

Vote CPI(M)—Strengthen Left

To Protect and Defend Agriculture, Farmers and Workers

India cannot progress by leaving its farmers and agricultural labourers behind. In the last twenty years, the policies of Congress-led UPA and BJP-led NDA have pushed peasant agriculture into a deep crisis.

The Congress-led UPA and BJP-led NDA Policy in Agriculture Stands For:

- Corporatisation of Agriculture, Unregulated Profiteering for Agribusinesses
- Reversal of Land Reforms and Dilution of Land Ceiling Laws
- Indiscriminate Land Acquisition and Real Estate Speculation
- Withdrawal of Agricultural Subsidies and Public Investment in Agriculture
- Withdrawal of Government from Procurement, Storage and Marketing
- Free Hand for Market Forces leading to Unremunerative Prices
- Privatisation of Extension Services and Agricultural Research
- Decontrol of Agricultural Inputs leading to Exorbitant Prices
- Financial Liberalisation and Cut in Rural Credit
- Free Trade and Trade Liberalisation leading to Dumping from Abroad
- Speculative Trading and Futures Trade leading to Price Rise
- FDI in Retail and in Agriculture denying Livelihoods to Millions

Under the Congress-led UPA and its predecessor BJP-led NDA the subsidies to agriculture have been drastically cut and our Farmers have to compete with Farmers in Europe, USA and other parts of the World who are getting huge subsidies as below.

Comparison of Agricultural Subsidies in India With Developed Countries			
Sl.No	Country	Subsidy/Farmer in US Dollars (1999)	Subsidy/Farmer in Rupees (1999)
1	Canada	\$9000	Rs.5,40,000
2	European Union	\$17000	Rs.10,20,000
3	Japan	\$26000	Rs.15,60,000
4	USA	\$21000	Rs.12,60,000
5	OECD	\$11000	Rs.6,60,000
6	India	\$66	Rs.3960

These policies have pushed millions of small and marginal farmers into acute distress and indebtedness, forcing many to commit suicide. Lies and myths propagated by the ruling classes need to be countered with the untold truths and reality on the ground.

Livelihood and Well-Being of Peasantry

The Government claims farmers have benefitted through its policies.

The Untold Truths:

- Between 1996 and 2012, rural India witnessed the most appalling phenomenon of 284,694 farmer's suicides. Or, one suicide every half an hour. Farmer's suicides have increased over time. On an average, 15,369 farmers committed suicide between 1995 and 2003. However, between 2004 and 2012, the average annual number of farmer's suicides increased to 16,264. In the Congress-NCP ruled Maharashtra, over 54,000 farmers committed suicide since 1995. Policies of Congress and BJP are directly responsible for this human tragedy.
- The official numbers of farmer's suicides do not include thousands of suicides by tenant farmers/share-croppers, Adivasis and Dalits without pattas, women farmers, forest land cultivators and agricultural labourers; the Government does not recognise these as farmer's suicides. Further, many States like Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Punjab and West Bengal under the TMC have significantly under-reported farmer's suicides to hide their policy failures. BJP-ruled Chhattisgarh brazenly put the number of farmer's suicides as zero in 2011; between 2006 and 2010, the same Government had reported over 7,500 suicides.
- West Bengal reported about 100 farmer's suicides after the TMC came to power. Kerala, which had effectively ended farmer's suicides under the LDF Government, has also seen over 100 farmer's suicides under the Congress-led UDF Government.

Agricultural Credit and Indebtedness

The Government claims it has ensured massive increase in credit to farmers.

The Untold Truths:

- The major beneficiaries of the growth of agricultural credit in the 2000s were corporate and agri-business groups and not farmers. In India the large majority of farmers are small farmers. The maximum loans they take is under two lakhs rupees. In 2011, loans of less than Rs 2 lakhs in size constituted only 48 per cent of all direct agricultural credit. Most of the other loans were large loans over one crore rupees. These were given out to large corporate and agri-business groups. This is further proved by the fact that a large part of these loans was given through banks in urban and metropolitan areas. Not farmers but corporates gained through the credit policies of the UPA Government.
- The Government boasted of its Debt Waiver scheme but left out the large number of farmers who were indebted to money lenders. Moreover massive corruption was exposed in its scheme in which more than 22 per cent of the loans were shown to be dubious by the CAG report.

