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Special Clusters and Agri-Export Zones Can Immensely Boost Farmers' Income

India's agricultural exports have rapidly grown in recent years to reach \$40 billion annually. With rapidly changing times and evolving market requirements, there are newer challenges that need to be identified and addressed for elevating India's position in international trade. The government bodies, service agencies, exporters, agribusiness companies and agro startups have to play an aggressive role to tap the booming export market opportunities and sustaining growth.

Is the export of agricultural produce a dream that must be limited to only those farmers who own large tracts of land? No. Our small and marginal farmers can unlock their huge potential if they come together for a cluster-based approach to farming. The situation demands alternate models that shall increase the scalability and profitability of farming. There are many examples in the last few years where farmers have immensely benefited from the cluster-based approach. Formation of FPOs promises great opportunity to translate this dream into reality. The institutional mechanism, which farmers can leverage on for economy of scale and for professional support, can certainly help farmers effectively connect with the national and global markets.

The will of the farmers for pursuing collective success is crucial. At the same time, the farmers need a support system in which they can flourish. The public sector plays a crucial role here. The state government and other public institutions can play a vital role in the formation of a cluster in their respective areas which specializes in the production of some specific agro produce. States have crucial role to play. Under the new agro exports policy, APEDA is already entering into MoUs with the States to help them boost up export related efforts.

The various institutions of the state must come forward to provide the technical and commercial expertise to the farmers to develop the cluster, and also the loans to support the pursuit of development. State institutions can support the cluster in various other ways. The state marketing boards can collect technical and market information for producers. The agriculture produce marketing boards or even the agro industries corporations of the states can take the initiative to collaborate with the

support agencies and farmers in order to support the cluster. The state governments can provide guidance and training sessions and quality testing systems for farmers so that their produce meets the international standards.

The collaborative approach of the national level institutions also plays a vital role in the development of a state-specific cluster. Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) has initiated a number of steps to support the export of agricultural produce from various specialized clusters in the country. Through such collaborative approaches, agri-export zones have been developed in various parts of the country. These initiatives have been successful, and promise immense possibilities for the farmers and the country's future of agro exports.

