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ANALYTICAL STUDY OF FARMER SUICIDE IN INDIAN AGRICULTURE SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Indian farmers are in problem due to indebtedness in India. Eleven crore farmer families are in problem. On an average a farmer has 80000 Rs per head debt in India (NSSO 2006). India is an agrarian country with around 60% of its people directly or indirectly depends upon agriculture. Agriculture in India is often attributed as gambling with monsoons because of its almost exclusive dependency on precipitation from monsoons. The failure of these monsoons leading to a series of droughts, lack of better prices, exploitation by Middlemen, all of which have led to a series of suicides committed by farmers across India. Since 1995, more than 253,000 farmers have been reported to have committed suicides in India, making this the largest wave of suicides in the world. On an average 45 farmers commit suicide each day in India and in Vidharb a farmer commit suicide each every five hour. Innovative remedies have to be thought of which are to be implemented with sincerity by the Government and the implementing agencies, along with putting in place ways to rehabilitate the affected farmers. An attempt has been made in this article to address the issue of farmer's plight leading to suicide and measures to address the issue have been suggested.

KEYWORDS

Farmer suicide, National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Suicide Mortality Rates (SMR), WTO, GDP, Growth Rate, Mean.

INTRODUCTION

Indian farmers are in problem due to indebtedness in India. Eleven crore farmer families are in problem. On an average Debt on a farmer has increased from 12585 Rs in 2003 to 80000 Rs in 2006 per head debt in India (NSSO 2006). Agriculture provides the principal means of livelihood directly for 65 crore farmer families and 20 crore landless labourer in India's population. On an average farmer's Debt in major States are 18135, 26007, 23965, 33907, 41576 and 23963 per farmer in Karnataka, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Karla, Punjab and Tamilnadu (NSSO 2003) respectively. Despite a steady decline in its share to the gross Domestic Product (GDP) agriculture remains the largest economic sector in the country. On an average income of a farmer was 2115 Rs per month in India. It was lowest (1630 Rs) in U P and highest (5500Rs) in J&K. This income is very low in comparison to a peon and a sweeper in India. How, it is possible for a farmer to alive themselves with his family. On an average a farmer has five members in their family in India. Low and volatile growth rates under the sector and the recent escalation of an agrarian crisis in several parts of the country pose a threat not only to national food security but also to the economic well being of the nation as a whole.

In 1947 the share of Agriculture in total GDP was 50%. Gradually it declined and has now come down to about 14% in 2012. Still however 60% population depends on agriculture for the survival. In the present time period also 60% of credit demand in agriculture sector meets by private money Leander. Due to rapid growth of rural population and division of families the farmland has undergone rapid fragmentation. Presently 80% of the farmland holding are with the small and marginal farmers owning land up to 5 acres. For these categories of farmers cost of production by way of farm inputs has increased manifold over the years while the productivity of the land remained at the same level and sale price of farm produce has not commensurately increased. These factors have driven farmers to the debt trap and have caused distress leading to suicide. My experience in the field has shown that smaller the landholding higher is the cost of production. The distressed economy of small scale crop cultivation is further accentuated by lack of knowledge, scientific application of crop management, diversification practices, inappropriate system such as non availability of quality input material in time, inadequate irrigation facility, non-remunerative prices, uneducated farmer's, backward technology and dominance of middlemen in Agricultural Marketing Structure. It is encouraging to see that our country is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Reform process in most of the economic sectors is in place. There is healthy competition in almost all the sectors leading to cost reduction. GOI has planned to achieve 10% growth by 2012, but all this cannot be achieved unless the targeted growth is ensured for Agriculture sector.

Indian central government make finance commission after every ten year for 1.42 crore employees. Govt also gives to their employees annually increment, Bonus and DA also but for the farmer govt. is nothing doing. Govt live the farmer's on the mercy of financial institution and private money Leander. It is a very critical situation that a farmer is committing suicide for a small amount of Debt in comparison to other people Debt. Several studies have been conducted by the Government and social science organizations to analyse the agrarian crisis and farmer's suicides. In the budget of 2008-09 Honorable Finance Minister has also announced massive write off to the tune of Rs.60000 crore of the outstanding loan of small & marginal farmers and OTS for other farmers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In 2006, the state of Maharashtra, with 4,453 farmers' suicides accounted for over a quarter of the all-India total of 17,060, according to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). NCRB also stated that there were at least 16,196 farmers' suicides in India in 2008, bringing the total since 1997 to 199,132. According to another study by the Bureau, while the number of farm suicides increased since 2001, the number of farmers has fallen, as thousands abandoning agriculture in distress. According to government data, over 5,000 farmers committed suicide in 2005-2009 in Maharashtra, while 1,313 cases reported by Andhra Pradesh between 2005 and 2007. In Karnataka the number stood at 1,003, since 2005-06 till August 2009. According to NCRB database number of suicides during 2005-2009 in Gujarat 387, Kerala 905, Punjab 75 and Tamil Nadu 26. In April 2009, the state of Chattisgarh reported 1,500 farmers committed suicide due to debt and crop failure. At least 17,368 Indian farmers killed themselves in 2009, the worst figure for farm suicides in six years, according to data of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

