

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE FARMERS SUICIDES CRISIS IN TELANGANA**Dr. P. JANAKIRAMULU.****Dept. of Economics.****University College of Arts and Social Sciences.****Osmania University Hyderabad****Abstract**

Agriculture sector is one of the commanding heights of the Indian economy with majority of people in the country depending on the sector. The sector employs 48 per cent of country's workforce and is the single largest private sector occupation. However, the share of agriculture in Gross Domestic Product which was 57.7 per cent in 1950-51 has come down to 14.5 per cent in 2015-16. The share of the agricultural sector's capital formation in GDP declined from 2.2 per cent in the late 1999s to 1.9 per cent in 2007-08. While, India's foreign trade is deeply associated with the agriculture sector, it accounts for about 14.7 per cent of the total export earnings. Some of the supply side bottlenecks of the farming such as fragile asset base ,imperfect markets for inputs and outputs , less access to credit , unskilled labor force, less information on HYV seeds, lack of apolitical collectivization and negative externalities arising from land and management (NCEUS, 2008), continue to dog the sector even after seven decades only with changing intensity. The intensity and spread of farmer's suicides in the country is a testimony to this fact. In view of this the agrarian interest has taken a forefront in the national agenda today. the farmer's suicides is not a phenomenon that is suddenly erupted. However, it was officially recognised in 2005 with a need for interventions by the State to provide relief to the farmers (GoI 2005a, 2007).Most of the researchers in the country have highlighted the situations leading to the unfortunate incidents. Given the diversity of Indian agriculture and the conditions under which the farmers are operating, it would be difficult to identify a single or major contributing factor to farm suicides. However, many researchers have pointed out indebtedness as a major factor.

Keywords: Indebtedness; Farmer suicides; Crop failure; Poverty; Rain water harvesting;**Introduction**

Farmers suicide is a global phenomenon. Studies in Sri Lanka, USA, Canada, England and Australia have identified farming as a high stress profession that is associated with a higher suicide rate than the general population. This is particularly true among small scale farmers and after periods of economic distress. Farming population in the United Kingdom, Europe, Australia, Canada and the United States have the highest rates of suicide of any industry and there is growing evidence that those involved in farming are at higher risk of developing mental health problems. The reasons behind farmers suicide include mental health issues, physical environment, family problems, economic stress and uncertainties. The suicide rate among farmers is higher than general population in developed countries, such as UK and the USA.

India is an agrarian country with around 48.9 percent of its people depending directly or indirectly upon agriculture. Nowadays the problem of farmers' suicides is one of the vital concerns that need to be addressed. According to Economic Survey 2014-15, a total of 5650 farmers have committed suicides during 2014, accounting for 4.3 percent of total suicide victims in the country. According to the National Crime Records Bureau of India (NCRB 2014) farmer suicides account for 11.2 percent of all suicides in India. The reasons for farmer suicides are monsoon failure, high debt burdens, personal issues and family problem.

Between 1995 and 2006, official records indicate that 166,304 farmers died by suicide in India (16,000 per year) and that at its peak, 18,000 farmers were taking their own lives every year. The issue received significant news coverage, mainly over claims surrounding the introduction of the Monsanto developed Bt cotton (a genetically modified cotton crop that provides resistance to bollworm and other pests) to the region.

Some have said that there is little evidence suggesting a particular suicide crisis amongst farmers in recent years. However, numerous reports state that farmers have died by suicide at rates exceeding those of the general population. The 2013 National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) statistics (considered the official domestic figures) estimate the suicide rate for the general population at 11.2/100,000 people, increasing from 10.5/100,000 people in 2002. Breaking down the NCRB figures, Nagaraj estimates that as of 2001, the overall suicide rate for farmers across India was 15.8/100,000 people, 50% higher than the general population rate, and that this has been increasing at a rate above that of the general population.

