

Prominence of Agricultures in India: Essential Support of Representatives

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“Increase in agricultural production and the rise in the per-capita income of the rural community, together with the industrialisation and urbanisation, lead to an increased demand in industrial production”-Dr. Bright Singh

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.906000338>

Received: 02 June 2025; Accepted: 10 June 2025; Published: 16 July 2025

ABSTRACT

A farmer's contribution to agriculture is not restricted only to him, but his whole family works alongside him. Many organizations in the globe finding problems facing farmers and its way to rectifying issues such as International and national levels organizations identified the Challenges faced by farmers, smallholders and family farmers. All the measures to take farmers Livelihood only Legislative measures strengthen is important at the present day.

Keywords: Farmers, Livelihoods, Legislature, industrialization.

INTRODUCTION

A farmer's contribution in agriculture is not restricted only to him but his whole family work along with him. The year 2014 was declared as Year of Family Farming by the United Nations General Assembly. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), a specialized agency of the United Nations intensively involves in collaborating with the governments, International Development Agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations and farmers organization to develop awareness and understand the challenges faced by the smallholders and family farmers at national, regional and global level. It is estimated by the Food and Agriculture Organization that nearly 500 million family farms from developed and developing countries contribute in producing 80% of the food supply. The farmers are dependent on the natural resources and they majorly utilize them for food production. Technological development could support and help the farmers in farming but deriving the available natural resources in agriculture sector gives a successful produce of food products. Due to climate change, around the world, the weather patterns are changing. Poor farmers who are dependent on rain and who do not have the technological facilities are dependent on traditional practices for the agriculture. In such situations their production capacity becomes less. Their livelihood are purely depending on the government agencies, such as, selling their agricultural produce and agricultural aids etc. When the agriculture fails, the government gives them certain aid to support their livelihood but it is inadequate. At times the government announces for the waiver of interest and an amount of agricultural loans and temporarily it do help the farmers. Apart from utilizing the natural resources, farmers also dependent on the government for, electricity, water facilities, seed aid etc. Now the government also encourages for the organic farming for which the farmers need a large support both technologically and monetarily. The Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution of India, 1950 also provides for the protection of the rights of farmers. The moot question is why still the farmers are suffering? Their contribution to agriculture is related to economy of a nation. Many business both at national and international level are flourishing because of agriculture but the farmers who are the bottom line of the agriculture sector face many issues which are unaddressed. The agricultural products paddy, grains, oil, wheat, flowers, livestock and so, when comes to the market become goods or commodities. The farmers with the goods produced expect the profit by calculating the expenses invested for the production of such products. The Minimum Support Price (MSP) is fixed by the Government to provide guaranteed price and assured market to the farmers. This helps in protecting the farmers from fluctuating price and market imperfections. The evaluation

of MSP is calculated (latest 2016) by the Ministry of Agriculture with the help of Evaluation Organization (DMEO). These evaluations are made with the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), the Department of Agriculture and Co-operation declares the MSP for the crops before the sowing season. The evaluation are generally made with a research/study in various districts based on the crops produced and the MSP is declared. The farmers trust this procedure which gives them a hope to sell their products in fair price. The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 was introduced and in both the Houses in the month of September 2020. This Farmers Bill provoked various oppositions by the farmers and agricultural associations. These oppositions are the reflections of the threats assessed by the farmers on the MPS because the provisions in the new Farmers Bills 2020 may affect the minimum support price. This legislation has created dissatisfaction among the farmers across India. After 7 decades of independence of India, the economic situation of majority of farmers remain unchanged. An appropriate legislation which would give the farmers will support them to continue with agriculture. Realizing the importance of farmer's rights will help countries to alleviate poverty. The farmers and the indigenous community in India have traditional knowledge which must be protected by appropriate legislations.

