

## **Impact of Globalization on Farmers Suicides in India**

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### **1. Introduction:**

In recent years, one can easily observe that there is an increasing rate in the incidence of farmers' suicides in India. Suicide being a multi faced and complex phenomenon, the risks are identified either in the neurobiological or socio-economic domain. The farmers are predisposing in nature and are internal to the individual whereas the latter are the precipitating ones and are external to the individual. A relatively higher suicide among farmer is indicative of a larger malaise in agriculture. There are two dimensions regarded with this crisis in agriculture, an agrarian crisis which threatens the livelihood of those dependent on agriculture; Particularly the small and marginal farmers, landless agricultural labourers' and an agricultural developmental crisis that manifest through of deceleration of productivity and declining profitability which can be attributed to the neglect in the designing of programmes and in the allocation of resources towards agriculture.

### **2. Statement of the Problem:**

Agriculture provides the principal means of livelihoods for over 60 percent of India's population. Despite a steady decline in its share to the gross domestic product (GDP) agriculture remains the largest economic sector in the country. Globalization, rapid growth of population and division of families the farmland has undergone rapid fragmentation. These factors have driven farmers to the debt trap and have caused distress leading to suicide. Most of the field studies expressed 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 to the farmers, and dominance of middle man in agricultural marketing at the time of fixing prices in procurement.

For the last few years every day news paper and others media demonstrated the farmers committing suicides. Nagarajan (2010) in his study stated about suicide the farmers that twelve years period between 1997 to 2008 as many as 1, 99,132 farmer's committed suicide in India. In this context the actual problems being faced by them are to be easily and everyone realize the problems. In this background an attempt has been made in this paper to address the issues of farmer's plight leading to suicide and measures to address the issues have been suggested.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

- To find out Causes of farmer's suicide in India
- To identify Trends of Farmer's Suicide in India
- To analyse impact of globalization on Farmer's suicides in India
- To Measures and suggestion to removal of farmer's suicide in India.

### **4. Methodology:**

The study is based on secondary data. The secondary data were observed from the State Government Agriculture department sources, Reserve Bank of India (RBI), National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NARARD), National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) and various community boards. The study broadly covers the period from 1997-2008, though detailed analysis is confined to the recent years.

**5. Causes for Farmer’s Suicide in India:** During the last few years, the problem aggravated due to deficiency in rainfall, sharp decline in prices for farmers product, lower production and the consequent increase in debt burden of the farmers.

- I. Agricultural crisis
  - II. Family problems
  - III. Physical illness
  - IV. Business loss
  - V. Causes Common Across Categories were
    - Repeated crop failure due to monsoon failure
    - Inability to meet the rising cost of production (farmers have been spend more fertilizers even while crop performance has been showing a declining tread), and
    - Indebtedness due to a host of reasons ranging from a daughters marriage to digging a well which eventually bore no water.
- These causes arose, out of a large picture of globalization & the resultant neglect of agricultural community in India.
- Lack of Irrigation facility
  - Lack of pesticides
  - Lack of Agricultural credit

**6. Trends in Farmers suicides in India 1997 to 2008:**

In the 12(twelve) years period between 1997 and 2008 as many as 1,99,132 famers committed suicide in India (See, Table 1Farmers Suicides in Different States below).

**Trends in Farmers suicides in India 1997 to 2008:**

Year	Maharashtra	A.P	Karnataka	M.P. & Chhattisgarh*	FS^ Big 5 states yearly total	FS All-India yearly total	Big 5 as % of all FS	Big 5 as % of All Suicides
1997	1917	1097	1832	2390	7236	13622	53.1	7.6
1998	2409	1813	1883	2278	8383	16015	52.3	8
1999	2423	1974	2379	2654	9430	16082	58.6	8.5
2000	3022	1525	2630	2660	9837	16603	59.2	9.1
2001	3536	1509	2505	2824	10374	16415	63.2	9.6
2002	3995	1896	2340	2578	10509	17971	58.5	9.5
<b>Totals 1997-2002</b>	17002	9814	13569	15384	55769	96708	57.5	8.5
2003	3836	1800	2678	2511	10825	17164	63.1	9.8
2004	4147	2666	1963	3033	11809	18241	64.7	10.4
2005	3926	2490	1883	2660	10959	17131	64	9.6
2006	4453	2607	1720	2858	11638	17060	68.2	9.9
2007	4238	1797	2135	2856	11026	16632	66.2	9
2008	3802	2105	1737	3152	10797	16196	66.7	8.6
<b>Totals 2003-2008</b>	24402	13465	12116	17070	67054	102424	65.5	9.6
<b>Totals 1997-2008</b>	41404	23279	25685	32454	122823	199132	61.5	9.1

**Source:** Data for 1997-2005 derived by Prof. K. Nagaraj from NCRB reports (Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India) for those years (The Hindu, Nov, 12-12, 2007) and extended thereafter with National Crimes Records Breau (NCRB) ADSI data from Years 2006, 2007 and 2008.

