

Budget 2015: "Dedicated funds needed for PPP research in drought tolerance"

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Q: How do you look at the recent speech by PM Modi at the Indian Science Congress where he advised industry to increase its own investments in research?

The recent speech by the Prime Minister, Narendra Modi at the Indian Science Congress is very encouraging for the industry. It will boost the confidence of the scientists and the research institutions especially working in the agri-biotech sector. The investment in research and development is also likely to increase.

Q: What are your expectations from the upcoming union budget?

The upcoming union budget for 2015-16 should provide necessary incentives to the Agricultural sector to grow faster. It should encourage investment in Agriculture by the private sector. Indian agriculture needs technology for productivity improvement and needs investment in storage and processing infrastructure to increase the share of farmers in the consumer price.

The government must focus on prioritizing investment for enabling research and development in the sector. With recurring drought situation in various regions of the country, it would be helpful if the government encourages ongoing research on drought tolerance crops which will not only help in growing crops in less water but will also ensure that farmers are able to sow and harvest crops without depending much on monsoon. Dedicated funds for public private partnership for drought tolerance in water intensive and other crops should be initiated to address farm challenges arising out of drought. There is also need to encourage technology for improving productivity of Oilseeds and pulses where country is dependent on large imports. The union budget should also focus on improving agriculture resources such as developing better irrigation infrastructure.

Q: What are the key points that previous budgets have failed to cover and need to be given attention now?

As we shared above, agriculture on which over 50 percent of our population is dependent, needs greater attention to encourage investments. Previous budgets have been only partly addressing these requirements.

Q: What are the reasons you feel are responsible for lesser allocations to S&T and health in budget?

Any government will have limited resources to allocate and but there would be many priorities to focus on. In its considered wisdom, each Government sets its priorities in allocating the available limited resources. Submission from our sector is that given the size of the population engaged in Agriculture and the cascading effect that the agricultural growth has on the economy, agriculture should be amongst top priorities.