Farmers and the Agricultural Sector: The Inseparable Relationship

Farmers are the soul of agricultural system. They are the guardians of food security and are responsible community which serves the human being in fulfilling their food necessity. Nearly 58% of India's population, the primary source of livelihood is agriculture. Likewise, the contribution of farmers in production of food grains is large in India - in 2019 was estimated to reach record of 295.67 million tonnes. The contribution of agricultural sector towards Indian economy is high, for example, in the year 2019 the agriculture export was 38.54 US\$. By nature, India has vast land which are highly suitable for agriculture and traditionally people involve in farming for centuries. India is well known for organic farming and the food products are rich in quality which is one of the reasons why in international market there is high demand of agricultural produces from India. The efforts of Indian farmers thus have a high recognition for their quality produce. There is an increasing emphasis on sustainable food production in the last 2 decades. Undeniably, the food industry is dependent on the farmers. For example, one of the leading company, Nestle India very recently proposed to invest about 100.16 US\$ for its ninth factory in Gujarat and in November 2019, Haldiram entered into an agreement with Amazon for E-tail sale in USA. Food industry responds by way of supplying to the society's demands. The responsibility of the food sector is to understand the various demands in the society. These demands of society may differ from individual to individual. Considering the ration of the demands, the food sector expects the products from the farmers. For instance, few consumers expect organic food products and few consumers buy food products every day. This demand and supply chain creates the interrelationship between the food-agriculture sector and the farmers. The food industry in India stands 6th largest market in the world. About 32% food and groceries are ruling the India's consumption market. Besides exporting the food products, food industry involves in collecting raw materials for production-like wheat as raw material for biscuits; and processing of food followed by selling the foods in the market. In connecting Indian farmers to the consumers both at national and international level, the food processing plays a vital role.

Farmers' Contribution towards Economic Development

In the process of economic development of a country, the farmers and agriculture sectors play a vital role. Besides, satisfying the food requirements of the population, the farmers become one of the important reasons for economic development of a nation. The role of agriculture sector and farmers in the economic development are as follows:

The agriculture sector provides India contributes about 28% of national income.

The agriculture sector also becomes a source of food supply and the farmers produce based on the needs of the population of a country.

Apart from this the food supply also is extended to fulfil the needs of other countries by way of exporting farm produce and thus contributes to national economic development and because the source of foreign exchange of the country.

The farm produce become as raw materials for many food products and it serves as basis of food industries. Agriculture also because a major source of capital for industrial development.

Creates demand and regulates the market both at national and international level.

Provides employment opportunities. Economic development needs growing labour force which the agriculture sector provides adequately.

Agriculture sector balances the shortage of foreign capital as agriculture sector requires less capital.

The disparity of income among the rural population is addressed by the agriculture sector.

The agriculture sector tends to phase economic depression.

Farmers and Poverty

Millions of individual men and women are the reason for rural development. Agriculture is one of the major elements of rural development. A strong agriculture basis of a nation is a path for successful economic development of that nation. In many of the developing nations, agriculture is the main source of rural population. Likewise, the rural population which are dependent on agriculture mostly are living in poverty. Small farming system contribute for economical development but for reducing poverty and accelerating economic growth broad-based agriculture is vital. The fate of the Indian farmers are decided by the climatic conditions and changing weather patterns. Subsequently, the unpredicted situations such as market price fluctuations, interference of intermediaries also make the farmers to suffer. The entry of multi-national companies in the agribusiness also has affected the local farmers. For instance, PepsiCo India filed suits on few farmers of Gujarat for growing their registered potato varieties that amounts to infringement of intellectual property rights but after negotiations they withdrew the suits. The entry of large number of swarm of locusts has also affected the agriculture farms. The government at times provides financial assistance but that does not fulfil the needs of the farmer and their families. Farmers confront continuous failure of harvests due to traditional farming system which does not help the current weather patterns and small farmers are not assisted with technologies or not aware of new technologies that help to confront the changing climatic conditions. Thus, these reasons result in poverty of farmers and they struggle for livelihood, basic education of children is affected, malnutrition and poor health and unemployment exists in the farmer's life. Ironically, the poor farmers end their life due to failure in agriculture. The 2019 report of the National Crime Records Bureau, about 5,957 farmers and 4,324 agriculture laborers have ended their life by suicide.¹ The price rise of fertilizers, lack of awareness on farming techniques, agricultural debt, failure of monsoon and water crisis are some of the reasons where farmers are pushed to live in poverty. If we are to make good on our promise to eradicate global poverty, protect the planet, and improve the lives and prospects of people everywhere, then we have to address the structural inequities in global commodity supply chains. Tackling these issues head-on is a shared responsibility for all actors involved, but also an opportunity for leading global food companies to reap the benefits of more sustainable farming while shaping a brighter future for their sectors.²

