

Introduction

The basic purpose of land reforms policy was to provide land to the landless households and ensure land productivity and food security. Livelihood of two-thirds of India population is based on agricultural land. 80% of the agricultural land is held by small and marginal farmers in the country. Agriculture sector is a major contributor to GDP. Recently major changes have taken place in agricultural vis- a- vis land policies. Withdrawal of subsidy on credit and introduction of subsidies on import have further deepened the crisis. Outbreak of farmers' suicide indicates that there is an agrarian crisis. Reasons for such situation as identified by several empirical studies are indebtedness, decline in public investment and farm income in agriculture sector, trade liberalization, withdrawal of subsidies, poor extension services, crop failure, risk taking, natural calamities, lop- sided flow of institutional credits, growing informal credit, rising costs, adulterated and spurious inputs, psychological and socio economic causes (illness, gambling, and break up of joint families, etc.). There is a sharp decline of credit share in agriculture and the number of agricultural loan accounts has declined. Indian farmers seem to be getting disillusioned and disgruntled and perhaps not able to cope up with the changing environment. This crisis is being manifested in the form of non-remunerative prices, volatile economy and absence of a protective market and also by way of burning sugarcane field by the farmers and throwing the agriculture produces on the roads. Nevertheless, growing incidences of farmers' suicide are recent phenomena never experienced in the past. Hence, there is a need to review and analyze critically our land and agricultural policies, its impact and come out with appropriate policy measures.

Various Committees have been constituted to deal with the situation such as the Expert Group on Agricultural Indebtedness by R. Radhakrishna (2007) and National Commission on Farmers by MS Swaminathan (2007) and Working Group on Distressed Farmers by S. Johl (2006). By and large, immediate relief package remained the primary concern of all these Committees and preventive measures remained the secondary concern. Thus, in the light of the above background, the Centre for Rural Studies, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie organized a National Level Workshop on "Globalization, Agrarian Crisis and Farmers' Suicides" on 23- 24 November, 07. The basic objectives of the workshop were to examine the causes of growing agrarian crisis and increasing incidence of farmers' suicides in the country.

The workshop was attended by senior government officials, eminent academicians, researchers and members of civil society. A wide range of papers were presented during the workshop covering different dimensions of the issue. Details about the papers presented during the workshop and the list of participants are enclosed at Annexure- I and Annexure- II.

This booklet contains the policy recommendations drawn by the participants on the issues of globalization, agrarian crisis and farmers' suicides.

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Inaugural Addresses

The workshop on “Globalization, Agrarian Crisis and Farmers’ Suicides” was held on 23-24 November, 07 in the Conference Hall of LBS National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie. It was sponsored/ financed by the Ministry of Rural Development, GoI. The workshop started with the welcome address by Dr. B. Ashok, Alternate Coordinator, Centre for Rural Studies who briefly introduced about the Centre, its objectives and functions and informed that it has conducted series of workshops during current financial year. He welcomed Sh. Padamvir Singh, Joint Director of the Academy and Chairman of the Centre for Rural Studies and the participants of the workshop for attending the workshop and share their valuable knowledge and experiences.

The workshop was inaugurated by Shri Padamvir Singh, Joint Director of the Academy and Chairman of the Centre for Rural Studies. In his inaugural speech, he welcomed the participants and expressed his thanks to the Centre for Rural Studies for conducting the workshop on an issue which is of great relevance. He expressed his satisfaction over the high level of participation of delegates from all corners of the country however, showed his concern for the thin attendance of the policy makers. Shri Padamvir Singh, stated that he hoped that the workshop would lead to experience sharing on the issue of agrarian crisis and arrive at a consensus regarding the problems and the solutions. In his address, he raised the following issues:

- (1) There is an urgent need to identify the issues causing agrarian crisis and generate consensus to solve farmers’ problems. Globalization is an irreversible phenomenon now and is penetrating deeper into our system, hence, to criticize

its effects would be a futile exercise as India cannot afford to get isolated from the rest of the world;