Dr. P. V. Deshmukh (Feb.2011) in their study "Farmers Suicides in India" found that the government must amend laws that are governing the farmers in the Indian agricultural sector. If the government does not make any urgent recommendations or legal provisions to offer relief to the trend of farmer suicide in the affected states, the whole country will suffer the consequences. Some of these are given below:

- * National disaster as farmer suicides increase every day.
- * Food productivity will be hit badly.
- * Food inflation will rise at an alarming rate.
- * Severe food crisis.
- * The intensity of unemployment problem will be increase.
- * Family problems, Social problems, Physiological problems.

Farmers in India became the centre of considerable concern in the 1990s when the journalist P Sainath highlighted the large number of suicides among them. Official reports initially denied the farmer suicides but as more and more information came to light the government began to accept that farmers in India were under considerable stress. On figures there was much debate since the issue was so emotive. More than 17,500 farmers a year killed themselves between 2002 and 2006, according to experts who have analyzed government statistics. Others traced the increase in farmer suicides to the early 1990s. It was said, a comprehensive all-India study is still awaited, that most suicides occurred in states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala and Punjab. The situation was grim enough to force at least the Maharashtra government to set up a dedicated office to deal with farmer's distress.

CASE STUDY ON FARMER'S SUICIDES BY PROF. K.NAGRAJ (MADRAS INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES)

According to the Report of Prof. K. Nagraj of Madras Institute of Dev. Studies, the General Suicide Rate (GSR) (overall suicides per 1 lakh population) in the country between the periods 1997 to 2005 was 10.6, where as the Farmers Suicide Rate (FSR) was 12.9 and the Ratio of FSR to GSR was 1: 1.2. In Maharashtra the position was alarming with GSR at 15.1 and FSR at 29.9. According to Prof. Nagraj Annual Compound Growth Rate (ACGR) for all suicides at 2.18% is lower than the Population Growth Rate. The data reveals that the worst position of the farmers in Maharashtra is in Vidarbha region. The Study also shows the alacrity of the problem, so much so that on an average one farmer took his/her life every 53 minutes between 1997 and 2005. State wise position of suicides in other States in critical group was Andhra Pradesh–16770, Karnataka–20093 & Madhya Pradesh (including Chattisgarh) –23588.

(II) STUDY OF AGRICULTURAL INDEBTEDNESS BY EXPERT GROUP – PROF. RADHAKRISHNA

According to the study Agricultural indebtedness is not the main cause of farmer's suicides but stagnation in agriculture, marketing risks, collapse of extension system, growing institutional vacuum and lack of livelihood opportunities are the primary causes. According to the Report the decline in returns from agriculture has resulted in inability of farmers to repay debt and this has triggered Farmers suicide.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

Main objective of the study is to make an Analytical Study of Farmers Suicide in Indian Agriculture Sector. To analysis the growth rate of Farmers Suicide. To analysis the gender base growth rate of Farmers Suicide. To analysis the causes of Farmers Suicide.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Present study is based on secondary data and data has been collected through ncrb.nic.in web site. To analysis the data growth rate, percentage and mean method is used.

CAUSES OF FARMER SUICIDES

There are various economic, social, political, individual and environmental causes of farmer's suicide in India. The causes of this crisis are complex and manifold; they are dominantly related to public policy and economic strategy.

