Understanding of MSP and Sustainable Farming of Soyabean

by

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It is my great pleasure to present this article before you which in itself is manifestation of my personal experience as farmer in field for last 18 years or so. Basically, I am a biological scientist possessing about 50 years of experience areas related to higher education, training, pollution control and environment protection at national & international levels. However, farming is in my core and passion for being born and brought up in the agricultural family coming from the village Borala of Tal. & Dist. Hingoli. We are engaged in the traditional crop farming and horticulture. This included mainly the floriculture (Rose & Gladioli), vegetables farming, Sugar Cane farming, Chili seed production, and traditional crops such as Soyabean, Maize, Wheat and pulses.

Very survival of farming has become difficult today. Farmers are facing techno-economic obstacles and challenges in crop production. Global climate change has brought in uncertain pattern of rain fall. Agricultural produce market is fluctuating due to market forces and import/export policies. It has become difficult to even meet the "break-even point", as they say in commercial terminology. Farmer's "never say die" attitude is sustaining ecosystem of agro-economics. We have seen incredible contributions of farmers during the last pandemic when agricultural food production continued unabated that was feeding the society at large.

The livelihood of majority of the population living in the rural and sub-rural areas is essentially sustained on the agriculture. It is crucial that the socio-economics of our farmers must be made robust and environmentally sustainable. This ecosystem in rural areas is adversely affected due to global climate changes and environmental degradation. The pressure of increased food and nutrition requirements of the growing population has enhanced rapid use of technologies and chemical fertilizers and pesticides. This has definitely caused higher agricultural production but it is subjected to the law of diminishing returns. There must be a natural balance. Role of

organic manure is very important. For this purpose, growth of bovine population is necessary.

The agricultural ecosystem and economy must have to function on all-inclusive socio-economic governance and support of welfare policy and programmes. Unfortunately, the existing agricultural practices of our farmers in rural and sub-rural areas are not sustainable even to support the minimum basic needs of livelihood. This is important root-cause of increased un-employment and poverty in the rural and sub-rural areas. Situation of the farm labours (land-less) is not much different.

What we urgently need is to revamp the entire agricultural farming and production practices. It must be based on the naturally sustainable practices keeping in view of the regional availability of natural resources, geo-political and economic viabilities. There seems to be no other option for survival of agriculture in medium and long terms as well.

(1) Illustrative data based on our own experience of Soyabean production in a farmland of about 3 Acres at Zalta village Tal. & Dist. (Ch. Sambhaji Nagar Aurangabad) with profitability as of last three years is presented in the Table 1 given below. It can be seen that the yield of Soybean has remained on the higher side i.e. about >10 Quintals per acre, however the profitability has reduced in last three years. The market price of Soybean purchase has reduced from Rs. 5800 per Quintal in 2022 to Rs, 4000 in the year 2023. This further reduced to 3736 in the year 2024. The MSP (Minimum Support Price) announced by the Government has been inadequate. "MSP Purchase Centres for Soyabean within were not located within the reasonable distance and difficulties thereof well documented elsewhere.

TABLE 1.

Particulars	**Year 2022**	**Year 2023**	**Year 2024**
Yield in Quintal for 3 Acres	31.98	32.20	32.14
Income	Rs. 1,85,484	Rs.1,40,000	Rs. 1,20,061
Expenditure	Rs. 1,33,350	Rs. 98,760	Rs. 1,01,366
Profit	Rs. 52,134	Rs. 42,200	Rs. 18,695
Sale Price per Quintal	Rs. 5800	Rs. 4348	Rs. 3736
Notified MSP	(4300)	(4600)	(4890)

(2) In view of the above and based on experience it is opined that in case of Soyabean farming, it is definitely possible to achieve revenue income by farmers as per recommendations of Dr. Swaminathan Commission's recommendation (that means income from sale would be double that of expenditure) provided there is proper and realistic Minimum Support Price mechanism linked to the crop yield per acre and expenditure incurred therefor. Suggested MSP requirements for the sustainable farming of Soybean are presented in Table 2 as given below:

Table 2

Soyabean Yield Quintals per acre	**Suggested MSP for procurement**
Less than 6 Q/acre	Rs. 11000
6 to 8 Q/acre	Rs. 9000
More than 8 Q/acre	Rs. 7000
Note: Actual assessment can be done online as per "Pik Pahani Ahwal" available with the Government.	

Once this is done, farmers can live with a sustainable quality of life with reduced debt burden. The policy reformation and systematic efforts, over a period of fixed time, are required at village level to improve Soyabean productivity and supportive MSP as suggested above.

(3) In order to consolidate the gains, following measure are suggested at Gram Panchayat level:

- Proper levelling of field land and bunding is required for soil conservation.
- Annual soil testing is needed at farm land in the month of April-May under each in each 7_12. Thereafter, augmentation of soil condition can be done by adding manure and fertilizers based on the test report. Scheme of soil health card for each Farmer's 7_12 land revenue record needs effective implementation.
- Deep ploughing should be done regularly with heavy duty tractor followed by tilling using Rotavator.
- Timing of seed sowing should be followed as recommended.
- First weedicide spray on 21st day after sowing is good for prevention and control of weeds.

- Second spray of mixture of pesticide, fungicide and nutrition after about 40 days (after sowing) or just in the beginning of budding/flowering helps crop improvement.
- Proper maintenance of agricultural field all throughout the season is critical in terms of manual tilling and removal of unwanted weeds as per requirement.
- Restriction of 14 Quintals per Hectare for procurement of Soybean needs to be removed forthwith.
- Entire produce of the Soybean should be procured under the MSP so as to avoid restrictive incidences of grading, moisture etc.

It is believed that above efforts taken in right earnest and adequate bliss of natural monsoon, the productivity of Soybean can be achieved at 10 Quintals per acre or more.

(4) In conclusion:

- Effective policies and program implementation by the Agriculture Department must focus on soil conservation, bunding and increased soil fertility, especially the organic carbon content, by considering each 7-12 land revenue record as it's functional unit in each village.
- Import/Export policy MUST be supportive to Soyabean farmers.
- Planning and stipulation of crop production for each 7_12.
- Procurement of crop yield as per fair and reasonable MSP that is linked to per acre productivity. This will ensure gap funding of profit and loss.
- Appropriate mechanism for reasonable crop insurance.
- Encourage bovine population for production of milk and milk products. This will augment farmer's income and also provide organic farm yard manure.
- Encourage and support agriculture and food processing industries in the region.
- Improved transportation and road network important.
- Uninterrupted power supply of 3-Phase for 8 hours(minimum) during the day.
- Water conservation measures such nalla bunding, percolation tanks, small or medium size dams for micro-irrigation by assessment of requirements at village levels.
- Time targeted tree plantation in monsoon at village level.

- Strengthening of human resources and infrastructure strengthening at primary and secondary schools in rural areas need urgently. This should also include accommodation for school teachers and student hostels at village level.
- Restructuring of the functional organisational set up for agricultural governance. Encourage and promote effective involvement of the Agricultural Universities in the regional agricultural planning, coordination, program implementation/governance.

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