

An Overview on Farmers Suicidal Tendency In INDIA

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Abstract

Incidence of farmers ending their lives in Karnataka region had hit epidemic proportions recently. Farmers may be at high risk for suicide because of their social environment and because of mental distress. The history of Indian farmer suicides is not new but officially the statistics is available from 1990s. In this research secondary data's are collected based on the number of farmers committed suicide in INDIA(2000-2014), especially in Karnataka(2003-2015) from different sources.

Keyword Farmer, Suicide, Karnataka, India, NCRB data set.

1.Introduction

Jai Jawan , Jai Kisan” - Lal Bahadur Shastri

This slogan of a visionary prime minister had lost its potential over the time. After the independence, according to Gandhiji's vision of Gram-Swaraj, villages and specially farmers were to be the main focus of any development plan of India. As years passed, by agriculture as an industry lost its importance for policy makers of India. This over the time caused severe distress among the farmers leading to recent dramatic rise in the number of suicides among farmer community. Every day in national newspaper invariably there is news related to farmers' suicides.

India is the land of agriculture and agriculture is the main occupation for more than 70 per cent of the population of our country. The economic prosperity of our country to a major extent depends on prosperity of agriculture. Mahatma Gandhi said that “India lives in villages”. While signing a visitors book he said that “I preferred to be known as a farmer” (cited by Swaminathan, 2007). It is a known fact that most of the Indian population lives in The villages and majority of villagers are engaged in agriculture. Agriculture along with other allied activities like animal husbandry, forestry and fisheries is a dynamic and an important component of our economy that provides livelihood for more than 60 percent of our people. The contribution of agriculture to Indian economy in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is declining steadily, year by year due to the process of industrialization and the economic growth gathered momentum in different five year plans with the manufacturing and service sectors growing rapidly and agriculture limping along, the percentage share of agriculture in GDP reached a level of 17.8 per cent in 2007-08 (Ruddar and Sundaram, 2010). According to union finance minister the GDP from agriculture, forestry and fishing for the year 2008-09 was 16 percent (Anon, 2010). The share of agriculture and allied sectors in GDP for year 2009-10 was 14.6 per cent and for the year 2010-11 it was 14.2 per cent (Ruddar and Sundaram, 2010). The share of agriculture and allied sectors in GDP for the year

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2011-12 was 14.4 per cent and for the year 2013-14 it was 13.9 per cent. Despite a steady decline

of its share in GDP, agriculture is still the largest economic sector and plays a significant role in the overall socio-economic development of our country.

It is the main source of food to the growing population.

Our country could achieve the self-sufficiency of food grains in few decades of its political emancipation. The food production in India reached to 213 million tonnes in 2001-02. It was increased to 231 million tonnes in 2007-08 and in 2008-09 it was 230 million tonnes (Anon., 2010). This one million tonnes less than that of 2007-08 was due to drought in some states, flood in some other states and also due to agricultural crisis in the country as a whole. During 2010-11, food production was 244.78 million tones, 259.32 million tonnes in 2011-12. Food production fell by 1.5 per cent to 255.36 million tonne due to drought in some states in 2012-13. The most tragic part of our country is the report of more suicidal deaths is among the farming community. The changes in the agricultural policy, increased cost of agriculture, the negative impact of globalization, liberalization and privatization on agriculture are some of the factors that are related to increasing suicidal tendency among farmers.

FARMER SUICIDES IN INDIA

The history of Indian farmer suicides is not new but officially the statistics is available from 1990s. The first state where suicides were reported was Maharashtra. Soon newspapers has gone to report similar occurrences from Andhra Pradesh. In the beginning it was believed that most of the suicides were happening among the cotton growers, especially those from Vidarbha. However, National Crime Record Bureau is collecting the statistics/information regarding farmers suicides. According to the National Crime Records bureau (NCRB) data, more than 2,16,000 farmers have committed suicide since 1997. A record of 2,50,000 farmers have committed suicide in India over the last 13 years. The big five States are Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh follow closely, with two thirds (68.4%) of farmer suicides being reported from these states. However, the NCRB figures across 18 years for which data exists how that at least 2,84,694 Indian farmers have taken their lives since 1995 (*i.e.*, accepting the non-figures of Chhattisgarh and West Bengal). The average annual famers suicides is 15,369 over a period of 18 years. During the period 1997-2002, farmer suicides in the big five states accounted for roughly one out of every twelve of all suicides in the country. In 2003-08, it accounted for nearly one out of every ten. India saw 1,38,321 farm suicides between 1995 and 2003 at an annual average of 15,369. During the period 2004-12, the number is 14,66,373 at much higher annual average of 16,264. The annual average farmers suicides during 1995-2002 is the highest at 2,508 in Maharashtra followed by Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh (2,304), Karnataka (2,259); while in the case of 2003-10 its place is the same.

