



## Agriculture –Backbone of the Economy

Pakistan has a vast natural resource base that covers various ecological and climatic zones, hence possessing the capability for producing a wide variety of food commodities. Pakistan has two crop seasons: "Kharif" is the first sowing season starting from April-June and harvested during October-December. Some of the major crops in this season include rice, sugarcane, cotton, and maize. "Rabi", the second sowing season, begins from October-December and harvested in April-May. Major crops include wheat, gram, lentil, tobacco, mustard etc.

## Largest Employer

Agriculture sector contributes approximately 20% to national GDP and is the largest employer absorbing 42% of the country's total labor force. Punjab claims significant share of the agriculture sector in Pakistan. It grows 83% of national cotton, 80% of wheat, 97% of fine aromatic rice, 63% of sugarcane, 95% of potato and 78% of maize. Amongst fruits, it has 66% share of national mango production, 95% of citrus and 82% of guava. The agriculture sector (including livestock) contributes 27% to Punjab's GDP and employs 40% of its labor force. It also adds to national export earnings due to manufactured goods derived from agriculture such as textiles etc.

# Agriculture

Government of Punjab



Besides immense contribution of the sector to the economic growth, it also possesses huge investment potential that enhances the attractiveness of the sector. Of the total 16.5 million hectares of cultivable land in Punjab, about 1.7 million hectares are still available for corporate farming. Government of Punjab considers corporate farming as an important area as it helps to transfer modern technology, raises output, cuts input costs, improves food security, prevents fragmentation of cultivable land and creates much-needed backward and forward linkages between agriculture production, processing and marketing. Foreign investors are allowed to hold 100% equity in the case of Corporate Agricultural Farming (CAF) (Investment Policy, 2013). Another major area for investment is that of 30% horticultural produce that goes to waste every year, and can be converted into economic gain by investing in agribusiness value chain industries.



### *ICT Based Innovations*

The government is focusing on improving agricultural productivity through systematic application of better inputs and advance technology to enhance profitability of the farming community. It is also laying great emphasis on improving competitiveness and ensuring the environmental sustainability of agriculture. It aims at achieving a sustained agriculture growth rate of four to five percent per annum to support the overall GDP growth trajectory. To protect the farmers from the whims of unprecedented climate change and global slowdown in commodity prices, the government has announced the Farmers Package in September 2015, which is a mega relief package of Rs 341 billion for small farmers including direct cash support and provision of soft agriculture

loans. It is aimed at introducing progressive agriculture on scientific lines, reducing production cost of crops, consequently causing the small farmers to prosper. The Government of Punjab has rolled out an interactive information dissemination system through use of modern technologies for innovative agriculture, which is expected to reach completion by June 2018. The project allows agricultural information officers and farmers to communicate with one another through laptops and android phones thus leading to greater efficiency. Numerous such projects are underway that ensure adoption of state of the art agriculture technologies and practices that will pave way for further development and growth of the sector.