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Amazon, Microsoft swoop in on \$24 billion India farm-data trove

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Bloomberg |

Amazon.com Inc., Microsoft Corp. and Cisco Systems Inc. are among technology giants lining up to harness data from India's farmers in an ambitious government-led productivity drive aimed at transforming an outmoded agricultural industry.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration, which is seeking to ensure food security in the world's second-most populous nation, has signed preliminary agreements with the three US titans and a slew of local businesses starting April to share farm statistics it's been gathering since coming to power in 2014. Modi is betting the private sector can help farmers boost yields with apps and tools built from information such as crop output, soil quality and land holdings.

Jio Platforms Ltd., the venture controlled by billionaire Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries Ltd., and tobacco giant ITC Ltd. are among local powerhouses that have signed up for the program, the government said this week.

With the project, Modi is seeking to usher in long-due reforms to make over a \$488 billion farm sector that employs almost half of the nation's 1.3 billion people and accounts for about 18% of Asia's third-biggest economy. The government is counting on the project's success to boost rural incomes, cut imports, reduce some of the