- ❖ Absence of adequate social support infrastructure at the level of village.
- ❖ Uncertainty of agricultural enterprise in India.
- ❖ Indebtedness of farmers: Institutional and Non- Institutional Credit
- ❖ Rising cost of cultivation.
- ❖ Lack of credit availability for small farmers. There has been minimal financial support from the government for small farmers.
- ❖ Lack of irrigation facilities.
- ❖ Lack of Government Vision and clarity of intention to benefit the poor and small farmers.
- ❖ Reduction of agriculture subsidies.
- ❖ Environmental pollution.
- ❖ Exploitation of natural resources (water - forest)
- ❖ Unfavorable international policies.
- ❖ Lack of increasing in the prices of agricultural products compare to agricultural inputs. Indian farmers are facing is the dramatic fall in prices of farm produce as a result of the WTO's free trade policies.
- ❖ Monocultures and uniformity increase the risk of crop failure, as diverse seeds adapted to diverse to eco-system are replaced by the rushed introduction of uniformity and often untested seeds into the market. When Monsanto first introduced Bt Cotton in 2002, the farmers lost 1 billion rupees due to crop failure.
- ❖ The drinking habit which atrophies the productivity of the farmer.
- ❖ Extravagant expenditure on marriages.
- ❖ Bad health and illness and inability to meet the necessary expenditure on medicine and health services.
- ❖ Government has destroyed important public institutions.
- ❖ Rehabilitation packages e.g. Package of Central Government, Package of State Government, Lone Waiver Proposal, etc are not implementing in proper way to relief needy farmers.
- ❖ Public expenditure on rural development fell during this period from 14.5 percent Of G.D.P. in 1991 to 5.9 percent in 2004 (P. Sainath, The Hindu - 2/2/2010)
- ❖ Repeated crop failure,
- ❖ Inability to meet the rising cost of production (farmers have been spending more on fertilisers even while crop performance has been showing a declining trend).
- ❖ Indebtedness due to a host of reasons ranging from a daughter's marriage to digging a well which eventually bore no water,
- ❖ These causes arose out of a larger picture of globalization & the resultant neglect of agricultural community in India
- ❖ Stagnant Revenues
- ❖ Rising Essential Expenditures
- ❖ Lack of covering the maximum crops under the crops insurance.
- ❖ Lack of crops diversity/lack of commercialization of crops.

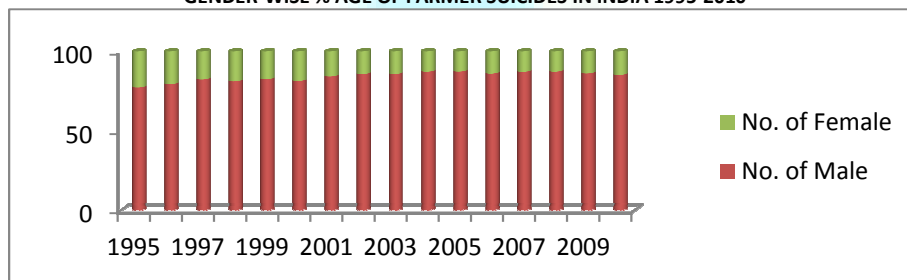
Table no 1 show the gender-wise percentage of farmer suicides in India from 1995-2010. It shows that out of total suicide 84.14 percent are male and 15.86 percent are female during above said time period.

TABLE NO 1: GENDER-WISE % AGE OF FARMER SUICIDES IN INDIA 1995-2010

Year	No. of Male	No. of Female	Total
1995	77.38	22.62	100
1996	79.37	20.63	100
1997	82.43	17.57	100
1998	81.09	18.91	100
1999	82.56	17.44	100
2000	81.32	18.68	100
2001	84.25	15.75	100
2002	85.66	14.34	100
2003	85.65	14.35	100
2004	87.33	12.67	100
2005	87.40	12.60	100
2006	85.96	14.04	100
2007	87.24	12.76	100
2008	87.34	12.66	100
2009	86.08	13.92	100
2010	85.14	14.86	100
Mean from 1995-2010	84.14	15.86	100

Source: ncrb.nic.in

GENDER-WISE % AGE OF FARMER SUICIDES IN INDIA 1995-2010



Source: ncrb.nic.in

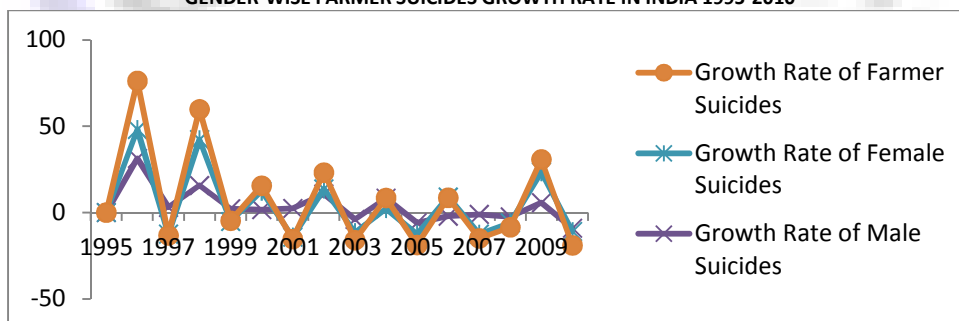
Table no 2 show the gender-wise growth rate of farmer suicides in India from 1995-2010. Study found that during the study period on an average 13549, 2508 & 16057 male, female and total farmer committed suicide. It also shows that total growth rate of farmer suicides is 3.08. In case of male & female it is found 3.77& 0.62 during above said time period.