FARMER SUICIDES IN KARNATAKA

Karnataka has no history of farmers committing suicide even during the situation of acute agrarian crisis. Even the unorganized farmers would resort to other tactics such as throwing the agricultural commodities on the roads, burning their crops, etc. Andhra became the harbinger for such a trend in Karnataka. However, suicide was an attempt to retain the identity as distinct social category within the larger economy. This is the reason why suicide in

Karnataka was first reported in the northern parts of Karnataka or close to the border areas of Andhra Pradesh.

The beginning of the suicides can be traced back to the year 1998, when two farmers in Bidar, who were involved in cultivating tur dal, a market-oriented agricultural crop committed suicide. In the initial two years, farmer suicides were largely concentrated in the drought-prone districts in north Karnataka or confined to economically backward, drought-prone regions such as Gulbarga and Bidar. However, after 2000, the phenomenon shifted to relatively advance agricultural regions, particularly Mandya, Hassan, Shimoga, Davanagere, Koppal and even Chickmagalur, Kodagu and it also covered ground water region (Belgaum), assured rain fall region (Haveri), sugar cane and cauvery irrigation belt (Mandya). However, in the coastal belt, the number of suicides reported was less. This is because of the fact that in these districts, the people depend more on the non-agricultural activities with wider linkages which extend to the metropolitan cities like Bombay and even to the Middle East. Moreover, in these regions, the primacy of agrarian sector is slowly being replaced by the industrial sector, notwithstanding the fact that certain pockets of coastal belt saw the commercial farming of the arecanut and coco, grown for the past one or two decade. This has linked the farmers to larger market, in the process, making them a vulnerable category. In fact, the land reforms of the 1970s had created autonomous categories in this region. The autonomy was effectively used to enter into the domain of larger market.

In fact, there is no precise number of suicides, as the number of suicides accounted by the state had been different from that of the civil society groups. This contention came about as the state refused to admit the reason of suicide as the result of capitalist development. Rather it tries to link the suicide to the personal matters, including the fact that it would dismiss the suicide on flimsy grounds during 1999-2001, it was estimated that 110 farmers committed suicide in Karnataka.

According to one estimate, 3,000 farmers committed suicide in Karnataka between 1998 and 2006. (Muzaffar, 1998). Nonetheless, if we take the report prepared by the Crime Branch of Karnataka, the number of suicide under the heading “farming and agricultural activity” comes to 15804 between 1998 and 2002. Year 2000 saw the maximum -number of suicide (2,630) followed by year 2001 –

these are the years when agriculture saw the negative growth. Interestingly, as per the crime branch report, 12,889 male farmers committed suicide followed by 2,841 female between 1996 and 2002. However this estimate has some problem. One of the problems is the fact that the Crime Branch report also include suicide committed in cosmopolitan city such as Bangalore or Mysore under “farming and agricultural activity”. Secondly in the districts such as Dakshina Kannada the suicide is the reflection of another form of capitalism- it is the reflection of the crisis of metropolitan/cosmopolitan or Middle Eastern capitalism than the agrarian one. Clubbing such issues would make the counting or numbering the farmers’ suicide a difficult one.

2.Objective

To prepare a database of farmers who have committed suicide in India and selected State Karnataka.

3. Material and Methods

For evaluating specific objectives of the study, Secondary data on the number of farmer committed suicides were collected from different sources.

4. Results

India is an agrarian country with around 48.90% of its people depending directly or indirectly upon agriculture. Nowadays the problem of farmers' suicides is one of the vital concerns that need to be addressed by the Government. Considering the paramount importance of this issue, the NCRB, for the first time, has collected detailed data on farmers' suicides.

