Rythu Bandhu Scheme - Telangana Model

Why in news?

Telangana’s Rythu Bandhu scheme supports its farmers with Rs 4,000 for every acre they own.

What is the Rythu Bandhu Scheme about?

- Rythu Bandhu is a support scheme for farmers in Telangana, which provides cheque payments to farmers based on their landholdings.
- Under this scheme Telangana government gives every beneficiary farmer Rs 4,000 per acre as “investment support” before every crop season.
- The objective is to help the farmer meet a major part of his expenses on seed, fertiliser, pesticide, and field preparation.
- The scheme covers 1.42 crore acres in the 31 districts of the state, and every farmer owning land is eligible.
- The government will issue cheques rather than make direct benefit transfer (DBT) because banks might use the DBT money to adjust against farmers’ previous dues.

How this scheme is implemented?
• The revenue department overhauled the entire land holding records and issued new Pattadar passbooks for land ownership.

• Over 5,000 village revenue officers and agriculture extension officers will keep a tab on whether a farmer who received the subsidy has sowed the crop or not.

• The cheques have been distributed along with free Pattadar Dharani passbooks with updated information including ownership and land purchase and sale.

• The government had initially drawn up a list of 72 lakh beneficiaries based on a revenue department survey last year.

• The records are still under rectification and more farmers will be added to the list later.

• The government plans to extend the flat Rs 4,000-per-acre subsidy to the Rabi season as well, with distribution of cheques.

What is the significance of this scheme?

• The Scheme has earned various appreciations and it is considered to be the template for social and agricultural policy.

• Indebtedness among Telangana farmers is very high and they fall into the vicious debt trap of moneylenders.

• Over a period of four or five years, Telangana farmers will be rid of all debts due to Rythu Bandhu scheme.

• Farmers also apply for loans from banks which get delayed as they don’t approve quickly in time for the crop season.

• Rythu Bandhu money provides that cushion to the farmer because with that money the farmer can purchase seeds and fertiliser and start sowing.

• If a bank approves his loan later then it is of additional help to hire farm labour etc but at least he is not going to moneylenders.
What are few limitations of the scheme?

- The Rythu Bandhu scheme does not exclude rich farmers and wealthy landlords.
- The scheme does however, have a provision under which cheques can be returned to the local authorities.
- The scheme leaves out tenant cultivators an estimated 40% of Telangana’s farming population and mostly coming from the poorest and most disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Tenant farmers cannot be included in the scheme as they cannot submit any proof of cultivation of land, which is done mostly based on informal and oral lease arrangements.

Source: Indian Express