In sharp contrast, the Debt Relief Commission set up under the LDF Government in Kerala waived the debts of thousands of peasants in the most transparent and inclusive manner. The proactive policies of the LDF Government in Kerala almost ended farmer's suicides, primarily because its confidence building measures instilled hope amidst the peasantry.

- The National Crop Insurance Programme has privatized crop insurance by bringing in corporate players like ICICI-Lombard, HDFC-Ergo, Tata-Allianz, L&T, Royal Sundaram and Reliance. These companies put impossible conditions on farmers to prove their claims depriving them of their rights.

Landlessness, Land Acquisition and Rural Poor

The Government claims it has protected farmers from land sharks through its new land acquisition act which gives fair compensation

The Untold Truths:

- The core of the policy of the UPA Government has been a reversal of land reforms through a dilution of land-ceiling laws. Both Congress and BJP Governments have diluted land ceiling laws in States. The BJP Government in Karnataka went to the extent of seeking an amendment in Land Reforms Act to treat agribusinesses as equivalent to farmers. The Congress-led UDF Government in Kerala also tried to legally allow easy take-over of paddy land and wetland.
- On the one hand, agrarian distress is forcing the peasantry to sell assets including land and livestock. On the other hand, the advent of MNCs into the countryside is dispossessing the peasantry of land and dignity.
- Landlessness in India has alarmingly risen between 1987-88 and 2011-12. The share of landless households in the countryside (possessing less than 0.01 hectare of land) increased from 35 percent to 49 percent during this period. At the same time, the share of land owned by the top ten percent increased from about 48 per cent to 50 percent.
- People are being dispossessed of their land without proper resettlement or rehabilitation. The Land Acquisition Legislation is named deceptively as 'The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013'. It is neither transparent nor does it provide fair compensation for farmers and livelihood losers. It exempts 16 areas where separate Acts are in operation; these include SEZ Act, 2005, National Highways Act (1956), Mines Act (1885) and others, which cause maximum displacement and accounts for over 90 percent of displacement. The Act does not address important issues of land use, prior-informed consent and protection of food security. It promotes speedy take-over of agricultural land for corporate profiteering and real estate speculation.

The Left front Government of West Bengal still holds the best record for land distribution in the entire country. In fact after the TMC Government

took over many peasants are being dispossessed of their land. The West Bengal Left front Government had also ensured the registration of tenants, a first in the entire country. Now under TMC tenants are being forcibly removed. It was the LDF Government in Kerala which enacted a legislation to prevent conversion of paddy land and wetland to prevent indiscriminate land use change. It is only the Left and the CPI(M) which is committed to land reform and distribution.

Costs of Production, Agricultural Prices and Procurement

Government claims it has ensured Fair and Remunerative Prices for Farmers' Produce

The Untold Truths:

- The policies of NDA and UPA have led to increased input costs across the board. Fertiliser prices have risen by more than 200 percent over the last 4 years. Increasing prices of diesel and electricity has made irrigation extremely expensive. Shamefully the Government uses the fertiliser subsidy to help big companies who import fertilisers rather than increase domestic production of fertiliser and ensure cheap fertilisers to farmers.
- As a result of these policies, leave alone getting remunerative prices, the farmers are not even able to realise the costs of cultivation rendering agriculture unviable. The MSP announced does not even meet the paid-out costs of production for most crops. It does not take into account the exorbitant increase in the costs of production. The Swaminathan Commission had recommended that MSP should meet the full costs of production and at least give an additional 50 per cent over that to Farmers. But this has been ignored.
- There is no procurement in some States despite the announcement of the MSP. Thus, in some States in 2012-13, paddy farmers received MSPs as low as Rs 650/Qtl instead of Rs 1250/Qtl. In the sugar sector, decontrol of sugar industry has led to profiteering by sugar companies. Thousands of crore are due as arrears to farmers leading to acute distress for them.
- There have been no serious attempts to reduce costs of cultivation by appropriate technologies and extension services. On the other hand, increasing the hold of predatory agribusinesses like Monsanto, DuPont, Cargill, Tata Chemicals, Birla, Reliance, UB and other groups have been the hallmark of the UPA and NDA Governments.

