

### Every 30 minutes, a farmer commits suicide in India – Aren't we complicit in allowing this to continue?

It's a difficult reality to face, but it is the truth. Today, Indian farmers - be it landowners, sharecroppers/tenants, women, dalit, adivasi cultivators or landless agricultural labourers - are rendered bankrupt. Official data shows that the debt burden of farmers is increasing. Farming has become a loss-making proposition. As a result, farmers who provide for the entire nation are heavily indebted. They're left to fend for themselves and struggling for a dignified life in an indifferent society, with an uncaring government. They've been robbed not just of their financial dues but also of their dignity.

Farmers have reached this situation because of governments' failure and apathy to protect and support them. Not only are they at the mercy of banks and loan sharks, but also the vagaries of weather and the market. After taking numerous risks in agricultural production, farmers do not receive a fair price for their crops – often, they do not even recover the costs invested on producing a crop. Even the Minimum Support Price (MSP) that the government announces is below the officially-estimated cost of cultivation! How is the farm family supposed to run, if there is no profit margin over and above the cost of cultivating a crop? Don't farm families have other expenses to survive with dignity beyond costs related to agriculture?

Government policies are blind to farmers' plight and often, outright against their interests. Complicit in this tragedy is our silence. We, the people of this country, are letting this situation to continue. Despite successful state level farmer agitations in the recent months where in some instances, farmers were killed in police firings on agitators, the Central Government has failed to do anything concrete to safeguard farmers. It is clear that this government only pays attention when citizens assert themselves. For this reason, more than 170 farmer organisations have united to form the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC). The following are the primary demands of the AIKSCC:

- 1) **Fair and remunerative returns** on farmers' hard work, i.e. at least 50% above the total cost of production. This was an election time promise of the BJP, and was also recommended by the National Farmers' Commission. AIKSCC demands this for all crops and other produce like milk as well as minor forest produce, and such a price made into a statutorily-guaranteed price for all farmers so that it is not just a price announced, but a price realized by all farmers.
- 2) **Freedom from Debt** through a permanent institutional mechanism that not only includes an immediate loan waiver that should apply to institutional as well as non-institutional loans of all farmers, but also provides for continuous support to farmers burdened by debt. Government should also take up measures to ensure that farmers don't slip back into debt through effective crop insurance, disaster compensation and promotion of low or no-cost farming.

After organizing hugely successful Kisan Mukti Yatras in different regions of the country AIKSCC is organising a Kisan Mukti Sansad on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017 in Delhi to secure these two demands for all farmers, as immediate requirements to tackle the acute agrarian crisis in India. We invite you to join this movement. The time has come to join our farmer brothers and sisters across the country in solidarity with their agitation. The situation is dire but together we can change it. Staying silent should no longer be an option. This is something that the nation owes to our *anna daatas*. You can contact us and contribute your time and money to the movement. You can also print and distribute this leaflet amongst as many people as possible.

**Join the Kisan Mukti Sansad in Delhi on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2017.**

All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC)

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