(2) Agriculture is no longer a rewarding occupation compared to other urban professions. In addition to the fact that it is a tough occupation, since time immemorial farmers have been exploited and it is the contractors, traders and middlemen who have reaped the profits. Despite all odds, the farmer continues to cultivate his land out of necessity and his love for the profession and the land. In a country like India where a large number of people still live in rural areas and are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood, the situation is not likely to change soon as urban areas cannot absorb all the people. In the United States 96-98% of the U.S. population lives in urban areas and agriculture has become a corporate phenomenon. Low prices of food grains and other agricultural products has made the agricultural sector less rewarding and has led to the persistence of the agrarian crisis. Incidences of farmers' suicides used to take place in the past also but now the data is being captured. The available data however, does not exhibit any definite trend. However, the fact that rural India is going through a tough time cannot be denied. The psyche of farmers is getting influenced by urban culture. Farmers are feeling a sense of relative deprivation, more so as they get exposed to the larger globalized world through the media.

(3) Subsidies have played a major role in the agriculture sector and their withdrawal needs to be substituted by a suitable Safety Net. Therefore, solutions should be recommended through the workshop to protect the distressed agricultural community. The issue of subsidies needs to be addressed during the discussions. Referring to the results of contract farming workshop organized by the CRS, Sh. Padamvir Singh said that the practice needs to be

viewed positively but with caution. It is important to see our strength in the context of global competitiveness and prices of food grains in the global market. There is a need for strengthening the marketing of agricultural produce. We need to analyze whether our agricultural products are competitive in the global market or not. If they fail to be globally competitive, it could lead to further problems in the agrarian sector. Quoting an example of Madhya Pradesh, he said that results have shown that ITC e-chaupal can help the farmers in a big way. Such interventions brought fruitful results as they provide choices to the farmers in terms of marketing of products. Madhya Pradesh e-chaupal informs one day in advance the proposed price for the next day and accordingly floor prices are fixed up. Such linkages help products reach global markets.

The inaugural session was wrapped up with a vote of thanks by Dr. Saroj Arora, Sr. Research Officer, Centre for Rural Studies.

The technical sessions of the workshop were divided into four sections. Technical session- I was on Globalization, Agrarian Crisis and Farmers' Suicides in India, session- II was on Farmers' Suicides in Andhra Pradesh, session- III was on Farmers' Suicides in Punjab and session- IV was on Agrarian Crisis and Farmers' Suicides in Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Objectives and Sub-themes of the Workshop

Basic objectives of the workshop were to discuss the causes of growing agrarian crisis in various States and analyze the measures undertaken so far and to suggest future directions in this regard. Also to discuss *how the agriculture of small farms can be made sustainable in long-term perspective*

and the role of State in the Agrarian Crisis and to what extent paradigm shift in the present neo-liberal policies is desirable.

Sub- themes of the workshop were as follow:

- Globalization and agrarian crisis;
- Agrarian crisis and agrarian distress;
- Indebtedness and other causes of farmers' suicides;
- Way- out: short term and long- term measures for sustainable agriculture.

Policy Recommendations

Participants of the workshop were divided into two sub- groups for the group exercise. Following four major issues were focused during group exercise for drawing the recommendations.

- 1. Package of Relief to Next of Kin Who are Victims of Farmers Suicides**
- 2. Package of Relief to Farmers facing Acute Debt-Burden**
- 3. Measures to Sustain Small Farms Agriculture**
- 4. Measures to address the issue of Land Reforms to Assert Landlessness and Marginalization.**

Recommendations drawn were as follow.

ISSUE 1: PACKAGE OF RELIEF TO NEXT OF KIN WHO ARE VICTIMS OF FARMERS SUICIDES

1. Farmers' suicides are not only persisting but are tending to increase in some of the States.

High suicide prevalent areas (Hot Spot Regions) should be identified. Geographical mapping should be done. Monitoring Cells should be set up.

