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Farmers seek sops for SRI cultivation

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BHUBANESWAR: Against the backdrop of rising number of suicides, the time has come for the Government to incentivise farmers. The Government should ponder over some pension scheme for the farmers, especially for those who adopt the system of rice intensification (SRI) farming. This has been the major demand of the farmer organisations in Orissa.

"We demand this because 2009 kharif season marred by drought has proved the resilience of this farming method. Despite drought- like condition, farmers cultivating the rice by SRI method have seen bountiful rice production. Therefore, some incentive by the Government would encourage more farmers to take up this farming practice," said Bhibhudendra Pratap Das, president, Orissa Krushak Mahasangh (OKM). The significance about the method of

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farming is it increases the yield with less external inputs, thereby bringing down the cost of farming and consequently the loan burden, added Das.

Das alleged that ` 2-a-kilo rice for the poor is proving counter productive for the farmers. "As a larger portion of the allocated cheap rice finds way to the open market, it compromises a farmer's position while selling its produce in the open market," said Das. The OKM is of the opinion that the BPL households be brought under the cash transfer system to address their food security requirements, added Das.

The OKM president termed the huge subsidy given on the specified fertilisers and pesticides by the Centre as a huge scam. It is because it benefits the manufacturers more than the farmers. Instead, the Government should provide cash coupons with insurance facility directly to the farmers so that the farmers would have the freedom to go for organic farming. "Switching on to organic farming would have a positive effect on the rising cases of suicides," explained Das.

The OKM thinks that the poor operationalisation of lift irrigation points is primarily responsible for the poor state of farmers in the State. Besides, the need of the hour is heavy investment in bringing up the micro-irrigation structures to tide over deficient rain, said Das.

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