

# Problems faced by farmers in Karnataka

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## Abstract

Karnataka's Farmers have been facing several issues ranging from improper technology to agricultural loan debts. Karnataka is a vast state with varied topography, while there are agriculturally prosperous regions, some regions are severely affected by the frequent droughts. The Karnataka government even after introducing and implementing certain policies for the farmers, have failed to protect the farmers, this has led to more than 3500 farmers committing suicide in the period of four years from 2013 to 2017. The opposition parties have ceased the opportunity to put pressure on the government, as they seek to improve the condition and growth of agricultural sector of the Karnataka, that has become stagnant in the recent years.

Karnataka's economy is largely dependent on the revenue generated from the IT sector, as major cities including capital Bangalore have become a major hub for IT industry. But on the other hand, agricultural sector's growth has been on a downward trajectory, as droughts are becoming a common event in various regions across Karnataka, while Northern Karnataka region is the worst affected region of the state. Although a state budget allocation of Rs. 3823 crore for the year 2017-18, the 2/3rd of the agricultural production in the state is still dependent on rainfall. Any delay in the rainfall or zero-rainfall, will affect the majority of farming communities in Karnataka due to lack of water management system and state's inadequacy to implement the policies to improve the condition of the agricultural sector.

Farmers' suicide has become a pertinent issue in the state, last year Karnataka faced the worst droughts in last 40-odd years. Droughts have affected several districts of the state for the fourth year running, the Northern region ranks on the top in terms of drought-prone region, as the region lacks proper irrigation system and rely on traditional methods of farming. Out of the 3515 farmers' death in between 2013 to 2017, approximately 2500 of the farmer suicides happened due to the drought or due to the failure of crop. The growing agrarian crisis in the state has resulted in the stagnation of the agricultural sector that is one of the major contributors towards the share in Karnataka's GDP.

*Key words: revenue, economy, Droughts, Karnataka GDP, agriculture, water management system*

## Introduction

Although we all currently rely on industrial agriculture to produce the majority of the food we eat, this type of agriculture is facing problems that may threaten its future. In this lesson, we will explore these problems and how they influence the future of food production. Think about how much food you eat each day. Now, think about how big the human population is and how much food is needed to feed all of those people. Since the development of agriculture, most of the food needed to feed the population has been produced through industrialized agriculture. Since the 1960s, the amount of food produced through this type of agriculture has increased drastically, and currently there is enough food produced to feed every human on Earth.

Although industrialized agriculture has been successful in producing large quantities of food, the future of food production is in jeopardy due to problems in agriculture. Two of the most major problems in agriculture are the loss of agricultural land and the decrease in the varieties of crops and livestock produced. One of the major problems facing agriculture is the loss of agricultural land, because as more land is lost, it will become more difficult to produce the amount of food needed to feed the growing human population. When discussing the area of land, the term hectare is often used, and this term is a unit of area that is equivalent to 10,000 square meters, or around 2.5 acres.

Worldwide, around three million hectares of agricultural land are lost each year because the soil degrades and becomes unusable due to erosion, which is when soil components move from one location to another by wind or water. An additional four million hectares are lost each year when agricultural land is converted and used for highways, housing, factories, and other urban needs. In the United States, around 140 million hectares of agricultural land has been lost in the last 30 years as a result of soil degradation and conversion for urban use.

The trends in the loss of agricultural lands do not look promising for the future of agriculture in the United States. It is estimated that over 40 million hectares of agricultural land in the United States is in danger of being lost due to exposure to erosion by wind or water. If this land is lost, people may find it more difficult to find produce, and prices may also rise. Another major problem in agriculture is the overall decrease in the varieties of crops and livestock produced. In the early years of agriculture, farmers grew a wide variety of crops and raised many different types of livestock. Since the development of industrialized agriculture the number of different types of crops and livestock.

