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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

AGRICULTURE GROWTH VITAL FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH: FM

New Delhi, Pausa 12, 1934

January 2, 2013

The Union Finance Minister Shri P. Chidambaram said that Agriculture and Allied Sectors are critical sectors for inclusive growth. The agriculture growth rate for the 11th Plan has been targeted at 3.3 per cent as compared to 2.2 per cent achieved during the 10th Plan period, the Finance Minister added. He further said that we need sufficient agriculture production not only to meet our domestic requirement but also for exports. The Finance Minister was making his introductory remarks during his first pre-budget meeting with stakeholders from agriculture sector here today. He said that foodgrain production during last year 2011-12 was 257.4 million tons and during the current financial year 2012-13 equally good foodgrain production is expected.

Along with the Finance Minister, both the Minister of State for Finance Shri S.S. Palanimanickam and Shri Namo Narain Meena, Adviser to the Finance Minister, Shri Parthasarthy Shome, Finance Secretary, Shri R.S. Gujral, Secretary, Financial Services & Disinvestment, Shri D.K. Mittal, Revenue Secretary, Shri Sumit Bose, Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Shri Arvind Mayaram, Secretary Agriculture & Cooperation, Shri Ashish Bahuguna, Chief Economic Adviser, Dr. Raghuram R. Rajan, Chairman CBDT and Chairman CBEC were present among others.

Participating in the discussion, the different stakeholders representing different sectors of agriculture gave various suggestions to the Finance Minister for the forthcoming Union Budget 2013-14. The suggestions included setting-up of National Agriculture Climate Damage Fund and creation of post harvest infrastructure in villages. Other suggestions included focus on National Agriculture Research System, extension of the advance quality seeds to the farmers, creating environment for equitable and employment generated agriculture etc. Others suggested the need to focus on solar operated pumps in the rural areas to save energy and purchase of extra power generated through solar photo voltaic pumps, allocation of additional resources for agriculture research, putting a regulatory system in place at the earliest for the FDI related investment in this sector, more allocation for oil palm farming among others.

The main participants from Agriculture sector included Shri P. Chengal Reddy, representing Consortium of Indian Farmers Association, Dr. Ashok Gulati, Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices, Dr. S. Ayyappan, ICAR, Prof. Amita Shah, Gujarat; Institute of Development Research, Dr. Gopal Naik, IIM Bangalore, Dr. Dinesh, National Coop. Union of India, Shri Y. Sivaji, former Member of Parliament, Dr. B.S. Dhillon, Punjab Agriculture University, , Shri G.J. Ancheril, United Planters Association of South India, Shri Siraj Chaudhary, Cargill India Pvt. Ltd, Shri Tushar Shah, International Water Management

Institute, Shri Cripino Lobo, Watershed Organisation Trust, Dr. K.V. Prabhu, IARI and Shri Uday N. Borawake, Uday Baug Farm.
