



## Shri B. S. Yeddyurappa, Former Chief Minister of Karnataka

**'For the last 45 years, even today, I'm going to my farm'**

*Shri B. S. Yeddyurappa is currently national vice-president of BJP and former Chief Minister of Karnataka*

### **Tell us about your personal experience as a farmer.**

Shri B. S. Yeddyurappa: For the last 45 years, even today, I'm going to my farm. I have coconut garden and mango garden. We also cultivate paddy and grow vegetables, so many things we do in our farm. Even now whenever I go to my native place, Shikaripura, I go to my fields and I'll spend hours together there. From last 45 years I'm an agriculturist. Even today myself and my son, we are looking after our fields.

### **As a farmer are you happy today?**

Many farmers are not happy. Because of drought or heavy rains they do not have proper harvests and they will not get remunerative prices from their produce. So about 60 years after independence, farmers are suffering like anything, Before Independence also they were suffering, now also their suffering is continuing.

These days in our villages in almost all the houses one or two graduates are there. This is a very good development, of course. But they don't have any interest in agriculture field. They will come to the town and they will search for some job and they are not at all bothered about their parents in the villages or their fields. They are not at all interested in farming because they don't get expected income from agriculture.

My humble request to our State Government and also Central Government is that – first, for any reason if the crop is lost, for heavy rains or drought or something like that, the expected amount which the farmers used to get, they should be able to borrow that with the State Government and Central Government. If not, in future people will not go to fields at all and they will lose interest in the agriculture field. Somehow – whether it is the State Government or Central Government- the farmers are neglected like anything, agriculturists are neglected like anything.

That's why people have lost confidence in the agriculture field. I will give one example. In Sagar taluk, they're having very good arecanut farms, four acre, five acres etc. But in their villages, now almost all the members have got educated and they went for higher studies and they have some good jobs. Now only old people – their mothers and fathers are there – and they're suffering since nobody there to look after their lands. Another very important problem we are facing is labor problem. Paying that much of money, they will not get any proper income.

These are the problems we are facing in the agriculture field. Only if the Central Government and State Govern-

ment take personal interest in the agriculture field agriculture can improve.

### **Is your own farming a profitable activity?**

No. I will tell you for the last 45- 50 years we are depending on our farm only. Not that there is money in this activity but because some satisfaction is there.

In a city, even a small pawn broker or small merchant will be able to earn Rs 1000 – 3000 benefit per day. Whereas in the agriculture field – in six to eight months, even if farmers suffer and work day and night – they may not get a net benefit of Rs 3000 – 4000 per acre.

In future, if this situation continues, farmers will suffer a lot. Now almost 50% people have lost the confidence in the agriculture field. Their children also are not around to look after their farms. Only those who are not educated – people unfortunately without any other work – are only working in the fields. This is the high time the government should come forward and help the farmer community. And if at all for any reason farmers lose a crop, they must receive full support and full compensation.

### **What are your thoughts on farmer suicides taking place in Karnataka?**

You see, in Karnataka, compared to any other state, this

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## Talking to

time we have witnessed more than 600 farmer suicides in the last four months. This is happening because are unable to repay the loans – whether it is Rs 2,00,000 or Rs 3,00,000. If the individuals or bankers who have given the loans give notice of loan default it makes farmers very vulnerable and desperate. Compared to any other states farmer suicides in Karnataka are happening in a very big way.

**How can government help farmers? We have talked about paying compensation for crop loss. What other ways can government help?**

Let us be clear in agriculture field there is a lot of awareness now. People are getting more information. They are becoming educated. Agriculture universities are working hard. There is no deficit in that. When I was CM, people used to visit agriculture universities to see the crop samples and they tried to implement it in their own field. The main problem now is they are not getting returns for the hard work they are put in. If one year or two years if there is no rains, farmers end up suffering for next 10 years. So where the government can help is to build cold storages. Every taluk should have cold storages, there should be godowns.

Also, government must try and do something about giving farmers good prices. Farmers should get good rates for their crops. Farmers usually would have taken loans, so when the crop is ready, whatever price they get they will sell their produce off and suffer. The consumer pays maximum rate but farmer is not getting that, middle men will get that. We have to do something about this. To sell the crops farmers need not come to district level at all. At the taluk level only they should make arrangements to sell their produce. Come to Shimoga, morning 6 o' clock opens and 8 o' clock closes. All the farmers come there. So entire Shimoga city and surrounding wholesale or retail, they will purchase and they will go. This way farmers will get very good price also.

In Karnataka, we have to provide better electricity supply for farmers. When I was the Chief Minister, I gave free power to farmer pump sets. More than 50,00,000 people were getting power daily. They were getting free power and we used to pay the amount from the government, over Rs 7,000–8,000 crores

on behalf of the farmers to the concerned department. Now what is happening? Farmers are not getting even two hours power every day.

Power and water are important. Prime Minister is trying his best – within 5-6 years he want to give the power 24 hours to all the villages. If it happens, some satisfaction will be there.

Also farmers must have some other income sources other than growing crops. When I was the Chief Minister I have given for milk producers Rs 2 per litre extra money. More than 70,00,000 to 80,00,000 litres per day of milk is being produced. In the entire country, we are the number one in the milk production now. So, such fields related to agriculture also we must give more attention. When we start showing interest in agriculture our youngsters



will also start going back to the villages. They will take some interest in agriculture. They will get a proper job.

**What are your thoughts on the rural employment programs. Farmers say these programs take labour away from working on the land.**

Employment generation programs must be related to agriculture work. Farmers are not getting labour to work on the field. This labour should go and work in the fields, whether five acres or four acres. Working on the agriculture fields will be more helpful to the nation.

**Overall there is a perception that BJP government in Delhi is pro-urban, not talking about agriculture rural issues. What will you say to this?**

No, I don't think so. Just now I told you that the the Central Government is trying to solve the power problem. The Central Government's financial condition was very bad when they took charge. Now they are improving and step-by-step they are trying their level best to improve. But I agree it is not sufficient. They must take more inter-

est. Even State Government also must take more interest. When I was the Chief Minister, I have gave a separate agriculture budget. I feel in the Central Government like the way we are giving importance to Railways etc..we must consider presenting a separate budget for agriculture. This will give people confidence that government is seriously helping the farmers.

**Looking back now, when you were the Chief Minister of Karnataka what were some of your noteworthy achievements for the farming community?**

First, very important decision I took on the first day in office – I gave free power to all the farmers in the State for their agriculture pump sets. More than 40 lakh farmers at that time and now nearly 50 lakhs the people are getting that benefit. Next, when they lost the crop we arranged for loan waiver two times – two times they got Rs 25,000 for each family. We got nationalised banks to waive off the interest – the State Government paid this amount. The interest rate previously was 8% – 11% and it not possible for the farmers to sustain this. Now, farmers are getting loans from the cooperative sector without any interest. This is first of this kind in the country. Without interest they are getting loan up to Rs 3,00,000.

This was a very important step we took during my time.

**Talking about loans for farmers. Is there any way improve the system since this seems to be the main reason leading to farmer suicides.**

You know – only about 30% farmers are getting loans from the proper channels. Remaining 70% they are not getting loans because of so many reasons like they don't have proper records, such people they will not get loans. There is no such arrangements at all. That's why people are suffering.

See – for example – in co-operative banks, this time our expectation was that about Rs 15,000 crores loans will be given to farmers. But not even Rs 2500 crore they have not given this time. This is because co-operative banks are not in good financial condition. That's why they are not given new loans. And those who have taken loan previously, we have waived off the loans and the State Government has not given the money to concerned .....

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