TABLE NO 2: GENDER-WISE FARMER SUICIDES GROWTH RATE IN INDIA 1995-2010

Year	Growth Rate of Male	Growth Rate of Female	Total Growth Rate
1995	-	-	-
1996	31.37	16.78	28.07
1997	3.05	-15.50	-0.78
1998	15.65	26.58	17.57
1999	2.25	-7.43	0.42
2000	1.68	10.63	3.24
2001	2.43	-16.63	-1.13
2002	10.69	2.98	9.48
2003	-3.97	-7.51	-4.49
2004	8.35	-6.13	6.27
2005	-6.00	-6.66	-6.09
2006	-2.06	11.03	-0.41
2007	-1.06	-11.39	-2.51
2008	-2.51	-3.39	-2.62
2009	5.70	17.84	7.24
2010	-9.09	-1.86	-8.08
Growth Rate From (1995-2010)	3.77	0.62	3.08
Mean of Total No.	13549.20	2507.88	16057.06

Source: ncrb.nic.in

GENDER-WISE FARMER SUICIDES GROWTH RATE IN INDIA 1995-2010



Source: ncrb.nic.in

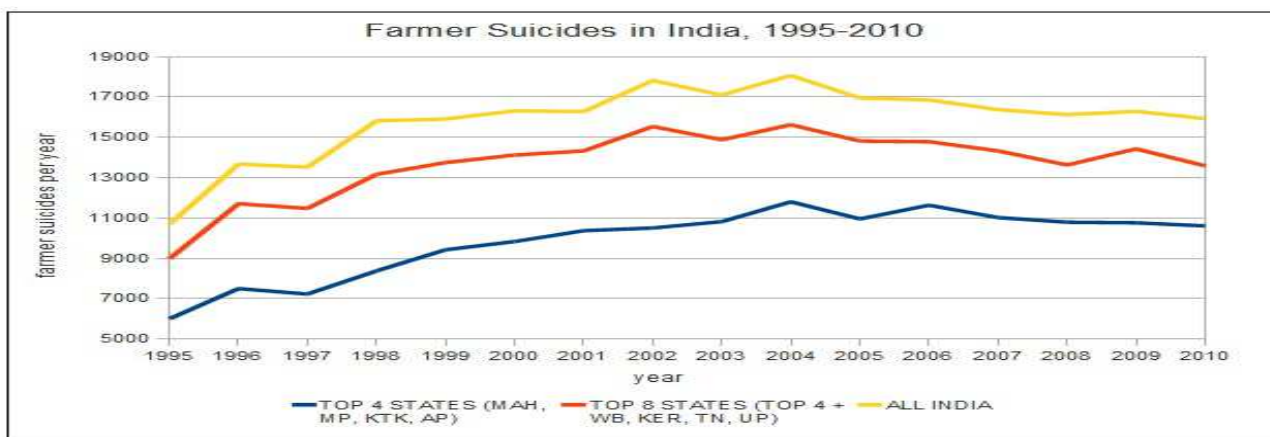


FIGURE 1: Farmer Suicides in India, 1995-2010 (All-India, Top 4 States and Top 8 States)

Two patterns are visible in Figure 1. First, for the all-India numbers as much as for the top 8 and top 4 states, there is an overall trend of increasing farmer suicides between 1995 and 2010. At the all-India level, total farmer suicides reported in 1995 was below 11,000; in 2010, it was hovering around 16,000. Second, and more problematic, is the fact that the 4 states that account for about two-thirds of the total farmer suicides in the country show a very mild decline since the mid-2000s. The trend line for these 4 states has basically flattened out since the mid-2000s, highlighting the fact that the states with the highest incidence of farmer suicides have not made much progress. This fact must then temper the optimism, if any, arising from the decline in the all-India numbers since the mid-2000s.

Let us now turn to a more disaggregated analysis of these overall figures by looking at the top 8 and top 4 states, as a group, in some detail. Figure 2 presents the time profile of farmer suicides in the 8 states that have consistently witnessed the largest number of farmer suicides in India, accounting for about 66 percent of the all-India total in 2010 (the recent most years for which data is available at the NCRB website). In descending order of farmer suicides in 2010, the states are: Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh (including Chhattisgarh), Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. Two patterns are visible in Figure 2.

TOTAL NUMBER OF SUICIDES ACROSS STATES: 1995-2010

The first alternative measure that we use is the absolute number of farmer suicides between 1995 and 2010. Figure 2 gives the ranking of the “top” 15 states according to the total number of farmer suicides reported between 1995 and 2010. The total number of suicides gives us a first quantitative approach to the phenomenon by answering the question: how large is the magnitude of farmer suicides across the various states? Just like the overall figure of 253785 farmer suicides for India convey the enormity of the problem we are dealing with, the overall numbers for states convey a similar sentiment.