2. Rs. 5 lakh to be deposited in the Bank Account of the dependent of the deceased and interest per month be paid to the dependent. This should serve as subsistence allowance to the family.
3. One-time debt waiver of both institutional and non-institutional loans.
4. Pension for the Widows and Old Age persons as part of Social Security Network.
5. Employment to one member of the family including Wage and Self Employment, preferably to the women members of the family.
6. In suicide victim families, the children invariably leave their studies.

Hence, special care has to be taken by the State to provide compulsory free education in such families. In addition, medical facilities and health insurance to the dependents be provided.

7. The credit- worthiness of the suicide victim's family to be restored.
8. Definition of the farmer to be widened to include cultivators, cultivating tenants (including unrecorded tenancy) and agricultural labourers.
9. (a) There is a tempering with the suicides data hence, lack of exact data on farmers' suicides. Definition of 'farmer' which determines the eligibility and non eligibility of farmers'

suicides is defined differently by Revenue and the Crime Branch Deptt. There are legal loopholes. Such data variations affect the policy makers. Therefore, the definition of a farmer needs to be concretized.

(b) Suicides data to be maintained at the Gram Panchayat level.

10. Identify all suicide cases of farmers through Census Method.

11. Set-up Help Lines at Gram Panchayat Level. Suitably trained counsellors/ social workers should handle this helpline.

Issue-2: Package of Relief to Farmers Facing Acute Debt-Burden & Addressing Problems of Marginalized Rural Persons

1. If quality of power could be ensured (in terms of timeliness, continuous supply, control of voltage fluctuation) then farmers do not want subsidy. The modalities in this regard can be worked out by each State. However, until such provisions are made, some sort of subsidy on power for farmers should continue. Besides, keeping in view the increasing feminization of agriculture, the issue of timely power supply becomes more important as women face difficulties in visiting their agricultural land, at odd hours, for the purpose of irrigation.

2. Need to promote public policy to strengthen irrigation potential and infrastructure. For dry land agriculture, generally there is no provision of public irrigation. As a result, cost of the ground water goes up and subsequently cost on subsidy also goes high. Private irrigation in such areas becomes very expensive.

Rain fed areas in southern region is rich in tank irrigation but lack of maintenance of these tanks has been experienced over the years. National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) may provide employment to the rural people in such areas and solve water problem in the dry land areas. Minor irrigation (watershed management) is another way out to provide the support.

3. Conversion of loans is needed in the States where there is agrarian distress.

4. Debt Relief Acts relating to DAM DUPAT principle should be enforced.

5. Debt Moratorium Act should be introduced in all such areas affected by agrarian distress for two years.

6. Interest waiver of loans both institutional and non-institutional should be given as one time measure.

7. The institutional and non-institutional sources of finance should charge simple rate of interest instead of compound rate of interest on the funds borrowed for agriculture related activities. And in no case, the interest amount should exceed the principal amount of loan.

8. Any loan should be through the bank.

9. All provisions to arrest the farmers in case of default should be scrapped.

10. Fresh crop loans should be given at 4% per annum (except plantation). In case of dry lands this can be extended even to plantation crops.

11. Comprehensive crop insurance package to compensate acute crop loss.
12. Issuance of Kisan Credit Cards to all farmers.
13. Introduce farmers' friendly banking through Self Help Groups (SHGs). Organize farmers into women and men groups separately.
14. Registration and regulation and licensing of Commission Agents and Moneylenders under Money Lender Act.
15. Punjab has sent a proposal for interest waiving to the Govt. of India but the proposal has yet not been approved.

Extend Suicide Relief and Rehabilitation Package to Punjab and similar States to cover all victim households.

