

# Excerpts from Stimulus is less than what it appears to be, govt must do more for farmers

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The Rs 1.70 lakh crore stimulus is not what it appears to be, its possibly half the size of the announced quantum....The average annual days of employment provided per household under the MGNREGA is about 45 and not 100 as claimed. Like Punjab which gives Rs.240 per day wages under MGNREGA, more than half the states were already committed to give more than the hiked wages of Rs.202. Further, due to the lockdown, work under the scheme has come to a standstill everywhere, thus the Rs 20-increase in MNREGA wages is only an eyewash. Instead [should have assured] availability of 100 day of work on demand under MNREGA and that farmers will receive the promised MSP ,, Ideally, the govt should have credited 30 days of advance wages to all those who have availed of the MGNREGA last year, to be adjusted over work done in the coming six months.

Unprecedented circumstances require bold and swift decisions. Announcement under PM Kisan is only about releasing outstanding dues. The government should double the PM Kisan payments to Rs.12,000 annually for this year. Distribution of grains to 80 crore people is commendable but it will remain a mystery why it wasn't announced & distributed in February when the crisis was on the horizon, FCI storages were overflowing and there was no space to store the new crop due in April. Transferring three monthly instalments of Rs.500 each to 20 crore women in Jan Dhan accounts is good targeting of resources but amounts to less than two days of minimum wages per month. Though, providing Rs.2,000 to 3 crore senior citizens and socially marginalized sections is a compassionate step.

The RBI has to create money and directly provide people with purchasing power and should be announcing to waive off interest of farm loans and rescheduling of loan payments. Now the hope is that the government will quickly transfer money to the beneficiaries. Issues of red tape have to be overcome for it is not time to fear errors of inclusion, but it's time to seriously worry about errors of exclusion. Farmers have wholeheartedly voted for the PM twice; it is the time he reciprocated the feelings and returned the favour. Every season has an end for a harvest to begin.

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