There is evidence that, worldwide, farming is an occupation with a higher risk for suicide than other occupations, so Indian farmers' higher rates may simply fit this pattern and warrant little explanation. However, evidence suggests that a substantial investigation into the causes of this crisis is an imperative, as along with the increasing rates of farmer suicides, research suggests that these suicides are not occurring from more organic processes such as mental health problems, but from socioeconomic and psychosocial circumstances. These circumstances are making the life of the Indian farmer much more precarious, leading many of them to such a desperate situation that they take their own lives.

Land Utilization Pattern

Land is the vital natural resource for any developmental activity. Land use is the surface utilization of all developed and vacant land on specific point at given time and space. The judicious use of land without disrupting the ecological necessities is imperative with an increase in population and demand for food for human and livestock. Both the quantity and quality of land is in serious threat due to extensive and intensive use of land for agriculture and non-agriculture purposes. Any change or changes in the land use pattern has significant economic and ecological implications. The pattern of land use in a state at a particular point of time is guided by physical, economic and social factors. Land utilization pattern has important implications for sustainable agriculture practices because of agriculture– livestock interface. Knowledge of change in land use, factors for change and implications of changes is therefore important to understand the context of any deprivation for some sections of the society.

Area under Irrigation

Irrigation is an important component in increasing in the productivity of crops. The Gross Irrigated Area as a percentage of Gross Cropped Area which was only 18 percent in 1959-60 has increased to 47.9 percent in 2014-15. The ultimate irrigation potential in the country using both the surface and ground water sources is of the order of 140 mha comprising of 75.83 mha from surface water sources and 64.17 mha from ground water sources. (Twelfth plan Working Group report on Minor Irrigation) .The total area under irrigation at present is 67.5 mha out of total 142 mha of net sown area. While major and medium irrigation projects have contributed more in the initial time periods, the share of minor irrigation projects also contributed to this in the later periods which were 18

percent of the potential area of 42.24 mha under surface irrigation created so far in the country (DFI Report). The Gross Irrigated Area (GIA) as percentage of Gross Sown Area at all India level is 35 percent and two out of the four selected States i.e, MP and Telangana with 44 and 47 percent have crossed this threshold level . However, in these two states major share of Gross Irrigated Area was occupied by area under Groundwater with 68 and 83 percent respectively.

Credit

Farmers had more debt and relied more on private moneylenders for credit, suggesting that these were significant factors explaining why farmers died by suicide more in certain states. The impact of foreign banks on Indian agriculture may partly be explained by the priority sector lending demands the Reserve Bank of India places on commercial banks. Domestic commercial banks must lend 40% of their deposits to priority sectors, with 18% of the total targeted to agriculture, while foreign banks currently have a lower target of 32%, with no specific agriculture target. While foreign banks are a small part of the Indian banking system overall, holding 7% of banking deposits, it is plausible that in regions where they have made an impact, they may have pushed out banks more amenable to lending to farmers, and thus forced many to use noninstitutional sources.

Changes in the Cropping Pattern

Cropping pattern has been defined as the proportion of area under different crops at a particular period of time. A change in the cropping pattern means a change in the proportion of area under different crops. The cropping pattern depends on soil, climate, rainfall and irrigation facilities, prevailing market prices, government policy, farm size and export potential of the crop. For the better understanding, the total crops which have been cultivated in India are divided into three groups such as (i) Food grains (ii) Food crops (iii) Non-food crops.

Crop Insurance

Major sources of risk in agriculture are drought, floods and cyclones. Drought effects more than 2/3rd of the cropped acreage annually. Agriculture therefore has become highly risky economic activity on account of its critical dependence on weather conditions which underscores the need for crop insurance. Designing and implementing appropriate insurance program for agriculture

which is prone to systemic and covariate risk (where a single risk affects large number of people across large geographical regions) is always a challenge.

