



## SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF FARMERS: A CASE STUDY OF WARANGAL DISTRICT

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### ABSTRACT

Any assessment for the status of Farmers has to start from the social framework, social structures, cultural norms and value systems that influence social expectations regarding the behaviour of both men and women and determine women's roles and their position in society. A society is composed of many institutions and most important of them are the system of decent family and kinship, marriage and religious traditions. They provide the ideology and moral basis for men and women about their rights and duties and their status and role. Living condition of women living in plain region is totally different from women living in mountainous region. Relief is the main factor which influences a person's stability.

**Keywords:** social structures, kinship, religious traditions, ideology, moral basis

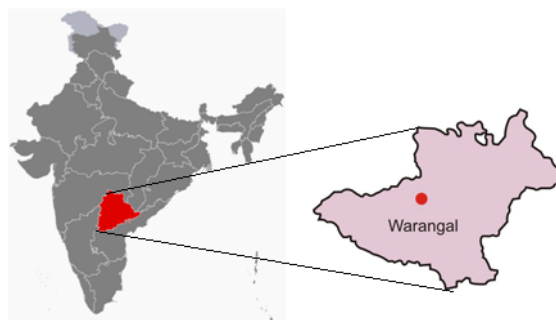
### INTRODUCTION

Indian agriculture had reached the stage of development and maturity much before the now advanced countries of the world entered on the path of progress. At that time, there was a proper balance between agriculture and industry and both flourished hand in hand. This situation continued till the middle of the eighteenth century. Agriculture contributed two-thirds of national income and after the initiation of planning in India, the share of agriculture GDP declined from 55.3 percent in 1950-51, and 37.9 per cent in 1980-81 and further to 12 in 2012. In 1951, 69.5 per cent of the working population was engaged in agriculture. This percentage fell to 52.1 percent in 2004-05 of underemployment and disguised unemployment. Six major causes for agricultural crisis because of globalization policies in India they are: liberal import of agricultural products, cutback in agricultural subsidies, lack of easy and low-cost loan to agriculture, decline in government investment in the agricultural sector, restructuring of the public distribution system (PDS), and special economic

zones are the major reason for agriculture crisis in India.

### STUDY OF AREA

Warangal is located at 18.0°N 79.58°E. It has an average elevation of 302 metres (990 feet). It is settled in the eastern part of Deccan Plateau made up of granite rocks and hill formations which left the region barren making the cultivation depend on seasonal rainfalls. There are no river flows nearby Warangal, which makes it to rely on Kakatiya Canal which originates from Sriram Sagar Project to meet the drinking water requirements. Located in the semi-arid region of Telangana.



In 2011 a study on Warangal reported that, 471,000 ha are cultivated each year, and of them, 138,900 are sown more than once, resulting in a gross cropped area of 609,800 ha. 323,900 hectares (68.8%) of cultivated land are irrigated and the remaining cropland is rain fed. At the time, the largest crop is rice, which accounts for 198,000 hectares each year (32.5% of gross cropped area). Almost all rice cultivation in Warangal is irrigated. The next largest crop is cotton, planted on 158,700 hectares (26% of gross cropped area). Altogether, farmers grow grains (mostly rice and maize with some sorghum) on 287,000 hectares (47.1% of gross cropped area), pulses and legumes (groundnut, green gram, red gram, bajra, and Bengal gram) on 104,300 hectares (17.1% of gross cropped area), and horticultural crops (mostly chillies, some turmeric) on 33,400 ha (5.5% of gross cropped area).

**NEED FOR THE STUDY:** Agricultural activity for their income. Agriculture in India is undergoing a structural change leading to a crisis. Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are the first state that drew country wide attention through a state of suicides by farmers. The first spurt in farmer's suicides occurred in the mid-1980s. 1986-1987 there were a few cases in the later years, so the early warnings of crisis in agriculture in the form of suicides were ignored as aberrations. During the year 1997-2007 farmer suicides in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana was 21,174. Different causes for farmer's committed suicide in India increasing indebtedness, inadequate support price and repeated crop failure. Agrarian conditions in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have marginalization of holding and resource stress, income and consumption levels of farmers monthly level of income is less than the monthly consumption expenditure for all classes of farmers up to semi-medium farmers.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- Telangana mainly dependent on rain fall for production, change in climate has severe impact on forming shortage of rains greatly reduces the yields and profitability.
- Deccan plateau in general prolonged dry spells high incidence of rain water runs off causes soil erosion.
- Electronic and print media have exposed the farmer suicides in Warangal district of

- Telangana Farmers growing different crops have been committing suicide. However, cotton farmers in the district formed the majority. It is to be noted that cotton is not a traditional crop in the district. A shift from traditional food crops to commercial crops such as cotton, chillies etc have taken place. Cash crops are capital intensive and risk prone.
- Crop failure or loss is said to be one of the main contributory factors of farmer's suicides, besides several others. On account of this, thousands of farmers committed suicide. The members of deceased farmer's families have become orphans at once and are facing innumerable difficulties, troubles, pains, sufferings, agony and misery.

#### METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The present study will be conducted in the agrarian state of Telangana. It will focus on the dismal state of agriculture in the Warangal district of Telangana. The region was selected for study as 2/3rd of the farmer suicides have been noticed in the Telangana region and among which Warangal district has seen the highest rate of farmer suicides in the state. The district's agriculture sector has seen some bad times with drought, crop failures resulting from pests and attack from diseases and the non-availability of credits playing their part. By analyzing various aspects of the district data in the agricultural sector like yield, productivity, land utilization, irrigational facilities, agricultural credits etc. the study will be carried out to determine the reasons for the dismal state, of agriculture in the district. To design the structured questionnaire thorough literature guidance especially socioeconomic causes for farmers' suicide was considered. Further, questionnaire was divided into two parts, first, basic demographic profile of the victim farmers. Second, socioeconomic factors caused for farmers' suicide. Socio factors such as, literacy rate, family size, caste, victim's cultivation experience, opinion on seeds fertilizers and pesticides were considered for study. Similarly, economic factors such as, land holding pattern, various family expenditures, cost of cultivation, cost of pesticides and sources credit were considered for this study. To collect data structured questionnaire is used primarily for

quantitative analysis and followed with unstructured interview method to procure additional information which would also enhance the response quality. Both questionnaire and interview data was used for complete analysis.

**DISCUSSION**

**Socio-Economic Survey in Warangal**



Characteristics	Warangal
<b>Gender Composition (%)</b>	
Male	97.21
Female	2.78
<b>Literacy (%)</b>	
Literates	46.5
Non literates	53.5
<b>Age Group(%)</b>	
30-50	66.1
<b>Family Type (%)</b>	
Nuclear Family	93.9
Joint Family	7.1
<b>Social Group(%)</b>	
SC	15.8
ST	4.4
BC	67.5
OC	12.3

<b>Ownership Category (%)</b>	
Pure Tenant	7.5
Pure Owner	63.5
Owner cum Tenant	25.2
<b>Operational Category (%)</b>	
Marginal & Small	91.2
Semi-medium & Medium	8.5
Large	Nil
Farmers Having agr. as the only Occupation (%)	47.5

*Source: Field Study (kamraju 2016).*

A recent sample survey of socio-economic characteristics of farmers who committed suicide in 2013 and 2014 in four districts (kamraju 2016) also shows similar results comparable to earlier studies. The survey also brought out the factors contributing to the incidence of suicides. These findings may be summed up as the following stylized facts:

- The more the dependence on the ground water sources of irrigation for cultivating non-food crops, the higher the probability of the farmers committing suicides
- The more the dependence of the farmers on the high cost informal credit for working capital and fixed capital for raising the non-food crops, the higher the plausibility of the farmers committing suicides
- The tenant farmers who grow non-food crops and depend on ground water sources for irrigating the crops are more prone to commit suicides
- Though suicides are not class specific, majority of suicides are among small and marginal farmers, followed by upwardly mobile middle level farmers.
- Suicides are noticed among all caste groups of farmers but most of the cases are among 'other backward classes' OBCs.
- The more the dependency of farmers for the inputs on the markets, and the more the market volatility in output prices, more is the probability of farmers committing suicides.
- The farmers whose household income is more diversified, the less the possibility for the farmers committing suicides.

- The more is the proportion of their income that farmers are forced to spend on education, health and social events, the more is the probability of farmers committing suicides.