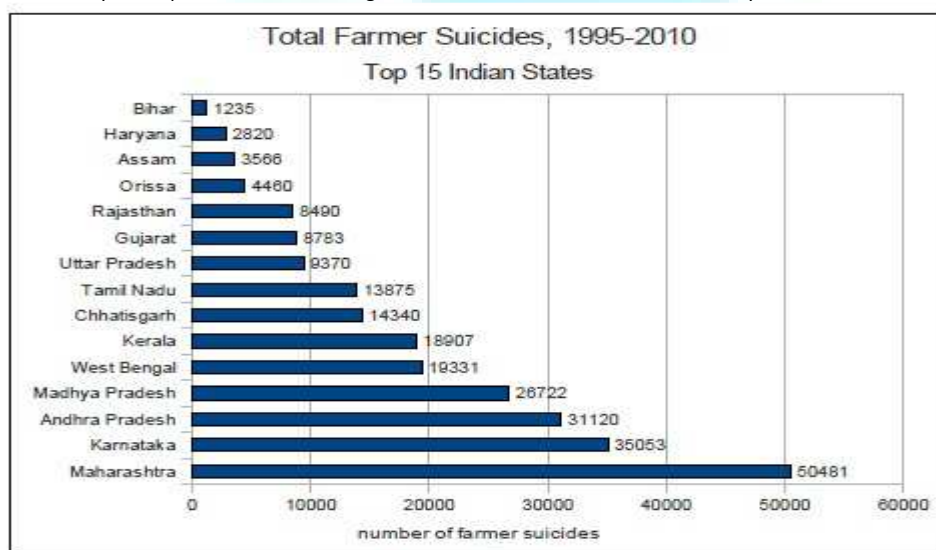


Figure 2: Total Farmer Suicides in Indian States, 1995-2010

The states with the highest number of reported farmer suicides are, in decreasing order: Maharashtra (MH), Karnataka (KT), Andhra Pradesh (AP), Madhya Pradesh (MP), West Bengal (WB), Kerala (KR), Chhattisgarh (CG), Tamil Nadu (TN). With 50481 reported farmer suicides, Maharashtra stands in a league all by itself. Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh form a close second group with West Bengal, Kerala, Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu forming the third group to watch closely.

TOTAL NUMBER OF SUICIDES: 2001-2010

Since some states were formed in the early 2000s, we also provide a ranking of states by the total number of suicides reported between 2001 and 2010. Figure 3 gives this ranking. Compared to Figure 2, there two significant changes in the rankings: (1) Chhattisgarh moves up from the 7th position to the 4th; (2) West Bengal and Kerala switch positions. This shows that the newly formed state of Chhattisgarh has forged ahead of many others in an ignominious way, and that Kerala has outstripped its sister state in more ways than one.

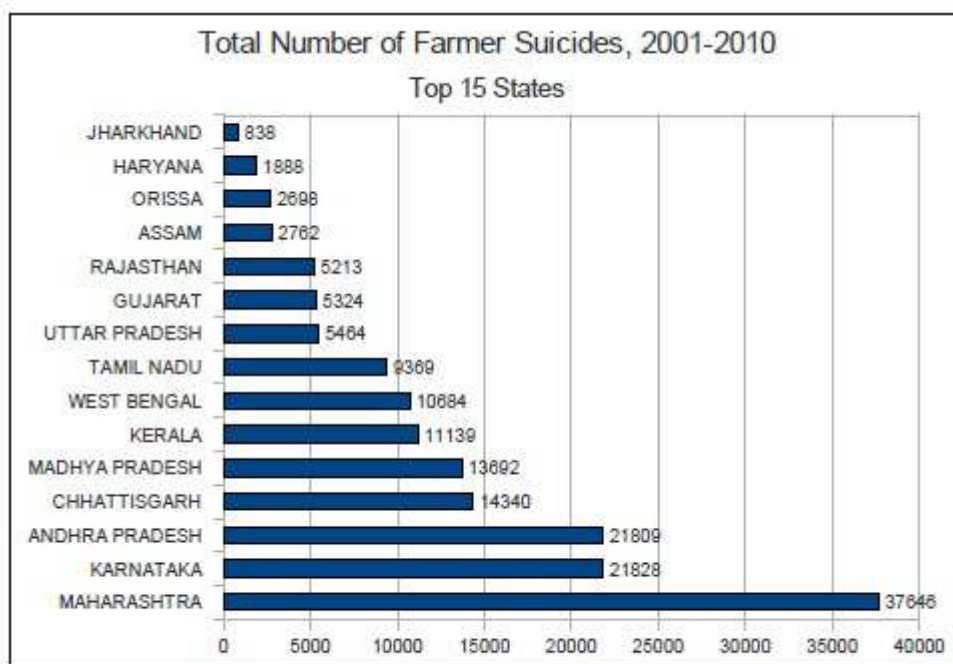


Figure 3: Total Farmer Suicides in Indian States, 2001-2010.

