

Weekly Livelihoods Update

04 July 2018

- ✚ **MSPs for Kharif Season:** A month after sowing for the kharif season began, the government finally announced the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for 2018-19 season. The MSP for the most significant kharif crop, paddy, has been increased by Rs 200 to Rs 1,750 per quintal, an increase of 13%. Ragi has seen the most significant percentage increase in its MSP, increasing by 52% to Rs 2,897 per quintal. Cotton, too, has seen a huge increase, rising from Rs 4,020 to Rs 5,150. *Arhar*, on the other hand, has only seen an increase of 4% to Rs 5,675 per quintal. Similarly, *urad* has only seen an increase of 3% with the new MSP being set at Rs 5,600 per quintal. However, it remains key how the increase in MSP is implemented as the government's procurement mechanism has been known to be weak and only 6% of all farmers actually get the MSP. (Visit <https://thewire.in/agriculture/after-prolonged-delay-msps-for-kharif-season-announced-with-substantial-increases> for further reading).
- ✚ **Grain Boom:** India's rice and corn production figures are set to hit record highs in the current year, while wheat production is likely to slide. According to a recent report by USDA India is set for a record 2017-18 (October/September year) rice production of 110 million tonnes and a record corn production of 27 million tonnes. The report forecast a dip in wheat production in the 2018-19 (April/March) marketing year at 95 million tonnes, following a record harvest of 98.5 million tonnes in the previous year, on account of a fall in the area under cultivation. According to the report, despite sufficient domestic supplies, 2018-19 wheat imports are likely to touch 1.5 million tonnes to "augment quality wheat requirement". The country would continue to be the largest rice exporter in the world, with 2018 calendar year rice exports estimated at a record 13 million tonnes. (Visit <https://www.frontline.in/other/data-card/article24328524.ece> for further reading).
- ✚ **Dalit Women Rights:** On June 21, the AIDMAM, a Dalit women's collective attached to the NCDHR, presented a report *Voices against Caste Impunity: Narratives of Dalit Women in India* at the UNHCR in Geneva against caste-based violence. For the first time, a Dalit women's group had a table at a side event at the UNHRC to highlight before the international community the impunity caste violence enjoys in India. By participating in the U.N., Dalit women made a strong call to international human rights organisations to break the silence on caste-related issues and sought support and solidarity from allies towards building a global campaign to end caste-based

violence and discrimination. They hoped the event would provide Dalit women with new footholds to actively engage in and build pressure within the U.N. system. (Visit <https://www.frontline.in/the-nation/human-rights/article24319248.ece?homepage=true> for further reading).

- ✚ **Manual Scavengers:** The Delhi Government has decided to prepare a list of Manual Scavengers in the city thereby dismissing municipal corporations' claims which were made in 2017 that the caste-based profession is no longer practiced in the city. In a move to rehabilitate safai karamcharis and Manual scavengers the government would be hiring 200 sewer cleaning machines, each of which would apparently provide jobs to four persons and thus create 800 jobs. SBI,NSFDC,DSFDC would provide 95% of the cost as loan to each of the machine owners. Visit <https://thewire.in/labour/delhi-govt-to-count-manual-scavengers-provide-loans-to-buy-sewer-cleaning-machines> for further reading).
- ✚ **EPFO:** Retirement fund body EPFO on June 27 decided to give its members an option to withdraw 75% of their funds after one month of unemployment and keep their PF account with the body. (Visit <https://thewire.in/labour/employment-provident-funds-organisation-unemployment> for further reading).
- ✚ **Amazon delivery in Leh:** Situated at a staggering 3,500 meters above sea level, Leh is now the highest spot in the world where Amazon offers fast delivery services. In October 2017, Amazon tied-up with a local delivery company, Incredible Himalaya, to hand deliver packages. It's been only nine months since Amazon started offering speedy deliveries, and the number of sales has multiplied twelve times.(Visit www.businessinsider.in for further reading).
- ✚ **India's uranium risk:** INDIA'S groundwater is heavily laced with uranium. Scientists of Duke University, USA, studied 324 wells in Rajasthan and Gujarat and found that one-third of them had uranium in quantities much higher than WHO's standard of 30 microgramme per litre. Analysing previous studies they found that groundwater in 61 districts across the country is highly contaminated with uranium. Much of the high-uranium groundwater tested had high salinity, fluoride and nitrate, which makes them unsafe for drinking. Despite this, uranium has not been listed as a contaminant by the Bureau of Indian Standards' Drinking Water Specifications. Drinking water laced with uranium can cause chronic kidney diseases and deformity of bones. (Visit www.downtoearth.org.in 1000 words column in current issue for further reading).
- ✚ **Environment Issues:** Total cases on environment and development tracked from January 1, 2018 to June 4, 2018 are 113 cases under Supreme Court, 90 under High Court and 93 under National Green Tribunal. (Visit www.downtoearth.org.in 1000 words column in current issue for further reading).

- ✚ **Maharashtra's Plastic Ban:** The Maharashtra government's ban on plastic may be well-intentioned but has been launched without adequate protocols, proper education of the public or assured availability of alternatives. (Visit <https://www.frontline.in/environment/article24321396.ece?homepage=true> for further reading).
- ✚ **Nation-Wide Yatra Planned to Highlight Plight of Farmers:** The Rashtriya Kisan Mahasangh is planning a Kashmir to Kanyakumari yatra in August to highlight the government's failure in addressing issues plaguing agriculture.(Visit <https://thewire.in/agriculture/nation-wide-yatra-planned-to-highlight-plight-of-farmers> for further reading).
- ✚ **Affordable Housing Scheme:** A recent report 'Affordable Housing – The Next Big Thing?' released in March 2018 by FICCI-CBRE has estimated a shortage of houses for the urban population at two crore, which it said can take up to eight to ten years to overcome. According to the report, the affordable housing segment hasn't really gained the required momentum to address this gap. A major reason has been the lack of private participation in the segment. (Visit <https://thewire.in/economy/what-is-holding-up-modi-governments-affordable-housing-scheme> for further reading).