

MGNREGA funds for farm labour?

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A group of Chief Ministers belonging to the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) have made a pitch for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act scheme (MGNREGA) funds to be used to pay for farm labour.

The suggestion was made at a meeting of a sub-group of seven Chief Ministers, convened by the NITI Aayog to discuss ways to coordinate policy approaches of MGNREGA and agriculture. It will be discussed in five regional workshops to be held over the next month before the sub-group meets again on August 31.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath suggested use of MGNREGA funds in supplementing labour costs in agriculture, according to an official statement. NITI Aayog tweeted statements from several Chief Ministers. Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said, "We must look into how MGNREGA can reduce farm costs, especially farm labour."

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said, "The scope of MGNREGA must be expanded with due analysis. From sowing to the harvest season, there is a need for adequate farm labour."

Mr. Adityanath said, "If MGNREGA can cover costs of agricultural inputs, especially availability of labour during farming season, it will be beneficial for all involved." The group is chaired by Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu – neither belonging to the NDA – submitted written suggestions.