ISSUE: 3 Sustainability of Small Farm Agriculture

The suicides are driven by several factors that include debt from private moneylenders at high rates of interest, soaring input costs, low output prices, need for funds for non-farm expenditure, particularly for healthcare and a complete loss of hope. The economic, ecological, technological and social problems facing marginal and small farmers are yet to receive the integrated attention they need. It is essential that they need to be rescued from the pale of despair and doom

1. Lack of access to technology has been a major factor in augmenting the cost of irrigation for the marginal and small farmers. This has become acute due to ecological crisis and mono-cropping. Hence, the government has to play a key role in getting the

technology accessible to the small and marginal farmers at a cheap rate.

2. *Assured and Remunerative Price for Farm Produce is the core issue.* Farmers should be assured that there will be strong Government intervention to prevent distress sale of their land, asset and agricultural produce. A more scientific view keeping in view the cost of cultivation has to be taken while fixing Minimum Support Price (MSP). MSP and Procurement Policy should be streamlined with the changing market situation. Diversification of crop should be as per geographical climate and land topography.

3. The sale and purchase of crop (Wheat and Paddy) through commission agents should be replaced by sale and purchase directly through State agencies from the farmers. In this context, it is also recommended that the payment should be made directly to the farmer and that also through his/her bank account. A suitable Act in this regard needs to be formulated and implemented.

4. Constitution of Federation for negotiating with the market, for the sale of agriculture produces. It can be an effective medium for providing information about market and strengthen negotiation skill.

5. Cooperative farming should be encouraged to sustain Small-Farm Agriculture.

6. Women Self Help Groups need to be empowered with land rights to augment their income.

7. Contract Farming, based on a well-defined Code of Conduct will be helpful to Small Producers in getting

good quality input, a fair price as well as prompt payment for their produce. *A Code of Conduct for Contract Farming will have to be developed. The government needs to play a pro-active role in this.*

8. The scope of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) Programme should be expanded to cover other crops also to assure food and income security for small farmers, marginal farmers and agricultural labourers.

9. If right prices are evolved for crops other than paddy and wheat then farmers do not want subsidy. Until such policy is evolved existing provision of subsidy should continue.

10. A Market Risk Stabilization Fund should be established jointly by Central and State Government. Financial Institutions should protect farmers during periods of violent fluctuations in prices.

11. Crop Insurance Scheme should increase its coverage and the implementation has to improve. Assessment and indemnity should be on individual basis.

12. There has been drop in government investment in Agriculture which is detrimental for the survival of marginal and small farmers. Hence, Government Investment has to increase in strengthening infrastructure in agriculture.

13. There is also need for an Agriculture Risk Fund to insulate farmers from risk arising due to recurrent droughts and other weather aberrations.

14. High quality inputs should be made available at affordable prices to the farmers.

15. All inputs required for agricultural production-seeds, fertilizers, pesticides etc. should be made available to the farmers through farmer co-operatives. Such co-operatives should be member based and free from bureaucratic interventions and controls.

16. (a) As extension services of govt. are more or less non-existent as far as knowledge inputs are concerned, farmers are almost entirely dependent upon private sector agencies. Enhance the physical interaction between Government Officials, Agricultural Scientists and the Farmers.

(b) Need to improve the awareness of farmers on soil testing, application of fertilizers and pesticides, implications of mono cropping, need for crop rotation and inter cropping for soil fertility management. *The Agriculture University and Agricultural Department need to be strengthened to play the lead role in providing quality seeds and sound Extension Service to the farmers.*

17. *Introduce measures to improve agriculture productivity and investment in infra-structure in agriculture.*

18. Increase in Small Farm Productivity and creating opportunities for crop-livestock integrated farming system as well as agro-processing have become urgent tasks. Agricultural produce should be linked to agro-processing industries. The marketing and processing of this produce should be entirely through farmer member based cooperatives. Any intermediary involved should be strictly evicted.

19. Removal of subsidies on agriculture inputs resulted in difficulties for farmers to procure inputs as the prices have been left to market forces. Also the existing distribution of subsidies is not transparent and often does not reach to the needy farmers but to the companies.