## Objective:

This paper seeks to study and enumerate problems in Karnataka Agriculture

## Problems in the Karnataka Agri sector

Some of the major problems and their possible solutions have been discussed as follows. Indian agriculture is plagued by several problems; some of them are natural and some others are manmade.

### *1. Small and fragmented land-holdings:*

The seemingly abundance of net sown area of 141.2 million hectares and total cropped area of 189.7 million hectares (1999-2000) pales into insignificance when we see that it is divided into economically unviable small and scattered holdings.

The average size of holdings was 2.28 hectares in 1970-71 which was reduced to 1.82 hectares in 1980-81 and 1.50 hectares in 1995-96. The size of the holdings will further decrease with the infinite Sub-division of the land holdings.

The problem of small and fragmented holdings is more serious in densely populated and intensively cultivated states like Kerala, West Bengal, Bihar and eastern part of Uttar Pradesh where the average size of land holdings is less than one hectare and in certain parts it is less than even 0.5 hectare.

Rajasthan with vast sandy stretches and Nagaland with the prevailing 'Jhoom' (shifting agriculture) have larger average sized holdings of 4 and 7.15 hectares respectively. States having high percentage of net sown area like Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh have holding size above the national average.

Further it is shocking to note that a large proportion of 59 per cent holdings in 1990- 91 were marginal (below 1 hectare) accounting for 14.9 per cent of the total operated area. Another 19 per cent were small holdings (1-2 hectare) taking up 17.3 per cent of the total operated area.

Large holdings (above 10 hectare) accounted for only 1.6 per cent of total holdings but covered 17.4 per cent of the operated area (Table 22.1). Hence, there is a wide gap between small farmers, medium farmers (peasant group) and big farmers (landlords).

The main reason for this sad state of affairs is our inheritance laws. The land belonging to the father is equally distributed among his sons. This distribution of land does not entail a collection or consolidated one, but its nature is fragmented.

Different tracts have different levels of fertility and are to be distributed accordingly. If there are four tracts which are to be distributed between two sons, both the sons will get smaller plots of each land tract. In this way the holdings become smaller and more fragmented with each passing generation.

Sub-division and fragmentation of the holdings is one of the main causes of our low agricultural productivity and backward state of our agriculture. A lot of time and labour is wasted in moving seeds, manure, implements and cattle from one piece of land to another.

Irrigation becomes difficult on such small and fragmented fields. Further, a lot of fertile agricultural land is wasted in providing boundaries. Under such circumstances, the farmer cannot concentrate on improvement.

The only answer to this ticklish problem is the consolidation of holdings which means the reallocation of holdings which are fragmented, the creation of farms which comprise only one or a few parcels in place of multitude of patches formerly in the possession of each peasant.

But unfortunately, this plan has not succeeded much. Although legislation for consolidation of holdings has been enacted by almost all the states, it has been implemented only in Punjab, Haryana and in some parts of Uttar Pradesh.

Consolidation of about 45 million holdings has been done till 1990-91 in Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh. The other solution to this problem is cooperative farming in which the farmers pool their resources and share the profit.

## 2. Seeds:

Seed is a critical and basic input for attaining higher crop yields and sustained growth in agricultural production. Distribution of assured quality seed is as critical as the production of such seeds. Unfortunately, good quality seeds are out of reach of the majority of farmers, especially small and marginal farmers mainly because of exorbitant prices of better seeds.

In order to solve this problem, the Government of India established the National Seeds Corporation (NSC) in 1963 and the State Farmers Corporation of India (SFCI) in 1969. Thirteen State Seed Corporations (SSCs) were also established to augment the supply of improved seeds to the farmers.

High Yielding Variety Programme (HYVP) was launched in 1966-67 as a major thrust plan to increase the production of food grains in the country.

The Indian seed industry had exhibited impressive growth in the past and is expected to provide further potential for growth in agricultural production: The role of seed industry is not only to produce adequate quantity of quality seeds but also to achieve varietal diversity to suit various agro-climatic zones of the country.

