

'Need to improve SMEs and agri sector in Punjab'

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Setting an agenda for the Punjab government on Thursday, the industry body ASSOCHAM has mooted a proposal for Congress led state government to emphasize on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and a value addition to the agri-products. The industry body has sought this agenda to be included in upcoming new industrial policy.

It suggested the policy should focus on activities relating farm products, horticulture, livestock products like milk and other dairy items, cotton and textiles which have strong linkages in the state's economy. In a joint vision paper for the new government brought out by the The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) and Thought Arbitrage Research Institute (TARI) which was released by ASSOCHAM National Secretary General D S Rawat and Kshama V Kaushik, Director, TARI at a press conference in Chandigarh.

According to the paper, Punjab needs to promote less-water guzzling crops like



pulses, oilseeds, cotton, maize, millet, vegetables and fruits – by providing improved seeds and ensuring that farmers get a fair price for these crops through a market support mechanism. The area under paddy cultivation should be reduced and high value crops like cotton, fruits, vegetables, canola, menthe, turmeric etc. should be grown to raise their share of cropping area from 3.4 per cent.

The paper further stated that Ad-hoc policies like ban on export of food grains, limits on private stocking and tax on purchase of food grains (14.4 per cent) should be revisited and withdrawn wherever possible. "The fertilizer subsidy policy needs to be revisited to achieve balanced use of nutrients and subsidy should be transferred directly to the farmers."