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# THIRD CONCEPT

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- ❖ **Retreating Construct of International Relations**
- ❖ **Media Literacy & Conflict Resolution**
- ❖ **One Nation, One Election**
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**Third Concept** aims at providing a platform where a meaningful exchange of ideas can take place among the people of the Third World. The attempt will be to communicate, debate and disseminate information, ideas and alternatives for the resolution of the common problems facing humankind. We welcome contributions from academics, journalists and even from those who may never have published anything before. The only requirement is a concern for and desire to understand and take the issue of our time. Contributions may be descriptive, analytical or theoretical. They may be in the form of original articles, reactions to previous contributions, or even a comment on a prevailing situation. All contributions, neatly typed in double space, may be addressed to:

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### Farmers' Plight!

It is saddening for us in India as a nation to claim ourselves as the fifth largest economy in the world when our Anna-data (food-provider) is forced to leave his farm and march frequently in protest in the national capital and state capitals to get his genuine grievances redressed without any fruitful outcome. Bulk of the farming community, especially the small and marginal farmers, is faced with multiple problems like indebtedness, inability to get proper price for the produce and an array of related problems. The apathy of any dispensation at the helm towards farm sector woes is deplorable. Declining trends in farm sector growth from 5.2 percentage point growth during the years of UPA-II to 2.5% under the present dispensation is worrisome. Neglect of key relief measure providers like MGNREGA and Food Security Act coupled with the bleak employment prospects in non-farm sectors in the wake of mounting debt problem has not only made farming in itself an unsuccessful proposition for the majority of farmers, but led many farmers commit suicides. Broad estimates show that between 1995 and 2015, a total of 3, 18, 528 farmers committed suicides. It does not bode well with fast growing economy like India.

Lack of an adequate policy framework especially for marginal and small farmers, is regarded as major factor for the miserable plight of farmers hailing from this category. According to some experts, the erstwhile Planning Commission, now replaced with NITI Aayog, had formulated cooperative self-help groups and farmer-producer organizations (FPOs) to assist the small and marginal farmers particularly; nevertheless, the FPOs are still in its embryonic stage in many states. MGNREGA, widely seen as an excellent short-term solution providing work to distressed farmers, has been reportedly eclipsed in the wake of budgetary cuts and machinations of the rich and influential farmers' role in derailing this programme in some states apparently to procure cheap labour for their farms. Such a scenario entails little options for the small and marginal farmers.

A dismal state of affairs pervading small and marginal farmers can be discerned from a recent survey by Lokniti-CSDS wherein nearly half of the farmers surveyed reported that the overall condition of farmers in the country was bad and only 15 per cent farmers said they were doing well. The worrying trend discernible from this survey is the revelation that in the past one year nearly one in every 10 farmers said that their family had to remain without food on a number of occasions. There is growing feeling among the small and marginal farmers that given an option they would quit farming. Another distressing picture emerges from the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), according to which during the last decade the bloated debt of Indian agricultural households has increased almost 400 percent while their undersized monthly income plummeted by 300 percent. The total number of heavily indebted households steeply increased during this period. It is further revealed that most farmers have fallen a prey to the rampant phenomenon of the cycle of poverty.

Additional shocking revelation is unveiled by a survey according to which bulk of the government subsidies are being usurped by big and medium farmers, leaving the small and marginal farmers sidelined. This survey also unfolds the fact that the subsidies are not being given based on needs, but on political considerations. Small and marginal farmers, owning small tracts of land, still continue to work on their land to eke out a living, despite host of problems, to keep their age-old bond with their land alive; nonetheless, the new generation is seemingly getting disenchanted with farming because they find it unsustainable for their new living style. The resultant impact is increasing influx to cities from the rural areas. While emphasizing on the need for arresting this influx, some experts stress on injecting the rural economy with new skill development programmes and expansion of non-farm activity in rural areas. Undoubtedly these suggestions entail investment and framing of adequate policy; nevertheless, these deserve serious consideration and sincere implementation. The recent demonstration by farmers in the capital has raised the demand for holding a special session of the Parliament dedicated to the agrarian crisis. Keeping in the fact that the farming community, especially the small and marginal farmers, are passing through a critical period, holding such session deserves priority.

— BK