "New technological tools especially through genetic engineering need to be employed more aggressively to build tolerance to various abiotic and biotic stresses that inhibit crop yields. Research products made available as a result should be easily accessible and affordable to all. In this regard, we call for strengthening the CGIAR institutions for generating significant technological innovations that could then be easily adapted and up scaled by the National Agriculture Research Systems."

Pawar talked about India's commitment to the strengthening of newly launched Agriculture Market Information System hosted in FAO under the G20 Action Plan on Agriculture. He said, "We are now regularly publishing periodical reports in the form of Agricultural Outlook of select commodities where situation analysis and forecasts are presented in the short and the medium terms. We are grateful to FAO for supporting this initiative with technical assistance on international exposure and capacity building. We believe that informed decisions based on sound analysis help develop better understanding of food situation internationally and locally."