

Farm leaders to look at support price fixing method

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NEW DELHI: A committee comprising farmers' representatives will look at the method of fixing the minimum support price of agricultural commodities.

It will suggest if there is a need for the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) to re-position itself in the light of the demands from farmers to raise the remunerative price for essential commodities.

At its first meeting held here on Thursday, the panel headed by Director of National Centre for Agriculture Economics and Policy Research, Ramesh Chand, set the terms of reference.

It was decided that the committee would examine the existing cost concepts for fixing the minimum support price. CACP Adviser (Costs) S.R. Joshi is member-secretary of the panel and representatives from Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh and senior academics from farm statistics and policy think tanks are members.

The panel will also look at the existing structure of tariff, taxes and credit to suggest measures to make MSP more "competitive and remun-

erative" to the farmers and encourage diversified agriculture growth.

"The committee will come up with comprehensive recommendations that are centred round technical issues, costing, MSP formula and price realisation, as well as additional issues beyond prices, to ensure that farming is made viable," said Kavita Kuruganti, member on the panel representing farmers and NGOs working with farmers.

Among those on the committee as farmers' representatives are Bhartiya Kisan Union leader Yudhvir Singh, Ajmer Singh Lakhwal, Chukki Nanjundaswamy and K.T. Gangadhar.

After the Indian Coordination Committee of Farmers Movements protested for three days last month, the Prime Minister had asked Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar to look into their demands.

Following extensive discussions with farm leaders and NGOs working with farmers, Mr. Pawar announced the formation of three committees.

The panel on MSP has already met and the farmers groups are waiting for the formation of two more on "Free Trade Agreements and Agriculture" and "FDI in Retail and Farm Livelihoods."