The policy statements are designed towards making available to the Indian farmer, adequate quantities of seed of superior quality at the appropriate time and place and at an affordable price so as to meet the country's food and nutritional security goals.

Indian seeds programme largely adheres to limited generation system for seed multiplication. The system recognises three kinds of generation, namely breeder, foundation and certified seeds. Breeder seed is the basic seed and first stage in seed production. Foundation seed is the second stage in seed production chain and is the progeny of breeder seed.

Certified seed is the ultimate stage in seed production chain and is the progeny of foundation seed. Production of breeder and foundation seeds and certified seeds distribution have gone up at an annual average rate of 3.4 per cent, 7.5 per cent and 9.5 per cent respectively, between 2001-02 and 2005-06).

### **3. Manures, Fertilizers and Biocides:**

Indian soils have been used for growing crops over thousands of years without caring much for replenishing. This has led to depletion and exhaustion of soils resulting in their low productivity. The average yields of almost all the crops are among the lowest in the world. This is a serious problem which can be solved by using more manures and fertilizers.

Manures and fertilizers play the same role in relation to soils as good food in relation to body. Just as a well-nourished body is capable of doing any good job, a well nourished soil is capable of giving good yields. It has been estimated that about 70 per cent of growth in agricultural production can be attributed to increased fertilizer application.

Thus increase in the consumption of fertilizers is a barometer of agricultural prosperity. However, there are practical difficulties in providing sufficient manures and fertilizers in all parts of a country of India's dimensions inhabited by poor peasants. Cow dung provides the best manure to the soils.

But its use as such is limited because much of cow dung is used as kitchen fuel in the shape of dung cakes. Reduction in the supply of fire wood and increasing demand for fuel in the rural areas due to increase in population has further complicated the problem. Chemical fertilizers are costly and are often beyond the reach of the poor farmers. The fertilizer problem is, therefore, both acute and complex.

It has been felt that organic manures are essential for keeping the soil in good health. The country has a potential of 650 million tonnes of rural and 160 lakh tonnes of urban compost which is not fully utilized at present. The utilization of this potential will solve the twin problem of disposal of waste and providing manure to the soil.

The government has given high incentive especially in the form of heavy subsidy for using chemical fertilizers. There was practically no use of chemical fertilizers at the time of Independence As a result of initiative by the government and due to change in the attitude of some progressive farmers, the consumption of fertilizers increased tremendously.

In order to maintain the quality of the fertilizers, 52 fertilizer quality control laboratories have been set up in different parts of the country. In addition, there is one Central Fertilizer Quality Control and Training Institute at Faridabad with its three regional centres at Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai.

Pests, germs and weeds cause heavy loss to crops which amounted to about one third of the total field produce at the time of Independence. Biocides (pesticides, herbicides and weedicides) are used to save the crops and to avoid losses. The increased use of these inputs has saved a lot of crops, especially the food crops from unnecessary wastage. But indiscriminate use of biocides has resulted in wide spread environmental pollution which takes its own toll.

### **4. Irrigation:**

Although India is the second largest irrigated country of the world after China, only one-third of the cropped area is under irrigation. Irrigation is the most important agricultural input in a tropical monsoon country like India where rainfall is uncertain, unreliable and erratic India cannot achieve sustained progress in agriculture unless and until more than half of the cropped area is brought under assured irrigation.

This is testified by the success story of agricultural progress in Punjab Haryana and western part of Uttar Pradesh where over half of the cropped area is under irrigation! Large tracts still await irrigation to boost the agricultural output.

However, care must be taken to safeguard against ill effects of over irrigation especially in areas irrigated by canals. Large tracts in Punjab and Haryana have been rendered useless (areas affected by salinity, alkalinity and water-logging), due to faulty irrigation. In the Indira Gandhi Canal command area also intensive irrigation has led to sharp rise in sub-soil water level, leading to water-logging, soil salinity and alkalinity.

