

Centre okays kharif MSP; decision secret amid farmers' protest

Agrees with prices recommended by Agriculture Ministry

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The Centre on Wednesday approved higher minimum support price (MSP) of 14 kharif crops including paddy and pulses in a bid to provide comfort to farmers who begin sowing in full swing from next month.

Although no official announcement was made about the increase in MSP, sources indicated that the Cabinet has gone with the recommendation of the Agriculture Ministry for the 2017-18 kharif season.

The approval comes amid farmer protests in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh seeking waiver of crop loans.

It was not clear yet if the increase in MSP would help douse some of the fire.



Incidentally, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh cancelled his press conference on cleanliness drive while the Cabinet briefing was also not held.

The Agriculture Ministry had proposed ₹80 per quintal hike in the MSP of paddy to ₹1,550 for common grade variety and ₹1,590 for 'A' grade variety. For pulses, the MSP was proposed to be hiked by up to ₹400 per quintal including a bonus of ₹200 for 2017-18.

About ₹175 per quintal hike

in the MSP of soyabean, a major crop in Madhya Pradesh, has been proposed by the ministry, while ₹160 per quintal increase been recommended in cotton support price for the new season.

Normally, the Cabinet approves the ministry's proposal, which is based on the recommendation made by the government's statutory advisory body on farm prices, CACP (Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices).

The sowing of some of the kharif crops has already begun in the country. The planting will pick up with south-west monsoon reaching central and western parts.

Monsoon is expected to be normal this year and the government is aiming to achieve yet another record foodgrain and horticulture production.

Despite a bumper crop, farmers in many States are in distress because of a sharp fall in prices, both in the domestic and global markets.