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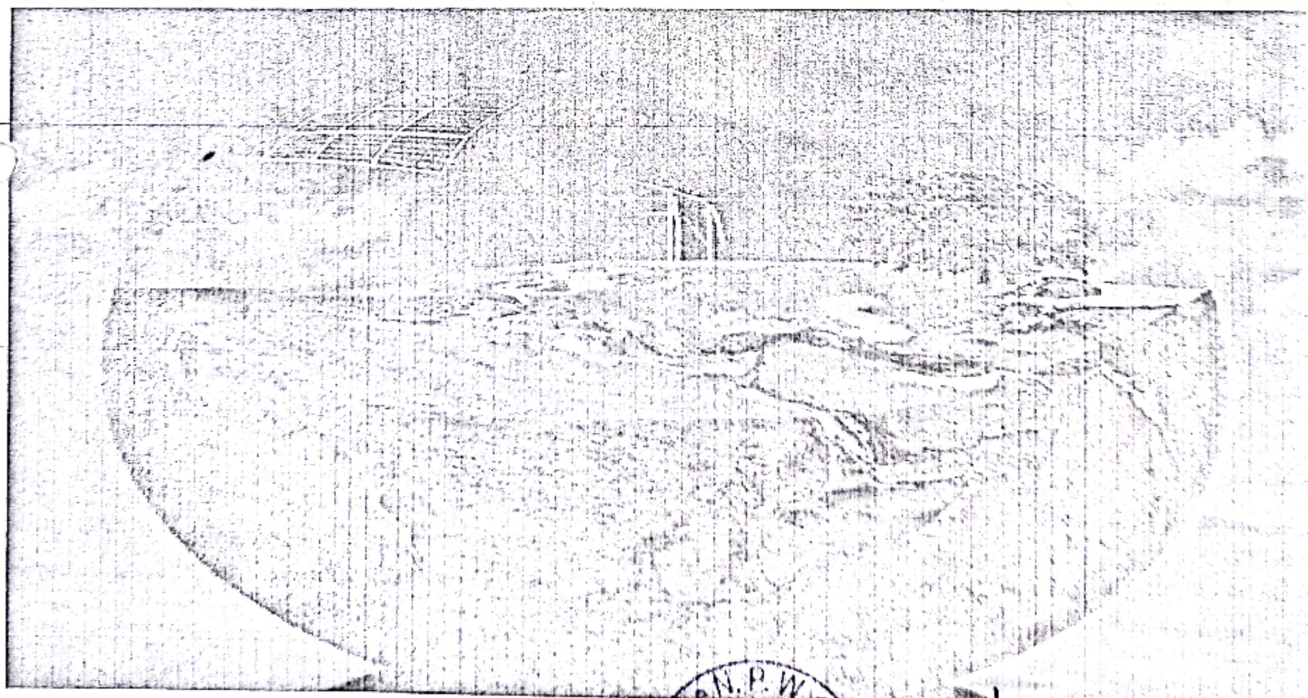
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*Resource Management Challenges, Opportunities
and Sustainability*

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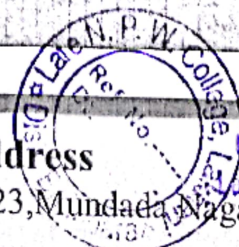
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Effect of COVID-19 on Indian Agriculture

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Abstract :-

The ongoing health crisis around COVID19 has affected all walks of life. Protecting lives of people suffering from the disease as well as frontline health responders have been the priority of nations. Governments have swung into actions since the Corona virus attack created an unprecedented situation. India declared a three-week nation-wide lockdown till mid-April in the initial phase, which has subsequently been extended till May 3 for achieving satisfactory containment of the virus spread. During these challenging times, how does Indian Agriculture respond to the crisis and how do government measures affect 140 million farm households across the country and thereafter impact the economy of a very important country in the developing world? We assess the immediate challenges that COVID19 has posed to the farm sector and suggest mitigation measures to ensure a sustainable food system in the post-crisis period. Immediately after the nation-wide lockdown was announced, the Indian Finance Minister declared an INR 1.7 trillion package, mostly to protect the vulnerable sections (including farmers) from any adverse impacts of the Corona pandemic. The announcement, among a slew of benefits, contained advance release of INR 2000 to bank accounts of farmers as income support under PM-KISAN scheme. The Government also raised the wage rate for workers engaged under the NREGS, world's largest wage guarantee scheme. Under the special scheme to take care of the vulnerable population, *Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana* (Prime Minister's scheme for welfare of the poor), has been announced. Additional grain allotments to registered beneficiaries were also announced for the next three months. Cash and food assistance to persons engaged in the informal sector, mostly migrant laborers, have also been announced for which a separate PM-CARES (Prime Minister Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations) fund has been created.