In the period 1997 – 2002, farm suicides in the Big 5 States accounted for roughly one out of every 12 of all suicides in the country. In 2003-08, they accounted for nearly one out of every 10.

The NCRB now has farm suicide data for 12 years. Actually, farm data appear in its records from 1995 onwards, but some States failed to report for the first two years. Hence 1997 from when all States are reporting their farm suicide data, is a more reliable base year. The NCRB has also made access much easier by placing all past years of “Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India” reports on its website.

The 12-year period allows us to compare farm suicide numbers for 1997-2002, with how they turned out in the next 6-year period of 2003-2008. All 12 years were pretty bad, but the latter six were decidedly worse. Reading a ‘trend’ into a single year’s dip or rise in misleading. Better to look at 3-year or 6-year periods within 1997-2008.

### **7. Gender Composition of Farmers Suicides in India:**

Form suicides, according to official data, take place overwhelmingly by the male farmers. Considering the period 1997-2006 as a whole, close to 85 percent of all the farm suicides are by male farmers, and every fifth male suicide in the country is a farms suicide. (See Table 2.) Suicides in general, among the population as a whole, are also largely concentrated among males, but the degree of concentration here is significantly lower than in the case of farm suicides: male suicides in the general population account for nearly 62 percent of all suicides in the country. It is also worth noting that the number of male suicides among farmers has increased quite rapidly, at around 3 percent per annum during this period, 1997-2006; the number of female farm suicides in sharp contrast has remained almost static during the period. Consequently the extent of concentration of farm suicides among males has witnessed a steady increase over the period.

Part of the reason for this overwhelming concentration of farm suicides among males may have to do with the possible undercounting of female farm suicides in the police records on which the NCRB data are based. We had noted earlier that criterion generally adopted in these records for identifying a farmer is title to land and since the title is generally in the name of the household it is very likely that a female farmer who commits suicides will not be recorded as a farmer in these records. But we would also think that in spite of this underestimation, the high concentration of farm suicides among males in fact represents and objective reality. In a context where there the male head of the household is generally considered the ‘bread winner’ in the household, this phenomenon would point towards economic distress as a major motivating factor underlying large number of these suicides, and the acute agrarian crisis in the country would be the basis for this distress.

**TABLE – 2 Number of Farmer’s Suicides and all Suicides in India by Gender, 1997-2006**

Year	Farmer’s Suicides					All Suicides		
	Male		Female		Male Farmer’s suicide as a percent of all farmer’s	Male	Female	Male suicides as % of all suicides
	Number	As % of all Male suicides	Number	As % of all Female suicides				
1997	11229 (100)	20.0	2393 (100)	6.1	82.4	56281 (100)	39548 (100)	58.7
1998	12986 (116)	21.1	3029 (127)	7.0	81.1	61686 (110)	43027 (109)	58.9
1999	13278 (118)	20.3	2804 (117)	6.2	82.6	65488 (116)	45099 (114)	59.2
2000	13501 (120)	20.5	3102 (130)	7.3	81.3	66032 (117)	42561 (108)	60.8
2001	13829 (123)	20.9	2586 (108)	6.1	84.2	66314 (118)	42192 (107)	61.1
2002	15308 (136)	22.1	2663 (111)	6.5	85.2	69332 (123)	41085 (104)	62.8
2003	14701 (131)	20.9	2463 (103)	6.1	85.7	70221 (125)	40630 (103)	63.3
2004	15929 (142)	21.9	2312 (97)	5.6	87.3	72651 (129)	41046 (104)	63.9
2005	14973 (133)	20.5	2158 (90)	5.3	87.4	72916 (130)	40998 (104)	64.0
2006	14664 (131)	19.4	2396 (100)	5.6	86.0	75702 (135)	42410 (107)	64.1
<b>Total Number of suicides, 1997-2006</b>	140398	20.7	25906	6.2	84.4	676623	418596	61.8
<b>Annual Compound Growth Rate (%), 1997-2006</b>	3.0	---	25906	6.2	84.4	676623	418596	61.8

