

# A field day for digital infra, accelerator for agri startups

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Bringing farmers to the core of the government's "inclusive growth" agenda and proposing to leverage technology, investment and huge farm credits to fulfil it, the Budget on Wednesday provided for setting up of digital public infrastructure for agriculture and creating an accelerator fund for agri startups in rural areas among other initiatives for the sector.

The digital infra will be an open source to enable farmer-centric solutions such as crop planning and health, improved access to farm inputs, credit and insurance, help for crop estimation, market intelligence and support for growth of the industry. "The fund will aim at bringing innovative and affordable solutions for challenges faced by farmers. It will also bring in modern technologies to transform agricultural practices," said FM Nirmala Sitharaman.

She also announced a nearly 11% hike in the agriculture credit target to Rs 20 lakh crore for the next fiscal with focus on animal husbandry,



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dairy and fisheries.

The Budget also provides for taking other measures ranging from enhancing productivity of cotton, promoting disease-free horticulture at an investment of Rs 2,200 crore, and creating a cooperative-based economic development model to make India a global hub for millets, in sync with the country's enhanced focus on these climate-resilient nutri-cereals in the International Year of Millets.

"With the plan of setting up the world's largest decentralised storage capacity, farmers associated with cooperative societies will be able to get

the fair price for their produce by selling it at appropriate time. This will play an important role in the PM's resolve to increase income of farmers," said home and cooperation minister Amit Shah. Shah also lauded the proposal for keeping the cooperative societies of the manufacturing sector formed till March 31, 2024 in the 15% tax net only.

The government will also launch a new sub-scheme of PM Matsya Sampada Yojana with targeted investment of Rs 6,000 crore to further enable activities of fishermen, fish vendors, and micro and small enterprises.