### **5. Lack of mechanisation:**

In spite of the large scale mechanisation of agriculture in some parts of the country, most of the agricultural operations in larger parts are carried on by human hand using simple and conventional tools and implements like wooden plough, sickle, etc.

Little or no use of machines is made in ploughing, sowing, irrigating, thinning and pruning, weeding, harvesting threshing and transporting the crops. This is specially the case with small and marginal farmers. It results in huge wastage of human labour and in low yields per capita labour force.

There is urgent need to mechanise the agricultural operations so that wastage of labour force is avoided and farming is made convenient and efficient. Agricultural implements and machinery are a crucial input for efficient and timely agricultural operations, facilitating multiple cropping and thereby increasing production.

Some progress has been made for mechanising agriculture in India after Independence. Need for mechanisation was specially felt with the advent of Green Revolution in 1960s. Strategies and programmes have been directed towards replacement of traditional and inefficient implements by improved ones, enabling the farmer to own tractors, power tillers, harvesters and other machines.

A large industrial base for manufacturing of the agricultural machines has also been developed. Power availability for carrying out various agricultural operations has been increased to reach a level of 14 kW per hectare in 2003-04 from only 0.3 kW per hectare in 1971-72.

This increase was the result of increasing use of tractor, power tiller and combine harvesters, irrigation pumps and other power operated machines. The share of mechanical and electrical power has increased from 40 per cent in 1971 to 84 per cent in 2003-04.

Uttar Pradesh recorded the highest average sales of tractors during the five year period ending 2003-04 and West Bengal recorded the highest average sales of power tillers during the same period.

Strenuous efforts are being made to encourage the farmers to adopt technically advanced agricultural equipments in order to carry farm operations timely and precisely and to economise the agricultural production process.

### **6. Soil erosion:**

Large tracts of fertile land suffer from soil erosion by wind and water. This area must be properly treated and restored to its original fertility.

### **7. Agricultural Marketing:**

Agricultural marketing still continues to be in a bad shape in rural India. In the absence of sound marketing facilities, the farmers have to depend upon local traders and middlemen for the disposal of their farm produce which is sold at throw-away price.

In most cases, these farmers are forced, under socio-economic conditions, to carry on distress sale of their produce. In most of small villages, the farmers sell their produce to the money lender from whom they usually borrow money.

According to an estimate 85 per cent of wheat and 75 per cent of oil seeds in Uttar Pradesh, 90 per cent of Jute in West Bengal, 70 per cent of oilseeds and 35 per cent of cotton in Punjab is sold by farmers in the village itself. Such a situation arises due to the inability of the poor farmers to wait for long after harvesting their crops.

In order to meet his commitments and pay his debt, the poor farmer is forced to sell the produce at whatever price is offered to him. The Rural Credit Survey Report rightly remarked that the producers in general sell their produce at an unfavourable place and at an unfavourable time and usually they get unfavourable terms.

In the absence of an organised marketing structure, private traders and middlemen dominate the marketing and trading of agricultural produce. The remuneration of the services provided by the middlemen increases the load on the consumer, although the producer does not derive similar benefit.

Many market surveys have revealed that middlemen take away about 48 per cent of the price of rice, 52 per cent of the price of groundnuts and 60 per cent of the price of potatoes offered by consumers.

In order to save the farmer from the clutches of the money lenders and the middle men, the government has come out with regulated markets. These markets generally introduce a system of competitive buying, help in eradicating malpractices, ensure the use of standardised weights and measures and evolve suitable machinery for settlement of disputes thereby ensuring that the producers are not subjected to exploitation and receive remunerative prices.

### **8. Inadequate storage facilities:**

Storage facilities in the rural areas are either totally absent or grossly inadequate. Under such conditions the farmers are compelled to sell their produce immediately after the harvest at the prevailing market prices which are bound to be low. Such distress sale deprives the farmers of their legitimate income.