**Source:** Various issues of ADSI, NCRB, GOI.

**8. Globalization and Land Reforms:**

From the Mid – eighties when liberalization started entering the Indian economy at first rather stealthily and then with thunderous gale force from 1991 land reform went off the radar screen of the Indian polity. It became a forgotten agenda. Marketers in the Govt. find it repugnant to talk about it, just in case the operators in the market get frightened by any state intervention in the land / lease market. They are finding the existing land reform laws that were enacted on the basis of central guidelines of early seventies not only unwanted road blocks but also obnoxious to the free play of capital in the land market. Hence there is strong lobby to enhance or the give up land ceiling, to recognize tenancies and allow free market forces to determine terms and conditions of tenancing / leases, to allow corporate houses to enter the agrarian sector to introduce direct capitalist farming, to move away from tradition of crop husbandry to export oriented crop production and the like. The Short question is, has land reform become totally irrelevant in these days of liberalization, privatization and globalization? One has to ponder over the issue for a while.

## 9. The Global Perspective of Farmers Suicide's:

The suicide rate for farmers throughout the world is higher than for the non-farming population. In India, one farmer committed suicide every 32 minutes between 1997 and 2008.

All over the world the impact of an industrial approach to boosting crop yields has stripped many small farmers of their self-sufficiency and thrown them into despair.

### (a) Globalization and farmer's Situation

While the prices of crops have been pushed down – often even below the cost of production – the prices of inputs such as seed, fertilizers and pesticides have gone up. With limited resources, farmers depend on borrowed money to purchase seeds and other inputs and to farm their land. A drop in their farm income could quickly lead to farmers owing more than they own.

### (b) Why are farmer suicide rates so high?

Financial Stress – constant financial pressure related to the “Farm Crisis” and ongoing drought and flood which add to the economic problems. Loss of independence and control: many of the issues are not within the farmer's control – disease, weather, government policy, but the debts are personal sense of loss: repeated sense of hopelessness, loss of crops, loss of land, loss of income, loss of community, loss of family farm, loss of a way of life. Geographical remoteness and the potential for social isolation. Untreated Mental Illness: Lack of access to mental health services in rural areas and the stigma attached to treatment. Depression arising from exposure to agricultural chemicals? Pesticides make increase the risk for mood disorders and ultimately suicide.

## 10. Summary

The analysis presented in the paper revealed that following trade liberalization and also due to a host of other factors like deficient rainfall, excessive concentration on export oriented perennial crops, decline in production and productivity, fall in prices, etc., the agricultural sector of the State has been facing a crisis during the last one decade, which led to rise in farmer” indebtedness and suicides. While farm distress continued, there was significant rise in loans issued by formal financial institutions in the recent period, especially short –term loans, thus, raising the indebtedness of the farmers further.

## 11. Suggestion and Conclusion:

### (a) Short –term Recommendation:

- ❖ Immediate (adequate) compensation given on a priority basis to families of victims,
- ❖ Ex- gratia payment of Rs.2.5 lakh for families to meet loan repayments and live with some level of dignity and land relief funds for damaged land holders in Tamil nadu government also recommended the district administration to give interim help to the farmers rupees ten thousand per acre.
- ❖ Comprehensive insurance safety net;
- ❖ Revamping of extension services in lines with e-choupals; and,
- ❖ Adequate information should be available to the farmers recorded with their selling product and others such as agricultural prices and methods of low-cost organic farming and others technical knowledge in agriculture.

**(b) Long-term Recommendation:**

Fundamental policy changes to factor in the fluctuating production cost in the Minimum Support Price mechanism; To integrate surface and groundwater irrigation schemes and integrate the line departments in order that the schemes are implemented efficiently.

**Conclusion**

The above measures will provide some immediate relief to the farmers. In the long- run, however, it is imperative to increase the competitiveness of the sector by undertaking comprehensive restructuring programmers for the improvement in yield levels and reduction in cost of production, so as to face the challenges of trade liberalization. The experience of Kerala, thus, clearly shows that without adequate safety nets and restructuring programmes, if a sector is pushed to the forces of competition there will be severe consequences. After nearly a decade, the government realized the problem and, hence, recently prepared a programme for the revival of the plantation sector.

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