Farm subsidies to be given directly to the farmers. And similar to the pattern of target approach adopted in Public Distribution System (PDS), subsidies should also be provided on target based approach to the small and marginal farmers.

20. Each State Govt. should have their Agricultural Policy document and Perspective Plan for Agriculture.

21. Need to analyze farmers' return as well as traders' return in agriculture sector.

22. Implement watershed development programme as envisaged in the Prime Ministers Package.

23. Each State Govt. should have at least one laboratory to check spurious inputs. The Seeds, Fertilizers and Pesticides Act needs to be implemented strictly.

24. Fatal toxic pesticides banned elsewhere should be banned.

25. Skill Centre to be established for training rural unemployed youth in each State.

26. Innovative credit scheme like Gramin Tatkal Scheme (on the lines of GTZ) be introduced through NABARD.

27. Price destabilizing imports from countries with very heavy subsidies to farmers need to be reviewed.

28. Encourage organic farming.

Issue: 4: Measures to address the issue of Land Reforms to assert Landlessness and Marginalization

In order to strike at the roots of landlessness and present Agrarian crisis the implementation of Land Reforms has become the top most priority in the country. Already the GoI has agreed to constitute a National Land Reforms Council under the Chairpersonship of the Prime Minister and National Land Reforms Committee for adoption of National Land Reforms Policy under the Chairpersonship of the Ministry of Rural Development on a speedy basis. This move of the Government of India is welcomed and suggest following measures to strengthen the hands of the National Land Reforms Councils Committee in its task:

1. Development of a comprehensive livelihood entitlement package for all marginalized section of rural poor which should consist of:

- Land
- Access to institutional support
- Resources (water, inputs, technology and knowledge, etc.)
- Linkage to development of co-operatives (for production, marketing, credit)

2. There is contradiction in various existing laws related to Land, Tribal, PESA Act, and Forest Mining which are causing Agrarian Crisis particularly in the PESA areas.

3.a Land Reforms were meant to give land to landless and increase the efficiency of land productivity but during the second round of land reforms, landowners are becoming land less. Land acquisition is one such step which is causing rural unrest. Land given for socio- economic zones (SEZ) in Chhattisgarh and in Seepat district, the most fertile land is given to NTPC. This situation is prevalent in many other districts too.

(b) Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to be re- thought in terms of displacement and conversion of agricultural land for industry. Any acquisition of land done by government and/or corporate sector for the purpose of economic activities should involve the farmers and landless workers of that area in terms of at least a five per cent stake in share holding. Along with it at least one member from each such family should be absorbed in the economic activities to be created. This will prevent their eviction from their roots.

Wherever land acquisition becomes necessary full- proof Rehabilitation for the displaced (including landless), to protect their livelihood basis, should be ensured.

Other Recommendations

1. Role of farmers' organization remained weak during the last decade. Sporadic and non- sustainable farmers' movement is also an issue that needs to be deliberated upon.

The farmers' organization need to be strengthened to play an active role in pressurizing the State and Central Govt. to promote sustainable small farm agriculture and also to negotiate with the markets.

2. Missing of post harvest linkages including storage is a problem hence; linkages should be introduced under post harvest management.

3. Need to look at subsidiary occupations.

4. Ensuring food- security to family Below Poverty Line (BPL).

5. The Non Government Organizations, media, and others should help the farmers by instilling confidence and explaining the success stories of farmers who could cope well with similar situations in spite of persisting loan and debt problems.

6. Need to explore the status of a widow or daughters in farmer family in the post suicide situation. Social security measures for the widows who are victim of farmers' suicides need to be ensured.

7. Compulsory joint pattas to ensure women's legal access to land.

8. The tenancy reforms should be rigorously implemented to prevent reverse tenancy and absentee landlordism.

9. Farmers are forced to produce in certain anti- climatic zone. To suggest ways and means for extricating agriculture from ecological crisis.

