

International Journal of Agriculture Extension and Social Development

Volume 9; Issue 1; January 2026; Page No. 46-49

Received: 26-11-2025

Accepted: 29-12-2025

Indexed Journal
Peer Reviewed Journal

Farmers' feedback–driven policy recommendations under Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan (VKSA): Evidence from Gorakhpur District, Uttar Pradesh

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DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26180723.2026.v9.i1a.2875>

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Abstract

The Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan (VKSA) was implemented as a nationwide initiative to strengthen farmer awareness and promote the adoption of improved agricultural technologies prior to the Kharif season through direct farmer–scientist interactions. The present policy-oriented study documents and analyses farmers' feedback collected during VKSA conducted in Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh from 29 May to 12 June 2025, with the objective of identifying key constraints and formulating evidence-based policy recommendations. A total of three programmes were organized daily across selected villages, and structured feedback from 25 farmers per day was obtained through group discussions, field interactions and observations. The collected responses were thematically analysed to identify dominant issues related to policy design, infrastructure, input supply, extension services, marketing and risk management. The results revealed that crop damage caused by stray and wild animals, particularly *Neelgai*, emerged as the most critical concern, with farmers prioritizing wildlife control over direct financial benefits. Other major issues included the need for farmer-category-specific government schemes, untimely availability of quality inputs, inadequate irrigation and power infrastructure, limited awareness and accessibility of government programmes, and poor price realization for farm produce. Significant knowledge gaps were also observed in scientific crop management, climate-smart agriculture, mechanisation, and natural farming practices. Dissatisfaction with the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, especially the lack of individual-level compensation during crop failure, was widely reported. The study highlights that farmers' expectations extend beyond subsidies to systemic reforms addressing human–wildlife conflict, infrastructure strengthening, extension delivery and market integration. The findings underline the importance of incorporating farmer feedback into policy formulation to achieve sustainable, resilient and farmer-centric agricultural development.

Keywords: Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan, farmers' feedback, policy recommendations, human–wildlife conflict, extension services, agricultural development

Introduction

The Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan (VKSA) is a flagship national initiative aimed at strengthening the agricultural sector through the dissemination of improved technologies, enhancement of farmer awareness and promotion of sustainable farming practices. Conceived in alignment with the Government of India's vision of building a resilient, self-reliant and farmer-centric agricultural system, the Abhiyan emphasizes direct engagement between farmers and scientists to bridge existing knowledge and technology adoption gaps, particularly ahead of the Kharif cropping season. Through on-field interactions and participatory learning, VKSA seeks to accelerate technology transfer and promote informed decision-making at the grassroots level. The Abhiyan was implemented through a convergence-based strategy under the theme "One Nation–One Agriculture–One Team", ensuring coordinated efforts among the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (DA&FW), State Governments, Agricultural Universities,

Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and allied line departments. A national-level core group was constituted to plan, guide and monitor the implementation of the Abhiyan across the country. The programme was executed nationwide during the period from 29 May to 12 June 2025 under the guidance of central leadership. VKSA focused on providing region-specific advisories related to crop and livestock management, efficient input use, soil health card-based crop and fertilizer selection, and creating awareness about ongoing government schemes and policies. In addition to technology dissemination, the Abhiyan served as a platform for capturing farmers' perceptions, constraints and expectations through structured and interactive feedback mechanisms. This participatory approach enabled the identification of ground-level challenges related to infrastructure, input availability, extension services, marketing and risk management. Systematic documentation of farmers' feedback was undertaken to generate evidence-based insights for policy formulation and programme refinement.

The Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan (VKSA) was also implemented in Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh from 29 May to 12 June 2025. The broad objectives of the Abhiyan included:

1. dissemination of modern technologies for Kharif crops;
2. dissemination of information on government schemes and policies;
3. promotion of soil health card-based crop and fertilizer management; and
4. preparation of innovation documents through systematic collection of farmers' feedback.

Thus, VKSA represents an important step towards integrating farmers' voices into the agricultural policy framework, contributing to sustainable productivity enhancement, livelihood security and inclusive growth of the agricultural sector.

Materials and Methods

The VKSA activities were conducted in Gorakhpur district from 29 May to 12 June 2025. A total of three programmes were organized daily in selected villages covering different blocks of the district. Farmers participating in these programmes represented various landholding categories and farming systems. Each day, feedback was collected from 25 farmers, resulting in a total sample size of 375 farmers, using open-ended discussions, group interactions and field observations. Farmers were encouraged to share their experiences related to government schemes, availability of infrastructure, input supply, market access and extension services. The collected feedback was compiled daily and categorized into thematic areas such as policy design, infrastructure, inputs, marketing and extension. Descriptive analysis was carried out to identify dominant issues and recurring policy demands. The findings were further synthesized to develop a policy action matrix relevant to agricultural and allied sector development.

Results and Discussion

Farmers' Feedback and Emerging Policy Concerns under VKSA

The feedback collected from farmers during the Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan (VKSA) revealed multiple, interlinked constraints affecting agricultural productivity, livelihood security and technology adoption in the study area (Table 1). The issues raised by farmers were not limited to input supply or extension gaps but reflected deeper structural and policy-level challenges requiring immediate attention.

