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PRESS RELEASE

MSP outreach: FCI urges eastern states to draft plan

New Delhi, Feb 18: Furthering its efforts to increase the outreach of MSP (minimum support price) operations to small and marginal farmers of the eastern India, Food Corporation of India has requested the governments of that region to chalk out a Specific Action Plan that outlines their roles in the mission.

A brainstorming session of FCI held at its headquarters here also decided to hold state-specific workshops from February 25 for finalising further action on the matter.

The Tuesday meeting, convened by FCI Chairman and Managing Director C Viswanath in pursuance of the recommendations of a High Level Committee (HLC) set up by the FCI, was attended by officials from both the Union and state governments of the eastern region, besides private players in the agri-business.

Agricultural costs and prices expert Dr Ashok Gulati, who is a member of the HLC formed in August last year to resolve its functional inefficiencies, reiterated that the eastern states have a huge potential for procurement of foodgrains. "That is one region that can trigger a second Green Revolution," he added.

West Bengal Principal Secretary (Food) Anil Verma stated that his state would welcome private players to increase the reach of benefits of MSP to the small and marginal farmers.

The meeting also discussed the creation of basic *mandi* infrastructure and milling capacity in the states — particularly in Bihar, Assam and West Bengal — with the involvement of the private sector.

The private players at the meeting expressed their desire to chart out a long-term policy for engaging the private sector in the procurement operations of the central government.