Keywords:- COVID 19 Pandemic, Economic Impact, Indian Agriculture

Intruduction:-

The world is sliding rapidly towards a recession. The Covid-19 pandemic will shut down large parts of the world economy for at least a few months more. IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva stated on March 23, 2020 that the outlook for global growth in 2020 was "negative." Recovery, if any, is expected only in 2021. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the rise in unemployment because of Covid-19 could be up to 25 million worldwide. When the crisis began, it was thought that the slowdown would be restricted to China. Under such an assumption, the OECD countries expected that their growth rate for 2020 would be down by only about 0.5 percentage points. Considering the possibility of the slowdown spreading out of China also, it was estimated that the growth rate of OECD countries would fall from 2.9 per cent in 2019 to 1.5 per cent in 2020. All those scenarios are now out of date. OECD countries can expect negative growth rates in 2020.

Study Objectives:-

The present study has the following objective, i) To study the Discussion of the Effect of Covid-19 on Indian Agriculture ii) To understand in an Economic Impact on Agriculture.

Data Base & Methodology:-

The data has been furnished from the related articles, research paper. Some data has furnished the websites & as well as time magazine for the present research paper the secondary source have been used. The articles regarding to it have been read thoroughly. The descriptive and analytical research method has been used for this research paper

Economic Impact on Agriculture: India

Let us first start with the question of prices. It is important to note that even before the Covid-19 pandemic began, Indian economy was facing a rise in food prices. Data show that food inflation had begun to rise from the middle of 2019, reaching, by January 2020, levels previously attained in 2013-14 (Figure 8). Data on the wholesale price indices (WPI) for selected crop groups, available only till February 2020, show that while WPI for food articles has been rising from August 2019 onwards, the rise was driven by a rise in the prices of vegetables; within vegetables, the price of onions, followed by potato and tomato, drove the WPI up (Figure 9). While onion prices have come down, vegetable prices remained high even in February 2020.



Figure 8 Food inflation rates in India, January 2012 to February 2020 (Source: Tradingeconomics)

Figure 9 Percentage change in the WPI of important agricultural commodities, y-o-y (Source: MOSPI)
 According to the RBI's 7-th bimonthly monetary policy statement, dated March 27, 2020: "as regards inflation, the prints for January and February 2020 indicate that actual outcomes for the quarter are running 30 bps above projections, reflecting the onion price shock". However, the RBI's assessment is that food inflation pressures will fall, since aggregate demand is likely to weaken because of the Covid-19 crisis. Consumer price indices (CPI) for food also indicate a similar trend of a rise after August 2019, with some weakening in January and February 2020 (Figure 10). The point is that if inflation rises in March 2020 and later, it will be on top of an already rising price curve.

As the lockdown proceeds, these prices can be expected to rise, just as in the Western economies, the rise driven by panic buying and supply bottlenecks. Despite such price rises,

Response of the Government of India

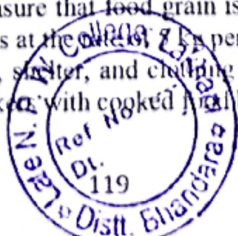
The response of the Indian government in agriculture has involved three policy measures.

1. It has announced that most agricultural activities will be in the essential list. It has exempted farm workers in the fields, farming operations by farmers, agencies engaged in procurement of agriculture products including MSPs, mandis notified by the State Governments, inter- and intra-state movement of harvesting and sowing related machines and manufacturing, packaging units of fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds among others.
2. It has announced that the first instalment of the PM-Kisan payment to farmers, i. e., Rs 2000, will be paid up front to farmers. It has also announced that the wages under MGNREGS will be raised from Rs 182 to Rs 202 per day.
3. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced a moratorium on agricultural term loans (including crop loans) for a period of three months.

If we consider the responses of governments across the world, these interventions appear insignificant. In fact, the up front payment to farmers from the PM-Kisan scheme is not even worth calling a package, as this money was anyway going to be paid to the farmers between April and June.

The US Congress has passed a Covid-19 stimulus package of \$2 trillion, of which \$9.5 billion is earmarked for the agricultural disaster fund. In addition, there is a \$14 billion funding for the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) that can be used by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to assist producers. These packages will assist livestock and dairy producers, growers of fruits, vegetables and nuts, and small businesses related to agriculture

1. The payment to farmers through PM-Kisan should be raised to at least Rs 12,000 per year, and 50 per cent of this amount (Rs 6,000) should be paid immediately. Tenant farmers should be included as beneficiaries of the scheme.
2. There should be an immediate expansion of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) to ensure compensation payments to farmers affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. Holders of all MGNREGS job cards should be provided an unemployment allowance or assistance, worth at least half the payments to be received by them, assuming 100 days work/year.
4. The Government should take steps to ensure that food grain is distributed to all households outside the priority list also for a period of three months at the current rate of 2 kg per capita per month.
5. There should be efforts to arrange food, shelter, and clothing to all migrant workers in villages. Steps should be explored to provide migrant workers with cooked food by the government agencies.



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6. The Government should consider waiving the interest costs of all outstanding crop loans and ensure a fresh flow of credit to small and marginal farmers for the kharif season of 2020.

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