In India in the year 2014 excluding the Agricultural labourers, farmers who have own land and farmers on contract, a total of 5,178 male farmers and 472 female farmers have committed suicides, accounting for 91.60% and 8.40% of total farmers' suicides. 31.10%, 29.20% 14.10% and 11.00% of female farmers' suicides, were reported in Telangana (147 out of 472 suicides), Madhya Pradesh (138 suicides), Maharashtra (70 suicides) and Chhattisgarh (52 suicides) respectively. Including Agricultural labourers (6694 suicides) total farmers committed suicide is 12,360. [table 1] And including farmers who have own land (4949 suicides) and farmers on contract (701 suicides). **Total farmers committed suicide is 18,010.** [table 7*]

From Table 1 it is observed that in INDIA in the year 2000 number of farmers committed suicide is quite higher compare to other year, but after 2001 it increased upto 2004 then decreased upto 2008. In 2009 1172 more farmers committed suicide than the year 2008. Then gradually the rate was in decreasing order upto 2013. During the year 2014 it increased at high extent. It also has been observed that in Karnataka more than 90 farmers are committing suicide since from 2003 to 2015. From Table 2 it can be seen that during 2003-2004 farmers suicidal rate was so much high, then it decreased at some extent and now upto June and July of 2015 it is 172.

Upto 2012 it has been seen that farmers committed suicide in India is about 13754, Andhra Pradesh (2572), Madhya Pradesh (1172), Maharashtra (3786), Karnataka (1875) and rest of the country (4349). [table 3]

According to State agricultural department Upto 2008 it has been seen that in every month 25 farmers committing suicide. Top 5 districts under study has been found as leading districts in committing farm suicide in KARNATAKA. [Table 4]

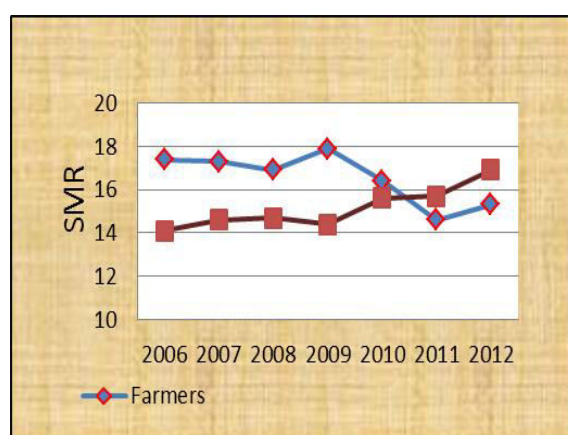
It has been seen that in Karnataka majority of farmers committing suicide due to drought, indebtedness etc. According to the data available in table 5 the top 5 districts in which farmers are ending their lives are Bidar, Chitradurga, Hassan, Chikmangalur, and Davanagere [table 5]

Top 5 districts based on Farmers suicide in Karnataka In 2012-13

Districts	No. of farmers committed suicide
BIDAR	14
CHITRADURGA	12
HASSAN	10
CHIKMANGALUR	8
DAVANAGERE	7

In Table 6 and Table 7 state wise number of farmers suicidal data of the year 2013 and 2014 are available. It has been seen that in the year 2014 the suicidal rate of Farmers are much higher compare to the year 2013.

Suicide Mortality Rate for Male farmers and Male Non Farmers In INDIA 2006-12



YEAR	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
FARMERS SMR	17.4	17.3	16.9	17.9	16.4	14.6	15.3
NON-FARMERS SMR	14.1	14.6	14.7	14.4	15.6	15.7	16.9

Note and Source: Calculations are based on suicides data from National Crime Records Bureau (Various Years) and interpolated/extrapolated 5+ years cultivators and non-cultivators populations for males using *Census of India 1991 and 2001*. For details of the method of calculation see Mishra (2006c).

Table 1 : Number of Farmers(Farming/Agricultural labourers) committed suicide during 2000- 2014 in India

*(excluding farmers whose have own land(4949 suicides) and farmers on contract(701 suicides)

Year	No. of Farmers Committed Suicide
2000	16603
2001	16415
2002	17971
2003	17164
2004	18241
2005	17131
2006	17060
2007	16632
2008	16196
2009	17368
2010	15964
2011	14027
2012	13754
2013	11772
2014	12360*
Total	2,38,658

Source: Various issues of Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India (ADSI), National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB),Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India & www.indiastat.com