FARMER SUICIDES FOR EVERY 1 LAKH PERSONS

It will be pointed out, and quite rightly we believe, that the rankings provided in Figure 2 and 3 need to be modified because different states are vastly different in terms of population. To understand the severity of the problem across states, the argument would go; we need to normalize the total number of farmer suicides by the size of the population. This is a valid point and so in Figure 4, we provide rankings of states by just such a measure: total number of farmer suicides between 1995 and 2010 divided by the state population in 2001. The year 2001 is used because it is a kind of “mid-point” for the period under study and thus provides a natural point to use for state population comparisons.

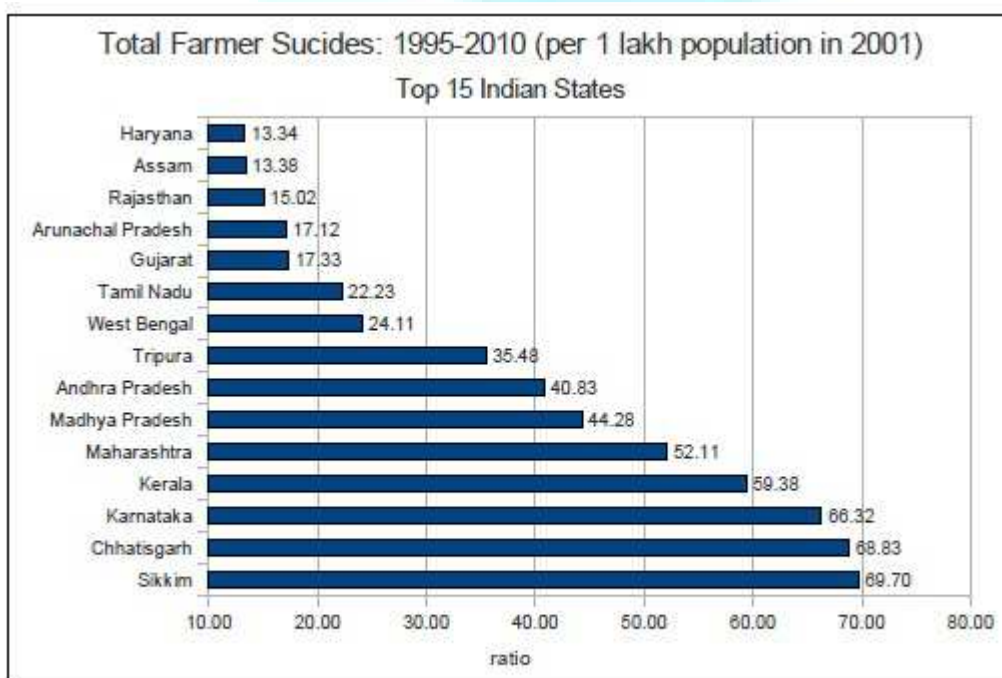


Figure 4: Farmer Suicides between 1995 and 2010 normalized by State population in 2001.

The state with the highest number of farmer suicides for every one lakh persons is Sikkim. This result might be driven by the fact that the population of Sikkim is very small. Among the larger states, we observe the following ranking in terms of farmer suicides per one lakh population.

FARMER SUICIDE MORTALITY RATES

We could refine the measure further. Since the share of farmers in the total population varies by states, it might be argued that we need to normalize by the farmer population rather than the total population. In fact, when we do so we get the suicide mortality rates (SMR) for farmers, a measure that is commonly used to measure mortality across different groups.

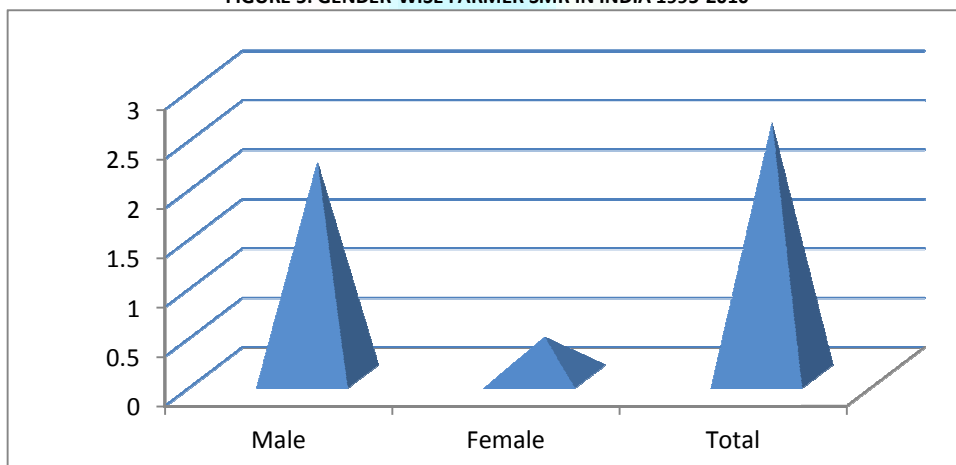
Table 3 reproduces the relevant data that relates to the suicide mortality rate (SMR) in some select years. SMR is defined as the number of suicides per 100000 populations. The table shows a marked increase in the rate of male farmers’ suicide, which appears to be sustained, at least for the periods for which the calculation was made.