Pesticide poisoning is the most common method in successful suicide attempts, at approximately 49% and 44% for men and women, respectively, in India, but considering historically the majority of the population was engaged in agriculture, this observation adds little to help determine whether farmers' easy access to pesticides might inflate their suicide rates, death rates from pesticide self-poisoning halved after regulations were instituted on the sale of highly toxic pesticides in 1995, even though pesticide selfpoisoning attempts increased. It is hard to predict whether similar measures would significantly alter the numbers of farmers that attempt and eventually complete suicide compared to the general population, especially as suicide in these groups appears to arise from long-term socioeconomic stress as opposed to transient moments of hopelessness that might pass.

Government of Telangana

Connect the entire area under tube wells with Micro Irrigation Systems by the Department of Micro Irrigation. Department of Agriculture of Telangana should direct the RARS of State Agriculture Universities especially those who are involved in plant breeding to converge with community based SHGs, FIGs and FPOs for seed multiplication and processing Department of Agriculture should promote Input dealerships to FPOs in the villages. For doing so, the FPOs should be provided with necessary infrastructural facilities State Marketing Department should develop norms for “ Promoting and maintaining the Price Stabilisation Fund” in line with Revolving Fund of Karnataka All the regulated APMCs under Department of Agriculture Marketing are to be integrated with E Nam with proper facilities for grading and assaying The compensation for the distress households provided by the Government of Karnataka is better compared to other states with more amount and relatively hassle free which could be emulated by other states.

Agriculture Investment Support Scheme – A Case of Telangana

The risks that the farmers face have multiple dimensions and Indebtedness is one such risk the farmers are forced to take, to meet their consumption and investment needs. Less availability of credit influences adversely the adoption of modern technology and private capital investments,

which in turn lowers the productive capacity of the agricultural sector and also pushes the farmers to borrow from non-institutional sources. In order to insulate farmers against non-institutional lending for purchasing the inputs of the crops the Government of Telangana introduced “Rythu Bandhu” scheme (Agriculture Investment Support Scheme) in the year 2018 with an objective to empower 72 Lakh Telangana farmers from their financial difficulty. This scheme is remarkably different from any other loan waiver scheme wherein the farmers take loans from a lending institution and when unable to repay are rescued by the government, as in Punjab and Haryana. But ‘RythuBandhu’ scheme provides funds to farmers before the sowing so that they do not have to bother about input costs.

Conclusion

Agriculture is an un-organized activity in India. Most of the farms are small and economically un-feasible. There is exploitation of farmers by the middlemen. The Government programmes do not reach the targeted farmers. There prevails high indebtedness and the interest rates are higher. Since farmers’ suicides were caused by the complex inter play of social, economic and environmental constraints, the following recommendations are made. 1. The farmers should not depend on only one crop. They should grow multiple crops, such as, coconut, turmeric, banana, papaya, ginger etc., which gives more income to the farmer 2. The small farms should be consolidated to increase the farm size to use modern methods of agriculture. 3. Crop insurance policies should be implemented so that the farmers should be protected when crop fails due to drought. 4. Improved modern methods of rain water harvesting should be developed. 5. The Government should provide training to the farmers to acquire new skills in animal husbandry, fisheries, timber production etc., so that the alternative source income can be ensured. 6. The farmers should use ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) like radio, television, mobile phones and internet to know the price of the product for sale and to know the use of modern inputs and credit facilities at lower rate of interest to increase their production and income. Determining a single defining cause for farmer suicides in India is impossible, especially considering the relative lack of detailed literature. What can be inferred is that an amalgamation of factors has led to a picture of large-scale farmer indebtedness, that combined with a volatile ecological climate and socioeconomic landscape has left hundreds of thousands, if not millions of farmers vulnerable to a situation of such crushing debt and desperation that many have come to take their own lives. The most discussed cause, Bt

cotton, does not appear to be a significant factor, and notably there is little, if any suggestion that mental illness plays a role. Rather an agrarian crisis that manifests as a culmination of lack of agricultural investment and irrigation improvement, the increased use of noninstitutional credit sources (that appears to have increased since the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s), and likely to some extent the reduction of trade barriers appear to best explain the picture of farmer indebtedness and the acceleration of farmer suicides over the period.

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