The Parse Committee estimated the post-harvest losses at 9.3 per cent of which nearly 6.6 per cent occurred due to poor storage conditions alone. Scientific storage is, therefore, very essential to avoid losses and to benefit the farmers and the consumers alike.

At present there are number of agencies engaged in warehousing and storage activities. The Food Corporation of India (F.C.I.), the Central Warehousing Corporation (C.W.C.) and State Warehousing Corporation are among the principal agencies engaged in this task. These agencies help in building up buffer stock, which can be used in the hour of need. The Central Government is also implementing the scheme for establishment of national Grid of Rural Godowns since 1979-80.

This scheme provides storage facilities to the farmers near their fields and in particular to the small and marginal farmers. The Working Group on additional storage facilities in rural areas has recommended a scheme of establishing a network of Rural Storage Centres to serve the economic interests of the farming community.

### ***9. Inadequate transport:***

One of the main handicaps with Indian agriculture is the lack of cheap and efficient means of transportation. Even at present there are lakhs of villages which are not well connected with main roads or with market centres.

Most roads in the rural areas are Kutcha (bullock- cart roads) and become useless in the rainy season. Under these circumstances the farmers cannot carry their produce to the main market and are forced to sell it in the local market at low price. Linking each village by metalled road is a gigantic task and it needs huge sums of money to complete this task.

### ***10. Scarcity of capital:***

Agriculture is an important industry and like all other industries it also requires capital. The role of capital input is becoming more and more important with the advancement of farm technology. Since the agriculturists' capital is locked up in his lands and stocks, he is obliged to borrow money for stimulating the tempo of agricultural production.

The main suppliers of money to the farmer are the money-lenders, traders and commission agents who charge high rate of interest and purchase the agricultural produce at very low price. All India Rural Credit Survey Committee showed that in 1950-51 the share of money lenders stood at as high as 68.6 per cent of the total rural credit and in 1975-76 their share declined to 43 per cent of the credit needs of the farmers.

This shows that the money lender is losing ground but is still the single largest contributor of agricultural credit. Rural credit scenario has undergone a significant change and institutional agencies such as Central Cooperative Banks, State Cooperative Banks, Commercial Banks, Cooperative Credit Agencies and some Government Agencies are extending loans to farmers on easy terms.

There has been a steady increase in the flow of institutional credit to agriculture over the years.



## Institutional Credit to Agriculture:

Institutions	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Co-operative Banks	18,363	20,801	23,604	24,296	26,959
Share (per cent)					
Regional Rural Banks	3,172	4,219	4,854	5,467	7,581
Share (per cent)					
Commercial Banks	24,733	27,807	33,587	41,047	52,441
Share (per cent)					
Total	46,268	52,827	62,045	70,810	86,981
Per cent increase					

**Conclusion**

The -Karnataka government envisions a 4.5% sustained growth rate for the agricultural sector of the state, as the government looks to enhance the productivity, while reducing the cost for sustainable agriculture to increase the farmers' income. The Karnataka government is looking to bring in changes in the functioning of agricultural sector, by introducing drought-proof agricultural system to promote climate adaptable techniques and utilise the natural resources in a sustainable manner. While the measures mentioned above can certainly help bring in stability in the agricultural sector of the Karnataka's economy, but it remains to be seen whether the state government can implement such policy measure in election-bound state.

The agrarian sector in Karnataka has been neglected, ever since IT-sector became the major source of revenue for the state. The degenerative farming methods and feeble policy structures have hampered the growth of the agricultural sector of Karnataka, while the changing climate has made the situation worse for the farmers, as frequent droughts have severely damaged the crops. The last budget of government before the upcoming legislative assembly elections, focused on improving the agricultural sector, as the CM wants to make sure that he has the support of the agrarian community of the state, while bringing in reforms to have a sustainable agricultural sector within the state.

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