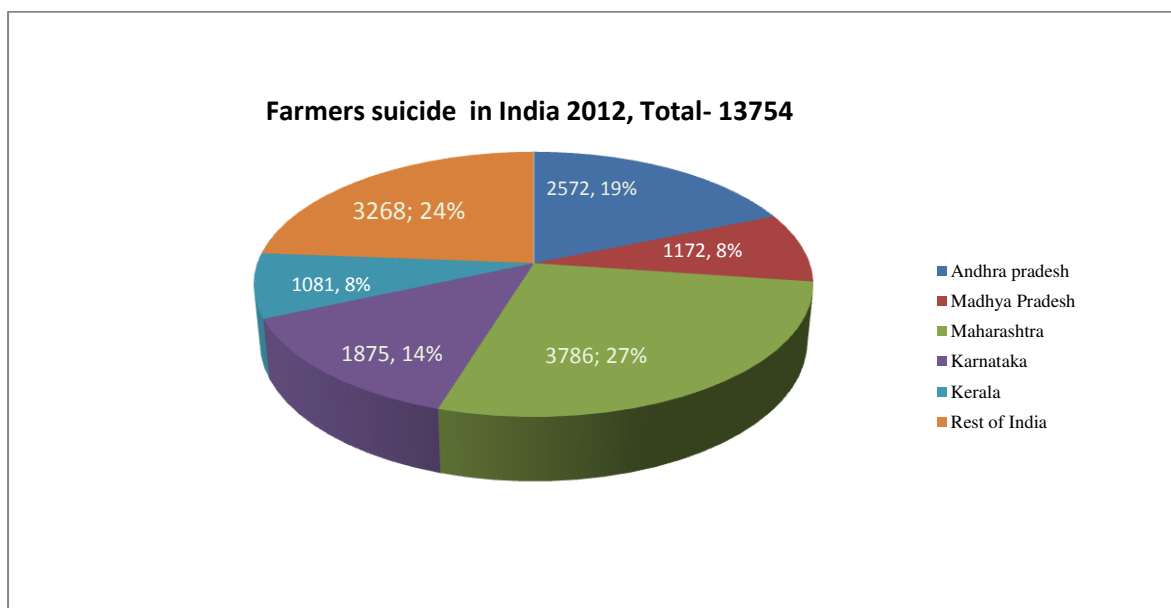
Table 2 : Number of farmers committed suicide in Karnataka from 2003-2015

YEAR	NO. OF FARMERS SUICIDE
2003-04	708
2004-05	271
2005-06	163
2006-07	346
2007-08	342
2008-09	337
2009-10	290
2010-11	242
2011-12	187
2012-13	100

2013-14	130
2014-15	61+131 (June & July)

Source: Internet, NCRB, Vijay Karnataka news paper

Table 3: Top 5 states(AP,MP, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala)in India based on number of Farmers committed suicide



Source: NCRB 1995-2012 <http://www.agrariancrisis.com>

Table 4: Top 5 districts based on Farmers suicide in Karnataka upto 2008

DISTRICT	FARMERS
Hasan	309 Farmers
Bidar	220 Farmers
Chikmangalur	213 Farmers
Belagavi	205 Farmers
Chitradurga	193 Farmers

