**National Press Release – to be released across India**

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**Sanjay Sonawani, Swarna Bharat Party leader to launch a mission to encourage dehydration of fruits and vegetables**

Mr Sanjay Sonawani, senior leader of Swarna Bharat Party, India’s only liberal party, said that farmers, like the rest of the country, have been suffering from decades of government mismanagement and incompetence.

Instead of deepening markets and supporting them with free inflow of technology to deal with economic issues, governments have chosen to directly “solve” problems in a piece-meal manner through restrictions such as controlled prices and undue interference in the trade of agricultural inputs and produce. It is, however, impossible for any government to circumvent economic forces through such restrictions. The result is always worse than the problem it was intended to solve.

Such futile policies are implicated in the circumstances which led farmers recently to strike across Maharashtra. The only sustainable way to help farmers is to free farmers from draconian socialist restrictions and anti-farmer laws. The solution lies in fully implementing SBP’s manifesto, not in further restricting the market or in transferring public resources in an untargeted manner.

In addition to having the worst possible policies, governments in India have created huge obstacles for those who wish to start a manufacturing business. Poor infrastructure has compounded the problem. As a result, seventy years from independence, India has huge deficit of food storage and processing facilities.

Although governments may claim to promote agro-processing industries, a mere 2 to 3 per cent of India’s food output is being processed. Almost 30 per cent of the fruits and vegetables produced, amounting to rupees sixty thousand crores, perish or on the way to the market. As a result, prices plummet after a good agricultural harvest, forcing distress sales by farmers.

Mr Sonawani argued that dehydration techniques, both conventional and modern, can play a role in providing farmers with some control over their produce. Dehydrated fruits and vegetables have a much longer shelf life, even as they retain nutritional value. Setting up dehydration plants will boost rural employment, reduce farmers’ susceptibility to the vagaries of the weather and reduce the monumental wastage of precious food in India.

In order to support farmers, Mr Sonawani – who has expertise in dehydration technology – said that he will lead an awareness mission across the country from July 2017, starting from Maharashtra, to explain good agricultural policies to farmers and to bring awareness about dehydration techniques. He also invited socially aware entrepreneurs to actively get involved in supporting farmers by building food storage and processing facilities.

**Notes for Editors**

SBP is India’s only liberal party, committed to defending liberty and promoting prosperity.

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