#### PROBLEMS FACED BY OUR FARMERS

##### Crop insurance programmes

- Crop insurance programmes have not been able to recover farmers' investments in most cases
- This is due to lack of accurate farm-level data that can be used to settle claims
- Satellite and remote sensing technologies are for the future

##### Economics of demand and supply

- Planted acreages have little to no connection with projected demand
- With every recurring phenomenon of high production that is in excess of demand, there is the consequent (and drastic) fall in price.
- When a farmer plants a crop, he does not know what the likely market price of his produce will be
- The government's minimum support price (MSP) gives him some direction, but it operates only with some crops  
No commodity-based farmers' organization
- In other countries, such organisations advise farmers on global projections of demand and supply for specific crops and help in moderating acreages in line with projected demand
- There is no commodity-based farmers' organization in the country to address these issues
- Neither are there platforms for farmers to highlight issues to key stakeholders such as policymakers, economists and scientists
- Existing farmer organisations are aligned with political or other special interest groups

##### High-input cost of farm labor

- I. The cost of labor has risen due to social welfare programmes and minimum wage levels

- II. Also, the problem is the availability of labour at the right time and at the right cost
- III. At peak times, like sowing, transplanting, harvesting, etc., it is very difficult to get sufficient farm labour
- IV. One solution to address this is greater reliance on technology
- V. It can be through farm mechanization, the use of weedicides or genetic engineering that can lower input and time costs
- VI. Farmers should be encouraged to use such labour-saving options instead of being burdened with the social objective of protecting rural employment and being denied access to new technology

#### What can be done?

- ✓ An idea that has gained much traction in recent days is cooperative farming. This is already popular in France, Germany, Romania, Kyrgyzstan, Nicaragua, Kenya, and Bangladesh among others. There are several variants of cooperation ranging from collective action in accessing credit, acquiring inputs and marketing to production cooperatives that also include land pooling; labour pooling; joint investment, joint water management and joint production.

#### Advantages of cooperative farming

- ✓ The advantages of aggregating small farms into larger, voluntary, cooperatives include greater capacity to undertake lumpy investment in irrigation and farm machinery, more efficient farming practices, greater bargaining power and better terms in the purchase or leasing of land, access to credit, purchase of inputs and the sale of produce.

#### Focus on the marginal farmer

- ✓ There are rising cases of farmer suicide
- ✓ The reasons for this vary: cotton crop has been whittled by whiteflies, basmati's market price has declined, and the local moneylender has hiked up rates to 20%
- ✓ A larger number of small farmers rather than marginal farmers reportedly committed suicide



in States like Maharashtra, Telangana and Karnataka

- ✓ Somehow, small farmers are also bedeviled by the agricultural crisis

#### On input costs

- ✓ Agriculture in States like Punjab is typically a monoculture of wheat and paddy
- ✓ When input costs associated with fertilizers, crop-protection chemicals and seeds rose, along with fixed costs associated with agricultural equipment such as tractors and submersible pumps, agriculture became economically unviable
- ✓ Prices have risen — of arhar seeds and staple crops like paddy and sugarcane, of fertilizers and plain barley
- ✓ Hiring a laborer can now cost at least 20/hour, excluding rates when NREGA is prevalent, compared to 6-9/hour previously
- ✓ Animal hire rates have also increased in a similar manner
- ✓ The cost of labour, associated with both animal and machine labour, has also undergone a substantial jump

#### Re-tailoring agriculture

- ✓ Solving this crisis requires an inclusive approach
- ✓ Our policies should encourage integrated pest management, an approach that focusses on combining biological, chemical, mechanical and physical means to combat pests with a long-term emphasis on eliminating or significantly reducing the need for pesticides
- ✓ State seed policies should focus on encouraging contract farming, along with identification of new genotypes for treating pest and disease syndromes, as well as adverse weather conditions
- ✓ Precision-farming techniques like Systematic Rice Intensification can help increase seed production in this regard
- ✓ Our farm equipment policy needs to be retailored with a focus on manufacturing farming equipment and implements that are currently imported

#### Structural changes

- ✓ We need to ensure that institutional financing is available and accessible and benefit provision is simplified while disbursed funds are effectively monitored

- ✓ States should seek to establish early warning signals, monitoring farmers who go past set limits and seek unsustainable loans
- ✓ Village-wise lists of deeply indebted farmers must be prepared annually to identify farmers on the flight path to penury and potential suicide
- ✓ The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, along with the local administration, should be tasked with analysing such lists for macro and local policy interventions, along with devising timely loan restructuring initiatives, insurance claim settlements and better counselling

#### CONCLUSION

The agrarian crisis is morphing into a social nightmare. It's time for a complete overhaul. There are many lessons of successful cooperative farming in India and abroad that will have to be learned for the institutional transformation of our small farmer economy into cooperative farming systems on a national scale to address the agrarian crisis.

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