



STATEMENT OF SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM

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A little knowledge is dangerous; little reading is even more dangerous.

The BJP is caught in a web of its own creation. For decades, it was – and it still is – a party dominated by traders and merchants. An economy that was afflicted by shortages of goods and services was exploited by them. That situation began to change with the Green Revolution (pioneered by Indira Gandhi) and liberalisation (ushered in by P V Narasimha Rao and Dr Manmohan Singh).

Today, our farmers produce huge surpluses in many agricultural produce – notably wheat and rice. On the strength of our farmers, successive Congress governments built, brick by brick, a *food security system*, that culminated in the National Food Security Act, 2013. The *three pillars* of our food security system are **MSP, Public Procurement and PDS.**

The Congress Manifesto 2019 was based on the foundational principles outlined above.

The Prime Minister and the BJP spokespersons have deliberately and maliciously distorted the Congress Manifesto. We promised

1. To promote Farmers Producer Companies/Organisations to enable farmers to access inputs, technology and **markets.**
2. **To establish farmers' markets with adequate infrastructure and support in large villages and small towns to enable the farmer to bring his/her produce and freely market the same.**

Farmers need *multiple accessible markets* and *choice*. The Congress' proposals would have given them that. Once that is accomplished, the Congress Manifesto promise on repealing the APMC Act and making trade in agricultural produce free would be a natural sequel in course of time.

While our promise is clear, the Modi government has surrendered to the corporates and traders. Please note that:



> The two **Farm Bills** do not contain a clause that the price that the farmer will get from the private purchaser *shall not be less than the MSP*. Why is such a clause absent?

> The Bills undermine the only regulated market available to the farmer today, without creating thousands of alternative markets that will be accessible to the farmer.

> The Bills assume perversely that the farmer and the private purchaser have equal bargaining power. They do not. The small farmer will be at the mercy of the private purchaser.

> If a dispute arises between the farmer and the private purchaser, the machinery under the Bills is so bureaucratic and convoluted that no farmer will have the strength or the resources to fight the purchaser. The small and medium farmer will be ruined.

> The Bills undermine the three pillars of our food security system.

The Congress and other Opposition parties must join hands to oppose the Bills in every forum and ensure that they do not become law in the present form. Every party has to take a stand – is it with the farmers or is it with the BJP threatening the livelihood of farmers?