

# Govt OKs pvt role in farm produce procurement

Dipak Dash  
& Vishwa Mohan | TNN

**New Delhi:** The Centre on Wednesday approved a new umbrella scheme for procurement of notified farm produce on minimum support price (MSP), involving private sector for the first time in the process and linking central support with states moving on agriculture market reforms as one of the key conditions.

Financial assistance to the states will, however, be limited to procurement up to 25% of the total produce. The cost of procurement beyond that will be borne by the states. The procurement under the scheme will begin from the upcoming kharif marketing season, beginning October.

The umbrella scheme, called PM-AASHA (Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay SanraksHan Abhiyan), comprises of three sub-schemes Price Support Scheme (PSS), Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS) and Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPSS). However, only PPSS among these three sub-schemes is new.

Though the PSS will focus on procurement of pulses, oilseeds and copra, the PDPS — which provides for direct payment of the difference between MSP and modal sale price to pre-registered farmers on the lines of MP government's Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana — will only be meant for oilseeds. The focus on oilseeds assumes significance ahead of assembly polls in three major oilseeds producing states of MP, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.

The Centre has earmarked Rs 15,053 crore for this new procurement mechanism with Rs 6,250 crore being utilised during the current 2018-19 crop year (July-June) and remaining Rs 8,803 crore in the next crop year.

Besides, the Union Cabinet decided to give additional government guarantee of Rs.16,550 crore to lender banks for providing credit limit to National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India.

The new mechanism, approved on Wednesday, will not impact the other existing schemes.