Human–Wildlife Conflict as a Dominant Constraint

Among all concerns, damage caused by stray and wild animals emerged as the most severe and urgent problem faced by the farming community. Farmers consistently reported that crop depredation by wild animals, particularly *Neelgai* (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*), has reached alarming levels, leading to substantial yield losses and discouragement from crop cultivation. A significant observation during VKSA was that many farmers expressed a preference for effective control of wild animals over financial incentives or subsidies under government schemes. This highlights that unresolved human–wildlife conflict can

undermine the effectiveness of all developmental interventions and threatens the sustainability of farming systems. The findings indicate an urgent need for a comprehensive and region-specific wildlife management policy integrating physical barriers, community-based monitoring and inter-departmental coordination.

Need for Farmer-Category-Specific Schemes

Farmers strongly emphasized that government schemes should be designed separately for small, medium and large landholders. The current uniform approach was perceived as inequitable and ineffective, as it fails to account for differences in resource availability, risk-bearing capacity and production objectives. Small and marginal farmers sought support for subsistence, risk mitigation and allied enterprises, while medium and large farmers demanded market linkage, mechanisation and enterprise diversification. This feedback underscores the importance of differentiated policy design for inclusive and farmer-centric development.

Constraints in Input Availability and Infrastructure

Timely availability of quality inputs such as seed, fertilizers and agrochemicals was reported as inconsistent, particularly during peak cropping periods. Farmers also highlighted the limited availability of high-yielding, drought-tolerant and disease-resistant crop varieties, which restricts their capacity to cope with climatic variability. Inadequate irrigation infrastructure, non-functional tube wells and irregular power supply further aggravated production risks. Farmers stressed the need for assured electricity connections to every farm and timely water supply through irrigation channels, indicating critical infrastructure gaps that constrain productivity.

Awareness and Accessibility of Government Schemes

A major institutional gap identified was the low level of awareness regarding government schemes and procedures among farmers. Complex application processes and procedural delays were cited as barriers to accessing benefits. Farmers demanded simplified processes, continuous availability of schemes throughout the year and stronger support at the village level. These findings point towards the need for decentralised extension mechanisms, digital facilitation and proactive outreach by line departments and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs).

Marketing, Price Realisation and Post-Harvest Challenges

Farmers reported dissatisfaction with price realisation for agricultural produce, highlighting the absence of assured and remunerative pricing mechanisms. Post-harvest losses, lack of storage, processing and organized marketing infrastructure further reduced farm income. These challenges reinforce the need for strengthening value chains, local aggregation centres and farmer producer organisations to improve market access and income stability.

Extension Gaps and Capacity Building Needs

The study revealed substantial knowledge gaps in scientific crop management practices, including weed management, pest and disease control, climate-smart agriculture and soil

health improvement techniques. Limited awareness and adoption of natural and organic farming practices were also observed. Farmers reported inadequate dissemination of information regarding farm mechanisation technologies such as Zero tillage, Happy Seeder and Super Seeder, despite their relevance for sustainable intensification. The demand for regular, village-level trainings and closer monitoring of frontline demonstrations indicates the need for strengthening participatory extension and follow-up mechanisms.

Allied Sector Development and Risk Management

Farmers expressed strong interest in allied sector enterprises such as dairy, goatery, poultry and fisheries, but emphasized the need for scalable schemes ranging from small to large units. Additionally, dissatisfaction was expressed regarding the implementation of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), particularly the non-receipt of compensation during crop failure. Farmers recommended that insurance benefits should be assessed and delivered at the individual farmer level to ensure transparency and trust in the scheme.

Policy Implications

Overall, the feedback indicates that farmers' expectations extend beyond input subsidies towards systemic reforms addressing wildlife conflict, infrastructure, scheme design, extension delivery and market integration. The VKSA platform effectively captured ground-level realities and highlighted the necessity of integrating farmer feedback into policy formulation. Addressing these issues through coordinated, evidence-based and farmer-centric policy actions is essential for achieving the broader goals of sustainable and resilient agricultural development.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the farmers' feedback collected during VKSA, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

Management of Stray and Wild Animals

- Formulate and implement a dedicated policy for control and management of stray and wild animals, with specific emphasis on Neelgai
- Promote community-based management strategies, physical barriers and compensation mechanisms for crop damage

Differentiated Scheme Design

- Develop separate schemes and support mechanisms for small, medium and large farmers to ensure inclusiveness and effectiveness

Strengthening Input and Varietal Supply Systems

- Ensure timely and decentralized availability of certified seeds, fertilizers and agro-chemicals
- Accelerate dissemination of climate-resilient crop varieties through strengthened seed systems and KVK-led demonstrations

Enhancing Extension and Capacity Building

- Organize regular village-level trainings on weed management, pest and disease control, climate-smart agriculture and natural farming
- Ensure close monitoring and quality assurance of field demonstrations

Infrastructure Development

- Repair and modernize tube wells and irrigation infrastructure
- Ensure electricity connectivity to every farmer's field and timely water supply through irrigation channels

