

Central Government's Ploy to Lure Poor Peasants in the Service of Imperialists and Big Bourgeoisie

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Everywhere the ruling classes abide by the old adage not to keep all the eggs in one basket and a section of big bourgeoisie and the imperialists have found in the present regime at the Centre their most obedient servers. They Modi-Shah clique knew fully well that their Plan A of enacting the Three Agricultural Laws were bound to face hard opposition from the peasants. The massive protest of peasants keeping Delhi at almost seize for more than a year forced Modi to bow down and make a tactical retreat for the time being. But they had their Plan B ready. This was stealthily passed in the Budget that very year. It was – FORMATION AND PROMOTION OF 10,000 FARMER PRODUCER ORGANISTIONS by 2023-24. It is important that in the latest Budget for this year Central Sector scheme Formation and Promotion of 10,000 FARMER PRODUCER ORGANISTIONS, Central Finance Minister Nirmala Sitaraman has increased the allocation by 100% to Rs. 500 crores whereas the PM-ASHA (PradhanMantri -Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan), a flagship programme to provide Minimum Support Price (MSP) has been allocated a farcical amount of only Rs. 1 crore.

After the retreat forced by the peasant movement they started to move fast with this Plan B. In the name of facilitating the development of "small and marginal farmers", a vocabulary used by the ruling clique and their academicians to hide the class character of the poor and lower middle peasants with less than one hectare of agricultural land, they started organising Farmer Producer Organistions (FPOs). To understand the real nature of this ploy we can take the Central Government's Operational Guidelines for our study.

Let us first find out the process of organising the FPOs. Para 4'4 of the Guidelines it is said that – "Farmer-members cohesively located with almost same interest are to be mobilised to form a group of 15-20 Members, Such 20 or more groups from a produce cluster area or a village /cluster of neighboring villages based on certain commonalities are to be put together to form an FPO with a minimum farmer-members size of 300 to be eligible under this scheme in plains while in Hilly and North-Eastern regions, 7-8 are to be to form an FPO with minimum farmer-members size of 100."

So if 300 members with average holding of 2 acres could be mobilised the FPO will have 600 acres of land. And 10,000 such FPOs will mean 60,00,000 acres of land. But how much say the poor peasants will have? Para 2'0 of the Guidelines is very clear on it: the FPOs will have to be in-corporated/registered either under Part IX-A of Companies Act or under Co-operative Societies Act of the concerned state. But to keep the peasants under complete control FPOs registered under Co-operative Societies Act must be "insulated from all kinds of interference including in election process and day today management. "So the FPOs will be run and managed by some people who have been appointed the agencies controlled by the Central government.

Actually the FPOs are run and managed by a complicated hierarchical arrangement very difficult to be comprehended, rather uncomprehendable by ordinary peasants. Let us try to understand the arrangement from below to the top.

1. FPO. We have already discussed how the lowest level groups formed with 15-20 peasant members are brought together to organize an FPO with minimum 300 members. But the activities of FPOs are carried by salaried CEOs and accountants.
2. CBBOs (Cluster Based Business Organisations), The formation of FPOs is done basing on produce of Cluster Area, "wherein a geographical, where in agricultural and allied produce such as horticultural produce of similar nature is grown/cultivated.... This will also cover Organic Produce and Natural Farming" (4'8). After selecting clusters it would be the CBBOs that would take upon the task of forming, registering arranging funds for the first five years, motivating, marketing and keep constant touch with government agencies and actual buyers.
3. Implementing Agencies such as SFAC (Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium), NCDC (National Co-operative Development Corporation), NABARD. They shall be funding and monitoring.
4. NPMA (National Project Management Agency) Apex body which will identify and structure the clusters and also act as advisory of the Implementing Agencies in the selection process of the CBBOs.

However, this complicated hierarchical arrangement has two main objectives.

1. To keep the peasants themselves out of the decision-making process, what will be produced and where will the produce be sold remain out of their control. They are lured into this nexus of loss of independence by making them believe that by this they will be assisted by supply of seeds and other inputs and the economics of scale would help them to produce more.
2. And this is the real objective: To bring a minimum of 600 acres of land of one FPO produce agricultural produce under some agro-based industrial giants. The focus would be 'One District One Product'. For example, one district will produce sun flower, some other would mustard seeds, some potato or some organic rice and some flowers.

The industrial giants like Adani-Deilmars, Hindustan Lever, Pepsi, Nestles etc. would contract the FPOs produce crops of their need. They might even give seeds of their choice 'at reasonably lower wholesale rate' the peasants with the financial assistance of the Implementing Agencies and their physical labour would not only produce the intended crops but also do some processing like 'cleaning, assaying, sorting, grading, packing and also farm level processing at user charge basis on reasonably cheaper rate' [3'0(iii)]. Thus they will fall prey to the big agro-industries, like Adanis, Hindustan Lever, Frito-Lay, Pepsi, Nestles as well as big malls.

Already the Kisan Morcha of BJP has very actively trying to mobilise the peasants to form groups on the one hand and to build up CBBOs with their chosen experts. Because they have to bypass the Mandis or government agencies to their chosen buyers. Problem is poor and lower middle peasants are lured with the dream of making profit from whatever little agricultural land they have, but once the whole conspiracy is explained to them they shall not allow themselves to be bled white for the profit of big business.

Indigo planter used to advance the peasants to produce indigo, by that process they were chained and lost independence of producing crops of their choice as well as deceived in many ways. This conspiracy is to utilise public money through the implementing agencies for the buyers of big industries. The hidden costs are so-called 'cleaning, assaying, sorting, grading' by which a large sizable amount would be rejected as the experience of tomato and potato producers of Himachal Pradesh shows. Let us oppose this conspiracy with all vigour and strength. Deceiving poor and lower middle peasants must be stopped. Let's be resolute and unite the people against this conspiracy.