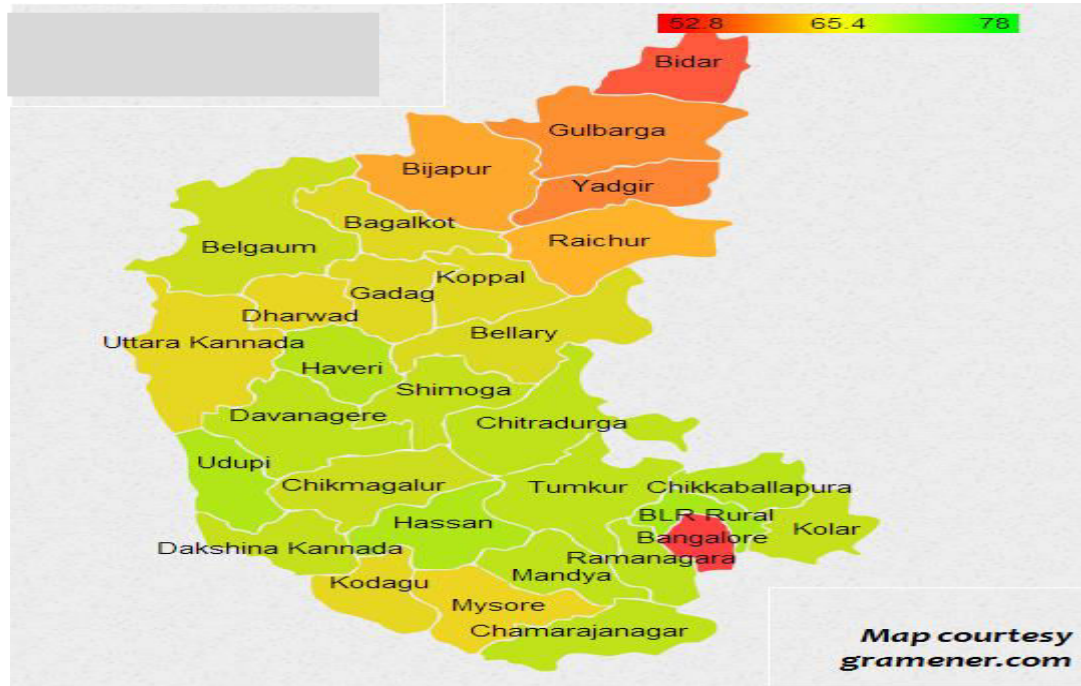


Table 5: District wise data about Farmers committed suicide in Karnataka during 2012-2013

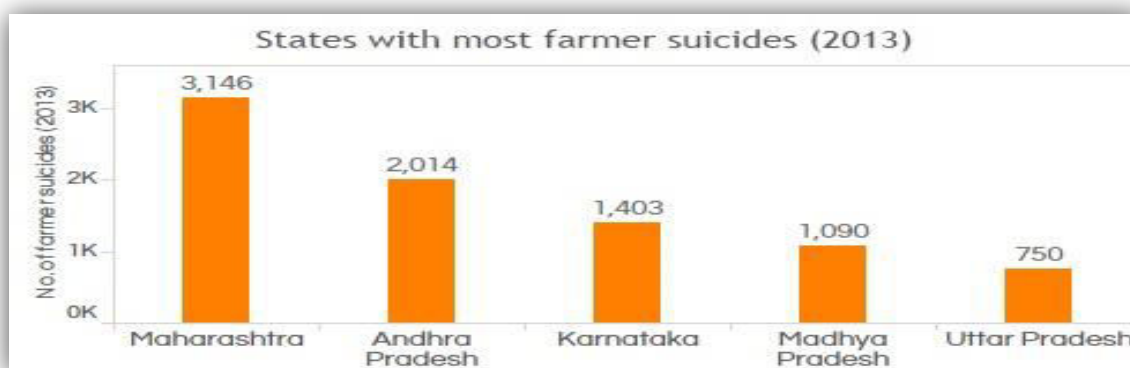
Sl no	District	No. of Farmers
1	BIDAR	14
2	HASSAN	10
3	CHITRADURGA	12
4	CHAMARAJNAGAR	5
5	HAVERI	6
6	UTTARA KANNADA	3
7	MANDYA	2
8	CHIKMANGALUR	8
9	RAICHUR	2
10	SHIMOGA	3
11	TUMKUR	4
12	MYSORE	6
13	BIJAPUR	6
14	GADAG	5
15	DAVANAGERE	7
16	BELLARY	2
17	GULBARGA	1
18	KODAGA	1
19	RAMNAGAR	1
20	BELGAUM	1
21	KOLAR	1

Source: www.thehindu.com/todays.../tp..farmers.suicide /article4612824.

Table 6: State-wise Number of farmer Suicides{Self- Employed (Farming/Agriculture)} in India (2013)

States/UT	Self-Employed (Farming/Agriculture) (numbers)		
	Male	female	Total
Andhra Pradesh	1554	460	2014
Arunachal Pradesh	32	5	37
Assam	278	27	305
Bihar	119	8	127
Chhattisgarh	0	0	0
Goa	1	0	1
Gujarat	489	93	582
Haryana	336	38	374
Himachal Pradesh	32	1	33
Jammu and Kashmir	18	0	18
Jharkhand	135	7	142
Karnataka	1232	171	1403
Kerala	882	90	972
Madhya Pradesh	997	93	1090
Maharashtra	3020	126	3146
Manipur	1	0	1
Meghalaya	4	1	5
Mizoram	6	0	6
Nagaland	2	0	2
Odisha	143	7	150
Punjab	83	0	83
Rajasthan	267	25	292
Sikkim	21	14	35
Tamil Nadu	96	9	105
Tripura	56	0	56
Uttar Pradesh	644	106	750
Uttarakhand	14	1	15
West Bengal	0	0	0
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	5	0	5
Chandigarh	0	0	0
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	15	0	15