Agricultural Growth and Public Expenditure

The Government Claims that Public investment in agriculture has risen.

The Untold Truths:

- The utter neglect of agriculture is shown by the fact that growth in agriculture is down to a miserable 1.8 per cent between 2011-12 and 2012-13. While a vast population continues to be dependent on

agriculture and allied activities, this share has come down to just about 14 percent in 2011-12.

- Public investment in agriculture in real terms has seen a steady decline. This has had adverse consequences for agricultural productivity and output. There was a steep decline in rural development expenditure as compared to GDP. Under the UPA's second term, expenditure of MORD decreased from 1.1 percent of GDP in 2009-10 to 0.7 percent of GDP in 2012-13.
- As a result, peasant incomes are falling. Stagnant yields, soil degradation, lack of irrigation facilities, costly inputs, unremunerative prices and lack of assured procurement have all adversely affected peasant incomes.

Rural Development and MGNREGA:

- The enactment of the MGNREGA to guarantee 100 days work to one member of every rural family was a significant step. It was the CPI (M) and the Left parties, which through their struggles outside and within parliament, ensured that the extremely weak and inadequate proposals by the Government were suitably amended. But the Government has sabotaged this law through low allocations and red tapism. Under pressure from rich agribusinesses and big landlords who want a constant supply of cheap labour, Governments like those of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana, whether of the Congress, BJP or its allies, have sabotaged the Act in their States.

The Government claims the MNREGS has transformed rural livelihoods and huge allocations are being made for its implementation and for Rural Infrastructure Development.

The Untold Truths:

- Under UPA-II, expenditure on NREGS decreased from 0.6 percent of GDP in 2009-10 to 0.4 percent of GDP in 2012-13. Shamefully more than one third of the reduced amount remained unspent.
- Instead of 100 days of work, the per rural household employment declined from 54 days in 2009-10 to 43 days in 2011-12 and merely 36 days in 2012-13. In West Bengal, per rural household employment generation under the TMC Government was 14 to 35 days, which was far below the national average.
- While work seekers were denied work, payment of unemployment allowances are not adhered to almost all States/UTs. Astonishingly, only a paltry 4078 workers were paid unemployment allowances in 8

States between 2006 and 2009. The provision for payment of wages within 15 days of date of work has also been widely violated. Late payment of wages led to cases of suicides of workers in Jharkhand and Maharashtra.

- Left Front-ruled Tripura has the best record in the utilisation of funds under the MGNREGS as well as in providing employment opportunities. Tripura provided over 87 days of employment being provided and for Tribal people up to 92 days of employment.
- Bharat Nirman, a programme meant for augmenting key infrastructure sectors across the rural India, has not made any significant progress. There was a major irrigation scam to the tune of Rs 70,000 crore in Congress-NCP ruled Maharashtra, where leaders of Congress, BJP and NCP swindled public money. Notably, the area under irrigation in Maharashtra rose by just 0.1 percent in the past decade — the lowest growth rate in the country. There were similar irregularities in Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Trade Liberalisation and Corporatisation of Agriculture

The Government claims that trade liberalisation, Free Trade Agreements, Foreign Direct Investment and WTO Ministerial Agreement will benefit Indian farmers.