Promotion of Farm Mechanisation

- Strengthen custom hiring centres and expand demonstrations on modern and low-cost farm machinery

Improving Marketing and Post-Harvest Management

- Develop local post-harvest infrastructure and strengthen market linkages to ensure fair and remunerative prices

Reforming Crop Insurance Implementation

- Modify PMFBY operational mechanisms to ensure transparent, timely and individual farmer-level compensation during crop loss

Promotion of Allied Sector Enterprises

- Support small to large-scale dairy, goatery, poultry and fisheries enterprises through simplified procedures, technical guidance and credit linkage

Table 1: Expanded Policy Action Matrix based on farmers' feedback under Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan (VKSA), Gorakhpur district

Sl. No.	Major Issue Identified by Farmers	Evidence from VKSA Feedback	Policy Gap Identified	Recommended Policy Action
1	Stray and wild animals (Neelgai)	Farmers prioritised control of stray/wild animals over financial benefits from schemes; Neelgai identified as the most destructive species	Absence of an effective, farmer-centric wildlife damage mitigation policy	Formulate and implement a dedicated policy for control and management of stray and wild animals, with special focus on Neelgai through fencing support, community-based management and compensation mechanisms
2	Uniform scheme design	Existing schemes do not address differential needs of farmers	Lack of farmer-category-specific interventions	Design and implement separate schemes for small, medium and large farmers
3	Availability of quality inputs	Delay and limited access to quality seeds, fertilizers and agro-chemicals	Weak supply chain and seasonal planning	Ensure timely and decentralized availability of certified seeds, fertilizers and plant protection chemicals
4	Awareness of government schemes	Many farmers unaware of ongoing schemes and benefits	Ineffective dissemination of information	Strengthen village-level awareness campaigns through KVKs and line departments

5	Irrigation infrastructure	Tube wells non-functional; inadequate irrigation facilities	Poor maintenance and infrastructure investment	Repair, renovation and modernization of irrigation facilities including tube wells
6	Electricity at farm level	Electricity not available at individual farm fields	Inadequate rural electrification coverage	Extend electricity connectivity to every farmer's field for irrigation and mechanization
7	Canal water availability	Irregular and untimely water supply	Weak irrigation water management	Ensure timely and regulated water supply through irrigation channels
8	Scheme continuity	Schemes operational only for limited duration	Lack of predictable support	Ensure round-the-year availability of major agricultural schemes
9	Farm mechanization	Limited access to subsidized machinery	High cost and poor dissemination	Ensure year-round availability of agricultural implements and machinery on subsidy basis through custom hiring centres
10	Price realization	Farmers do not receive genuine prices for produce	Weak market linkages and price support	Strengthen MSP implementation, local procurement and market access
11	Monitoring of demonstrations	Demonstrations not adequately supervised	Quality gaps in extension activities	Establish close and regular monitoring of field demonstrations
12	Training and awareness	Trainings not conducted at village level	Limited capacity building	Organize regular, need-based village-level trainings and awareness programmes
13	Administrative procedures	Complex application process for schemes	Procedural barriers for farmers	Simplify procedures for accessing government schemes and projects
14	Allied sector development	Limited scale-based support	Inadequate enterprise diversification	Promote small to large-scale enterprises in dairy, goatery, poultry and fisheries
15	Crop varietal availability	Limited access to high-yielding, drought-tolerant and disease-resistant varieties	Weak varietal dissemination	Strengthen supply and promotion of climate-resilient crop varieties
16	Post-harvest and marketing	Losses and poor market access	Inadequate post-harvest infrastructure	Develop post-harvest management facilities and market linkages
17	Weed management	Poor awareness of scientific weed management	Knowledge gap on herbicide-resistant weeds	Strengthen extension on integrated weed management practices
18	Pest and disease management	Inadequate knowledge on control measures	Weak advisory support	Enhance pest and disease surveillance and advisory services
19	Climate-smart agriculture	Limited adoption of water-saving and soil health practices	Knowledge and adoption gaps	Promote climate-smart agricultural practices through demonstrations and trainings
20	Natural and organic farming	Low awareness and adoption	Insufficient technical guidance	Strengthen awareness and technical support for natural and organic farming
21	Mechanisation awareness	Poor knowledge of advanced implements	Limited dissemination of technologies	Promote awareness and demonstrations on Zero till, Happy Seeder, Super Seeder and low-cost implements
22	Crop insurance (PMFBY)	Farmers not receiving PMFBY benefits during crop failure; demand for individual-level compensation	Institutional and procedural limitations	Revise PMFBY implementation to ensure benefit disbursement at individual farmer level during crop loss

Conclusion

The Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan in Gorakhpur district provided valuable insights into farmers' priorities, challenges and policy expectations. The feedback clearly indicates that farmers prioritize risk reduction, infrastructure improvement and effective problem-solving over short-term incentives. Addressing critical issues such as stray animal damage, scheme targeting, extension effectiveness and crop insurance delivery is essential for achieving sustainable and farmer-centric agricultural development. Institutionalizing structured feedback mechanisms under VKSA can significantly strengthen evidence-based policy formulation and implementation.

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