TABLE NO 3: GENDER-WISE FARMER SMR IN INDIA 1995-2010

Year	Male	Female	Total
1995	0.083	0.024	0.107
1996	0.109	0.028	0.137
1997	0.112	0.024	0.136
1998	0.130	0.030	0.160
1999	0.132	0.028	0.161
2000	0.135	0.031	0.166
2001	0.138	0.026	0.164
2002	0.153	0.027	0.180
2003	0.147	0.025	0.172
2004	0.159	0.023	0.182
2005	0.149	0.022	0.171
2006	0.146	0.024	0.171
2007	0.145	0.021	0.166
2008	0.141	0.021	0.162
2009	0.149	0.024	0.174
2010	0.136	0.024	0.160
SMR	2.168	0.401	2.569

Source: ncrb.nic.in

FIGURE 5: GENDER-WISE FARMER SMR IN INDIA 1995-2010



A similar ranking in terms of the SMRs for male farmers is presented in Figure 6, which displays similar patterns as the one represented by Figure 6. It is common for researchers and activists to separately look at the SMR for male farmers. Hence, we report this statistic here. But it must be remembered that there is wide variation in the share of female farmers among Indian states. For instance, in 2001, the share of female farmers varied from 17-18% in Kerala and West Bengal to above 50% in Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland. Moreover, the agricultural workforce in India is getting increasingly feminized with time. According to a report by the NCEUS (National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector), between 1993- 94 and 2004-05 the percentage of female farmers had grown from 34.1% to 36.1%. Hence, the traditional approach of focusing on male farmers might no longer be very informative; one needs to look at the farmer population as a whole.²

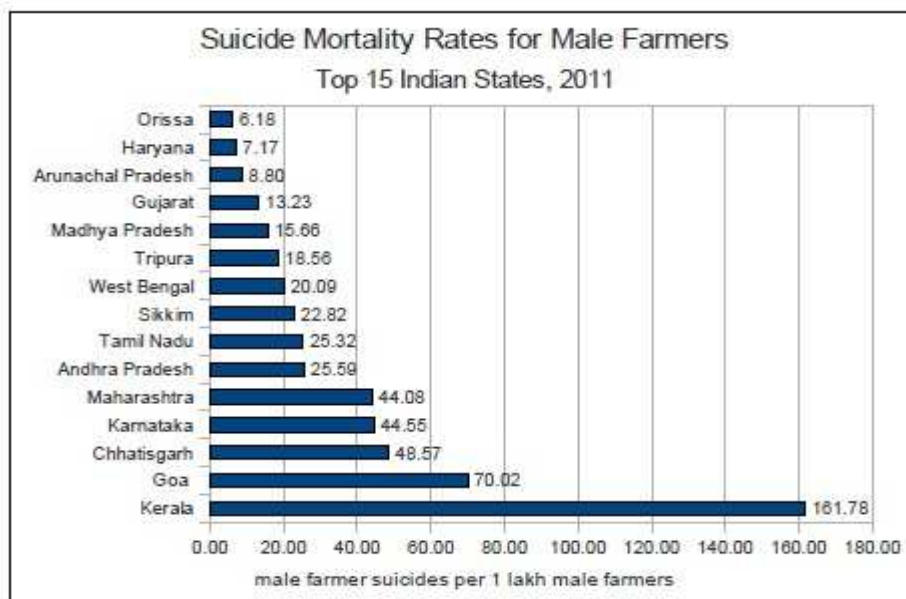


Figure 6: Male Farmer SMRs for the top 15 Indian states in 2001

FIGURE-7: GENDER-WISE FARMER SUICIDE IN INDIA FROM 1995-2010
Age classification of suicide victims

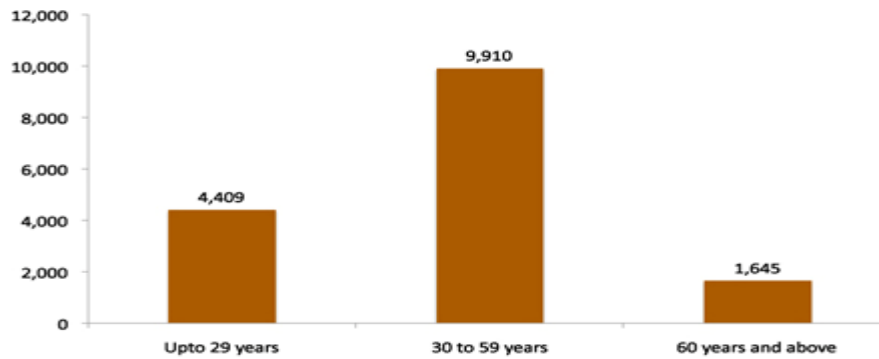
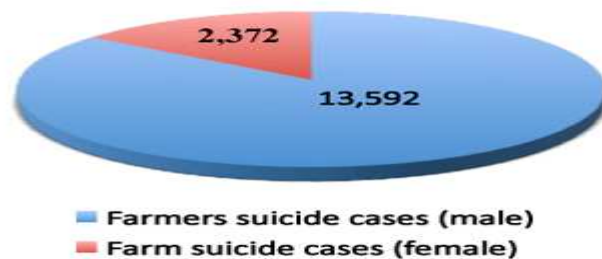