The Untold Truths:

- The trade policies of UPA and NDA have been threats to the sovereign rights of our country and also against the federal principles. They are being imposed clandestinely violating the established Parliamentary norms.
- In the name of a strategic cooperation in agriculture with USA, the Knowledge Initiative was initiated. The American monopolies in seed, food and retail-trade, namely Monsanto, Archer-Daniels-Midland and Wal-Mart, were given representation on the KIA Board in addition to ITC, FICCI and CII. This Board has dictated the direction of agricultural policy and research in the country ever since. The American agribusinesses have used the KIA to infiltrate all Indian centres for agricultural research, extension and policy making structures.
- Under the WTO Ministerial Decision, the Congress-led UPA has compromised the interests of the peasantry and the poor. The crop basket under purview of MSPs cannot be increased. Pulses, cooking oil and crops other than those described as “traditional staples” by the WTO cannot be included in the food security programme. Even the quantity of food grains procured cannot be increased beyond the procurement as of date, which could have serious implications for the implementation of the Food Security Act. Entitlements under food security programmes, as also the MSP of different crops, will have to be frozen.

- The WTO has failed to deal with issues like the export subsidies of rich nations and US cotton subsidies. The USA and the European Union are going ahead with their domestic subsidies as well as export subsidies. USA has more than doubled its subsidy from US \$ 61 Billion to US \$ 130 Billion between 1995 and 2010 while the EU subsidies hover around € 90 to 79 Billion between 2006 and 2009.
- States ruled by the Congress as well as the BJP and their allies have privatised extension. The farm gates in Rajasthan have already been opened up to Monsanto, DuPont, Bayer, PEPSICO, Cargill, SAB Miller, Lupin and some Indian companies. In Rajasthan and Gujarat, Monsanto has two major maize projects called 'Project Golden Rays' and 'Project Sunshine' respectively, where the States buy hybrids from the company and distributes them to farmers, the expenditure incurred being financed by the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana.
- The UPA Government has resorted to a myriad of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs). There are 56 other FTAs with various countries and regional groups in the pipeline The UPA Government has signed the Indo-ASEAN FTA and gone ahead with secret negotiations with the European Union and is all set to conclude the India-EU Free Trade Agreement. All these agreements affect the domestic market and the Indian farmer.
- 100 percent FDI in the development of seeds, planting materials and services related to agro- and allied sectors has been allowed. There will be no control over seed prices or royalty and seed monopolies will be further strengthened. In the plantation sector also, 100 percent FDI has been allowed. This could lead to future land use changes to real estate speculative activities.
- The latest attack on Indian agriculture has come in the form of a seemingly lucrative proposal of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) for Integrated Agriculture Development (PPP-IAD) Project under the World Economic Forum's (WEF) "New Agriculture Initiative". Put together by the World Economic Forum and McKinsey, this initiative is led by 26 global partner companies that span the food value chain and beyond. The companies include Archer Daniels Midland, BASF, Bayer, Coca-Cola, DuPont, Heineken, Monsanto, Nestlé, PepsiCo, SABMiller, Syngenta and Wal-Mart.
- On the eve of the announcement of Lok Sabha elections, the Ministry of Environment and Forests has allowed field trials of GM Crops at the behest of Monsanto and other agribusinesses without stringent bio-safety regulations and addressing concerns of bio-diversity, seed costs and fixing liability for damages. The undue haste and clandestine manner of its announcement is cause for suspect.

Both BJP and Congress are committed to these anti-farmer policies.

The CPI(M) among other issues stands for land reforms and for distribution of land to the landless. It is strongly opposed to land grab by corporates giving a pittance as compensation.

The CPI(M) stands for implementation of the Swaminathan Commission recommendations for an MSP which guarantees profit margins of at least 50 per cent over and above the costs of cultivation for farmers. It stands for a strong procurement policy. A Price Stabilization Fund for crops affected by volatile world market prices and dumping must be ensured.

The CPI(M) is opposed to Free Trade Agreements which compromise the interests of our farmers.

The CPI(M) stands for a massive increase in funds for agricultural development, rural infrastructure with the aim of developing agriculture, enhancing the incomes of farmers and to increase the purchasing power of the rural poor.

The CPI(M) proposes Social security measures and employment opportunities for the agricultural workers of at least 200 days in a year under the MNREGS and higher wages of at least Rs.300/day must be ensured.

To Reverse Present Anti-Farmer Policies

Vote CPI(M) – Strengthen the Left

To Defend Indian Agriculture, Farmers and Workers