Daman and Diu	0	0	0
Delhi	7	1	8
Lakshadweep	0	0	0
Pondicherry	0	0	0
TOTAL	10489	1283	11772



Source: ADSI 2013, NCRB

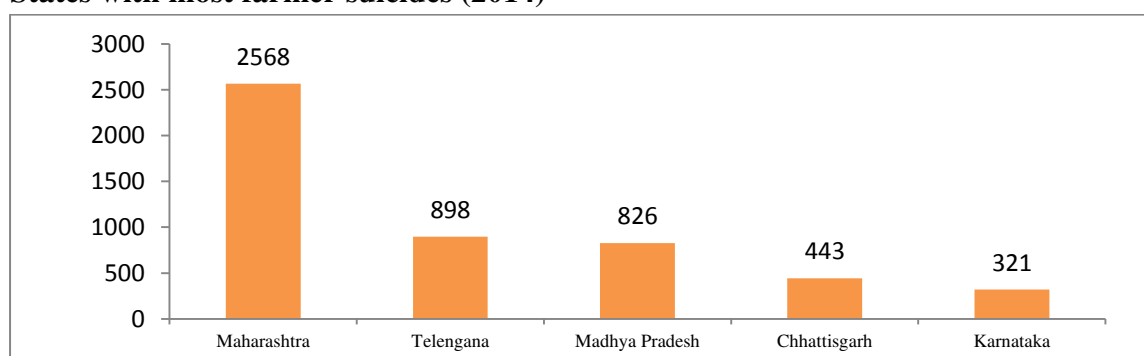
Table 7: State-wise Number of farmer Suicides (Self-Employed (Farming/Agriculture)) in (2014) [excluding farmers whose have own land (4949 suicides) and farmers on contract (701 suicides)]*

States/UT	Self-Employed (Farming/Agricultural labourers)(numbers)		
	Male	female	Total
Andhra Pradesh	573	59	632
Arunachal Pradesh	3	0	3
Assam	50	9	59
Bihar	10	0	10
Chhattisgarh	648	107	755
Goa	513	0	0
Gujarat	0	87	600
Haryana	119	0	119
Himachal Pradesh	59	4	63
Jammu and Kashmir	32	5	37
Jharkhand	4	0	4
Karnataka	714	54	768
Kerala	675	132	807
Madhya Pradesh	992	206	1198
Maharashtra	3726	278	4004

Manipur	0	0	0
Meghalaya	2	0	2
Mizoram	4	1	5
Nagaland	0	0	0
Odisha	98	4	102
Punjab	61	3	64
Rajasthan	357	16	373
Sikkim	33	2	35
Tamil Nadu	691	204	895
Tripura	29	3	32
Uttar Pradesh	165	27	192
Uttarakhand	0	0	0
West Bengal	193	37	230
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	7	1	8
Telangana	1115	0	1115
Chandigarh	0	0	0
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	0	0	0
Daman and Diu	0	0	0
Delhi	0	0	0
Lakshadweep	0	0	0
Pondicherry	16	0	16
TOTAL	10889	1471	12,360

[*including 4949 & 701 suicides, Total – 18,010]

States with most farmer suicides (2014)



Source: ADSI 2014, NCRB

5. Discussion

Farmers are in severe distress and there is an urgent need for increased public awareness among farmers regarding agricultural policies both financial and those extended by the government. If given an option, 40% farmers said that they would like to quit agriculture and take up some other career. It is a complex task and requires more than just throwing money at it. Surely, other measures will be needed to set the rural economy on track. Marketing and storage infrastructure will have to be built. New crop patterns that answer to emerging needs will have to be introduced. Better rural credit delivery system will have to be evolved. Self-help groups need to be encouraged.

