

Weekly Livelihoods Update

21 August 2018

- ✚ **Social Audit in Meghalaya:** The Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act, 2017, is the first state-level legislation explicitly aimed at institutionalising the procedure of auditing public works and programmes by the people residing in villages and urban localities through public hearings. Auditing at public hearings (jan sunwai) was initiated by the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan in the 1990s in Rajasthan, and the Meghalaya act has elements comparable to the Rajasthan Right to Hearing Act, 2012. Both these acts further the movement for transparency in governance, accountability of public servants to the citizens and redress of people's grievances. [For further reading visit: <https://www.epw.in/journal/2018/33/commentary/institutionalising-social-audit.html>]
- ✚ **Minimum Support Price:** The central government has announced a fresh increase in the minimum support price (MSP) for kharif crops, making the new MSP 50% higher than the actual paid-out costs of production plus the imputed value of family labour (excluding the cost of the land). This has created a wave of dissatisfaction among political parties and farmer organisations like the All India Kisan Sabha, which claim that the rise in MSP is insufficient and a mere façade as the government has ignored the recommendation regarding calculation of the cost of production as given by the M S Swaminathan Committee. [For further reading visit: <https://www.epw.in/journal/2018/33/letters/minimum-support-price-hike.html>]
- ✚ **Skilling the unskilled:** Our educational ecosystem isn't particularly good at blending learning with working, or learning by working. Though we have introduced numerous programmes in our schools and higher education institutions that focus on practical learning by project work, group activities, competitions and hackathons all appreciable initiatives, their very existence proves that we believe learning as a process is different from working. The way it should be is that one has to learn to work before beginning work. In an environment of transforming jobs infrastructure, it would be wise to accommodate broader learning processes such as apprenticeships or skilling programmes, leaving it on the student to decide the mode of learning one is most inclined towards. [For further reading visit: <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/supplement/story/20180827-skilling-the-unskilled-1316162-2018-08-16>]
- ✚ **Another dressed-up Central scheme:** AMONG the pro-farmer policies that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government claims to have initiated, the one

that is often flagged is the modified crop insurance scheme titled Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY). Effective as of kharif season 2016, this scheme is supplemented with the Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS). In the former, crop loss is computed by comparing actual yield in a season, calculated on the basis of crop cutting experiments by State government agencies, with an indicator of expected or “threshold” yield, while in the latter it is computed using leading weather indicators. Together, the schemes promise enhanced and more reliable crop insurance for a much larger number of farmers, significantly higher coverage in terms of acreage and with no cap on the value insured. [For further reading visit: https://www.frontline.in/columns/C_P_Chandrasekhar/article24551519.ece]

✚ **Climate change affecting hydropower generation in India: study** - A new study has suggested that the government must consider changes occurring due to climate change while planning new hydropower projects. The generation of hydropower from the top seven hydropower projects in India has suffered due to climate variability in the past six decades. Future projected climate change may also hit reservoir operation for power generation from these projects, says the study done by researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar. [For further reading visit: <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/climate-change/climate-change-affecting-hydropower-generation-in-india-study-61419>]

✚ **Ayushman Bharat:** The launch of much-awaited health insurance scheme, Ayushman Bharat, which was announced during 2018 Union Budget, again got delayed. The scheme found a mention in Prime Minister’s Independence Day speech but only to get delayed further. As per his announcement from the Red Fort, the scheme will be rolled out on September 25, the anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay. Due to the political importance of this speech (his last one of this tenure), there were speculations that the Prime Minister might roll out the scheme on the occasion of 72nd Independence Day itself. However, he just announced a date of rolling out the scheme. [For further reading visit: <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/health/ayushman-bharat-what-pm-did-not-tell-in-the-last-i-day-speech-of-his-tenure-61398>]

✚ **Carbon dioxide (CO₂):** More people than ever are acutely aware that rising levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere are accelerating climate change and global warming. And yet food manufacturers have been issuing stark warnings that they’ve nearly run out of the gas, which is used in many products from beer to crumpets. [For further reading visit: <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/food/this-is-how-food-drinks-industry-can-use-excess-carbon-in-the-atmosphere-61299>]