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Problems of Agricultural Sector in Afghanistan!

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Afghanistan is an agricultural country as majority of people are farmers and earn their livelihood by farming. The trend started changing with the restoration of democracy in 2001 but still the majority of population depends on agricultural products to feed their families.

A country is termed to be agricultural because of the availability of a number of possibilities. Among these are the availability of suitable climate for crops and trees, availability of vast areas of land for cultivation, abundant supply of water, and some others. Many countries like Japan can face a number of difficulties if it solely relies on its agriculture because the land for

cultivation is very limited or the hot desert countries of Asia where shortage of water makes the cultivation very difficult or costly, while the freezing weather of some of the European countries make cultivation impossible.

However, it is lucky that Afghanistan has almost all the natural possibilities that can qualify it as an agricultural country. It has a variety of climate in different corners of the country needed for the cultivation of different kind of crops and fruits. Similarly, a large number of rivers provide a cheap and convenient source of water for irrigation. Availability of large pieces of fertile land and numerous other factors make it a country suitable for the agricultural activities.

Anyhow, it doesn't mean that a country good in agriculture should ignore industry and technological advancement. As stated earlier, there are a number of countries that are not only performing good in industrial sector but are working hard to improve their agricultural sector because agricultural products have become a good source of income for the farmers. However, these countries have adopted latest techniques and machinery which has made the work of farmer easy and also increased the production.

It is also unfortunate that the system of monarchy and then unrest of three decades never let the country to improve in any direction, either agriculture or the industry. We see that there are a number of agricultural countries in the world that improved their crops, increased their production, established more efficient network of water management and irrigation, worked on storage of crops, improved the system of transportation from farm to the market and took numerous other steps that brought general prosperity in the country and especially to the farmers.

Some industries were established before the civil war but these industries were run by government and thus the open competition of a free economy never came into existence. On the other hand, there never came an established government that could have made long-term plans for the construction of dams, improvement of water management, improvement of transportation, introduction and implementation of advanced techniques of harvesting, and many more because of which productivity of our agricultural sector remained the same and already present system of irrigation faced break down.

At present, although being an agricultural country, majority of our food requirements are met by the exports from our neighboring countries of Pakistan, Iran, Central Asian states and numerous other countries of the world. This is very unfortunate that when our farmers are struggling hard to make the ends meet, we are exporting the food products of millions of dollars in a month. Had this money been spent inside the country, it could have not only boosted up the agriculture but every sector of our economy.

However, the agricultural sector of our country is facing a number of problems that need to be solved that would in return solve numerous other problems of our countrymen. No doubt, we witnessed a number of plans being undertaken for the improvement of agricultural sector in the last ten years of democratic establishment, however, majority of these were meant for short-term gains and thus they have failed to change the scenario of this important sector.

Agricultural sector of Afghanistan is facing a number of problems that need to be addressed properly and long term and nicely coordinated plans are needed for the resolution of these problems permanently. First is the absence of a proper system of irrigation. Almost 90% of our farmers depend on the water of river and canals but the system of canals has not been upgraded from many decades and a lot of water is wasted due to soil absorption and evaporation. For this, government and the concerned ministry need to make proper plans on how to improve the present system of irrigation and how new dams and water reservoirs can be established to provide a well-organized system of irrigation to the country. Similarly, due to the lack of water reservoirs, a lot of water flows into the neighboring countries from our rivers or is wasted in the deserts. This cheap water can be stored and properly distributed to our farmers.

Second biggest problem is the non-availability of storage facilities which results in the loss to the farmer. During the season, the supply of an agricultural product becomes abundant which results in the sharp decline of its prices and thus farmers struggle to recover their expenses. On the other hand, when the season of a product ends, shortage of product results in the brisk rise in prices. The solution to this problem is not very easy and cannot be managed by farmers. In different countries of the world, government has intervened and solved the problem. Government makes purchases from the farmers on a reasonable price and then stores the products in its own stores due to which the certain product remains available throughout the year and its price also remains stable.

Another problem is the non-availability or high prices of pesticides, urea, tractors and other objects needed by the farmers. Once again, these things are not manufactured in our country and are imported and thus there is very less a poor farmer can do in this regard. Government can establish the industries of these products or make them available for the farmers on subsidized prices.

Very recently, we have witnessed the increasing trend of cultivating addictive drugs as people were earning very less from other crops and addictive drugs are very lucrative; they can earn millions in one year only.

Another big problem is the poor transportation system due to which the products reach very late from the farm to the market and there is always present a danger that they might get spoilt and wasted. In all the agricultural countries, government works to establish a good network of roads to briskly transport the agricultural products from farm to the market and thus these products are sold on time in local markets or sent to foreign countries. This is worth-mentioning here that a lot of work has been done in improving the condition of roads and still a number of projects are in progress. However, this pace of construction of roads needs to be improved.

It is important to realize here that if the agricultural problems are properly solved, our country has the potential to emerge as one of the strong agricultural nations of the world that would change the fate of the nation.