10. Prevention of bio- piracy of bio- diversity by multi nationals and corporates.

11. Sensitization of policy makers.

12. Declare agriculture as an industry.

At the end of the workshop, Sh. Padamvir Singh, Joint Director of the Academy thanked the participants for their active participation and said that he found the recommendations pro-

poor and pro- farmers. Afterwards he invited Sh. Rudhra Gangadharan, Director of the Academy for valedictory address.

In valediction address, Sh. Rudhra Gangadharan, Director of the Academy said that there seems to be an obsession about globalization, modernization, growth of GDP and tendency to forget about the most important issue of food security in India where population size is quite large. He said that farmers' suicide is a serious problem and is a result of weakening of agriculture extension machinery and declining investment in agriculture sector. He emphasized the need to increase productivity and production level and taking feedback through land to lab approach to increase the agricultural growth. All this can happen if there is a political will. There is a provision of massive expenditure in Eleventh Five Year Plan on agriculture. However, there is a need for other kinds of skill up-gradation too that can provide employment. Education should be job oriented and merely higher education can not ensure jobs to youth. There is a need to educate the farmers on scale and quality of use of fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides. He accepted the importance of Minimum Support Price (MSP) and its further extension to the other crops. In the end, he emphasized the need to continue with such discussions/ debates in order to improve the conditions of the farmers. The workshop should not remain a one time measure. There should be follow- up and documentation in the form of publication too.

In the end, Dr. B. Ashok, alternate Co-ordinator, CRS thanked the entire group of participants and also the chairpersons of various sessions for handling their sessions effectively. Agreeing with the point raised by Sh. Rudhra Gangadharan he said that there is a need to discuss and follow-up on the issues of relevance such as sustainability of agriculture, land reforms and subsidies, etc.

ANNEXURE-I

CONTENTS

Sl. Title of Paper (s) and Author (s)

1. Economic Reforms, Agrarian Crisis and Farmers' Suicides in India
D. Narasimha Reddy & Srijit Mishra
2. Globalization vis-à-vis Agrarian Crisis in India
M.S. Sidhu
3. Suicides and the Making of India's Agrarian Crisis
A.R. Vasavi
4. Farmers Suicide: Behavioral and Social Dimensions
Gyanmudra
5. Agrarian Crisis: A View
Ajmer Singh Lakhwal
6. Agrarian Distress, Indebtedness and Farmer Suicides: Some Observations
V. Sridhar
7. Empowering the small farmer: key to finding a way out of the current agrarian distress
Meeta & Rajivlochan
8. Agrarian Crisis vis-à-vis Globalization
A. K. Singhal
9. Globalization, Agrarian Crisis and Farmers' Suicides: Illusion and Reality
R. S. Deshpande
10. Globalization, Agrarian Crisis and Farmers' Suicides Way out: Short-term and Long-term Measures for Sustainable Agriculture
S. Santhanam

11. Punjab Peasantry: A Question of Life and Debt.
Anita Gill
12. Credit through Participatory Management: The Way for Rural Smile
Ravikesh Srivastava
13. Agrarian Crisis, Indebtedness and Farmers Suicides in Punjab
K. Gopal Iyer
14. Farmers' Suicide in India: Agrarian Crisis, Path of Development and Politics in Karnataka
Muzaffar Assadi
15. Falling into Poverty Syndrome: A Study of Farmers of Andhra Pradesh
T. Prabhakar Reddy
16. Farmers' Suicides in Andhra Pradesh: Issues and Policy Concerns
E. Revathi & S. Galab
17. Agrarian Crisis and Farmers Suicides – A Study in the Drought Prone Anantapur District of Andhra Pradesh
G. Sreedhar
18. Agrarian Crises faced by the Farmers of Vidarbha with special reference to it's Cotton Growers
Neelima Deshmukh
19. Agrarian Crisis and Farmers' Suicide in Vidarbha Region of Maharashtra – An Overview
P. R. Bharambe & N. M. Kale

ANNEXURE-II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS ATTENDED THE WORKSHOP

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