Finally, suicide should not be viewed as only mental health problem, which is a common notion among people. The various factors

which play are: (1) chronic indebtedness and inability to pay interest accumulated over the years, (2) economic decline leads to complications and family disputes, depression, and alcoholism, etc., (3) compensation following suicide (death) helps family to repay debt, (4) grain drain, and (5) the rising costs of agricultural inputs and falling prices of agricultural produce.

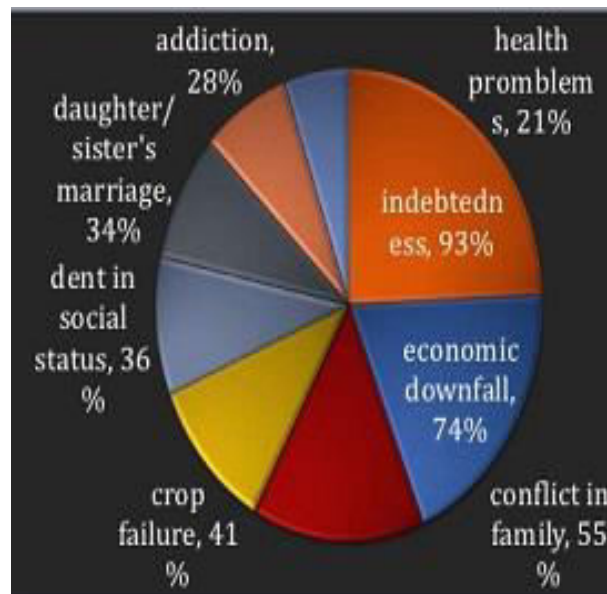
Causes of Farmers suicide

The most immediate consequence of drought is a fall in crop production, due to inadequate and poorly distributed rainfall. Farmers are faced with harvests that are too small to both feed their families, fodder supplies from crop residues to feed their livestock and fulfil their other commitments forcing them to drastic measures. The drastic measures can include changing jobs or suicides.

Indian farmers are heavily dependent on monsoons,. They don't have any source for proper irrigation farming. Irrigation farming is when crops are grown with the help of irrigation systems by supplying water to land through rivers, reservoirs, tanks, and wells. • 58% of farmers having committed suicides had absolutely no irrigation facilities.

Borrowing from formal and informal sources has been one of the important reasons for suicides cited in press reports. Almost every farm household has debts. Indebtedness was the reason behind the suicide of 93% farmers. • Out of 17.64 Lakh farmers only (25.3%) farmers could avail institutional finance in 2005-06. • Private money lenders charge high interest rates between 48-60% p.a. • Higher rate of interest in the cooperative credit system e.g. up to 12.5% to 14% till last year. • cooperative sector brought down their interest rates to 7%, even then the farmers are taking loans from the private individuals. Etc.

General View on reasons of Farmers suicide



Source: Slide share on Farmers suicide In INDIA, AbhinavAnand

6. Conclusion

The trend can be reversed through active participation of the Government in addressing the real issues of the farmers that are driving them to suicides. Social responsibility also goes a long way to help the farmers. The big land owners in most places do not lend a helping hand to struggling farmers, in most cases; they grab the benefits which are otherwise meat for the poor farmers. General public, NGOs, corporate and other organization too can play a part in helping farmers by adopting drought affected villages and families and helping them to rehabilitate. The solution to the farmer's plight should be directed towards enabling the farmers to help themselves and sustain on their own. Temporary through monetary relief would not be the solution. The efforts should be targeted at improving the entire structure of the small farmers where in the relief is not given on a drought to drought basis, rather they are taught to overcome their difficulties through their own skills and capabilities. The Government needs to come up with pro- active solutions and the nation has to realize that farmer suicides are not minor issues happening in remote parts of a few states, it is a reflection of the true state of the basis of our economy. Farmers' suicide requires to be seen in the path of capitalist development that the regimes or the state introduced during the post-colonial/post-independence period. Capitalist development initially created euphoria however on later date it translated into massive agrarian crisis. This is the reason why beginning of agrarian crisis should be seen. Globalization also carried the inbuilt fear of losing identity- the identity of "New Farmers or Market Oriented Autonomous Farmers" (MOAF). Suicide is the new technique employed by the farmers. At the all India level more than one lakh farmers' have committed suicide. At present the suicide is restricted to some states- there is no guarantee that it will not spread to other states. There is a need to redraw preferences,

rework on policy measures, otherwise there is a danger that suicide might envelop the whole of India.

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