FIGURE-8: FEMALE FARMER SUICIDE IN INDIA FROM 1995-2010

Women farmers, too, commit suicide



CONSEQUENCES

The government must amend laws that are governing the farmers in the Indian agricultural sector. If the government does not make any urgent recommendations or legal provisions to offer relief to the trend of farmer suicide in the affected states, the whole country will suffer the consequences. Some of these are given below:

- National disaster as farmer suicides increase every day.
- Food productivity will be hit badly.
- Food inflation will rise at an alarming rate.
- Severe food crisis.
- The intensity of unemployment problem will be increase.
- Family problems, Social problems, Physiological problems will be increased.
- Poverty will be increased more and more.
- Standard of living will be declined.

CONCLUSION

In this article we have argued that the wave of farmer suicides that have swept across India since the mid-1990s is a plain and simple case of policy-induced disaster of epic proportions. Adoption of neoliberal policies like reduced public investment in agriculture, withdrawal of institutional credit to rural areas, opening up the agricultural sector to global trade, neglect of irrigation facilities and allowing the rampant commercialization of agricultural inputs, have contributed to the development and deepening of acute agrarian crisis. The build-up of farmer debt is a direct result of the deepening agrarian crisis, and the wave of farmer suicides is a direct outcome of mounting debt. We have illustrated the detailed dynamics of this process by looking all India.

It is deplorable that the Central and State governments in the country have done little in terms of adopting and enforcing concrete policies to address this unprecedented situation. Even as, year after year, desperate farmers protest the neoliberal dispensation by turning their fury inward and taking their lives, politicians, bureaucrats and policy-makers look the other way. If 253000 suicides were not enough to wake up our cynical rulers, what will?

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REMEDIES

Farmers need protection through protective legislation as nothing is typically done to help them settle their debts or tackle the unprecedented price rise that leads them to commit suicides. Mere lip sympathy by political parties and government officials is not enough to bridge the widening demand-supply gap in the agricultural sector.

1. Minimum Support Price mechanism for agricultural produce should appropriate with consideration increase in agricultural inputs.
2. All crops should cover under crops insurance.
3. To integrate surface and groundwater irrigation schemes and integrates the line department in order that the schemes are implemented efficiently.
4. Ensure that the formal banking system in the rural areas covers all the credit requirements of farmers and others and that the coverage of the formal financial system is extended to all rural households.
5. Set up a Distress Fund that will provide support to banks in chronically drought prone areas, and permit some debt relief to cultivators in extreme distress.
6. Focus on increasing agricultural productivity with sustained growth and lower costs of production with innovation in high yielding seeds.
7. Develop a land use strategy with particular reference to drought-prone areas.
8. Promote and provide incentives for sustainable agriculture.
9. Identify input needs and monitor the provision of inputs to farmers.
10. Promote relevant public research in agriculture, particularly dry land agriculture, for the development of drought and disease resistant seeds of cereals and pulses.

11. Analyze the relationship between input costs and market prices and suggest appropriate and timely interventions by the state/central government agencies, in order to ensure remunerative prices to the farmers.
12. Monitor the adverse effects of droughts and pests on agriculture and bring in the required initiatives by the appropriate agencies to mitigate distress on account of these calamities.
13. Oversee the settlement of land records, registration of all tenancies, and issue of passbooks to all cultivators including tenants.
14. Improve infrastructure for crop markets and the post-harvest management of the production.
15. Identify proper opportunities to promote rural employment, including nonfarm employment, encourage diversification within and out of agriculture; develop value addition activities such as agro-processing in rural areas in a way that benefits farmers.
16. Crop failures are a disaster for farmers and their families. Therefore government should make legal provision about crop insurance because they need farmers take money from private lenders or banks or other financial institutions but when the crops fail, they are left with no option other than death.
17. Set up a commission with statutory powers that takes decisions on the issues such as genetic modification technology and its impact on Indian agriculture, agriculture pricing policy and cropping pattern.
18. Government should increase public expenditure on rural development.
19. Crop diversification must be adopted by the farmer and govt should give motivation.

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