Rights of Farmers and the Sustainable Development Goals: The International Realization

In addressing the global poverty, the role agriculture is very crucial. It is a powerful reminder to the world nations when the on 17th October, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty was announced - a high time to realize that agricultural development paves way to confront global poverty. As estimated it is nearly 650 million people live in rural areas and are the poorest people in the world. These people are mostly dependent on farming for their livelihood. It is a fact that without addressing the farmers' income it is not possible to address global

¹Rahul Tripathi, *NCRB data shows 42, 48 farmers and daily wagers committed suicide in 2019*, available at <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/ncrb-data-shows-42480-farmers-and-daily-wagers-committed-suicide-in-2019/articleshow/77877613.cms>. (last visited on November 10, 2020)

²Aparajita Bhalla, *Global Agenda, "We can't meet the SDGs without improving farmers' income. Here's why"*, October 2020, available at <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/farmers-incomes-meeting-the-sdgs/>. (last visited on November 12, 2020)

poverty.³In developing countries the farmers are considered to be the back bone of agriculture sector and food security. The Food and Agriculture Organization estimated (as on 2020) that smallholder farmers contribute 70% of national food production and nearly 30-34 % towards the world's total food production. For understanding the relevance of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with farmers rights few important SDGs are analyzed.

SDG-1 which in on poverty alleviation is very important in relation to agriculture and farmers. Agriculture and role of farmers are vital in reducing poverty both at national and international level.

The SDG -4 on quality education which provides as an essential element that the farmers must have education to understand and employ it on using the tools and techniques in agriculture.

SDG-5 on gender equality is important as involvement of women in agriculture and their participation in decision making -equal opportunity as like men must be achieved.

SDG- 7 is on affordable and clean energy which is vital as the agriculture system needs sustainable use of technologies in farming. These technologies used in farming must be considered not affecting the environment.

SDG-8 on decent work and economic growth which relates to the farmers' contribution towards the food production and economic growth. It is about 43% of agriculture and related labour force are women in developing countries.

SDG-12 on responsible consumption and production. There is lot of food wastage around the world and also hunger -which needs to be balanced. The farmers play major role in production of food grains.

SDG-13 is relating to climate action where the farmers have the responsibility in mitigating climate change.

SDG-15 on life on land which is on the ecosystem management where the farmers are involved in protection of ecosystem by minimizing the loss of natural habitats.

Prominently, sustainable agriculture is knowledge based and it necessitates a holistic approach. The Sustainable Development Goals from the year 2015, included the agricultural sectors and farmers involvement in many goals like hunger and poverty alleviation which establishes the importance of farmers. The SDG-2 primarily discusses on zero hunger where sustainable agriculture, food security and nutrition can be related to role farmers in food production.

Farmers in India: The Constitution and Legislative Protection

It is remarkable that India is one of the countries which provides constitutional protection to farmers and boosts agriculture sector. The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act, 2001 and Biodiversity Act, 2002 which are few appropriate legislations which protects the rights of farmers under intellectual property rights, benefit sharing, protection of traditional practices of farmers, protection of seed varieties. These legislations are the outcome of International obligations and Conventions.

There are many policies and schemes both at national and state level. Few important are discussed as follows:

Pradhan Mantri KisanMaandhan Yojana

Pradhan Mantri FasalBima Yojana

Kisan Credit Card scheme

PashuKisanCredit Card scheme

³ World Economic Forum Global Agenda, available at <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/farmers-incomes-meeting-the-sdgs/>(last visited on November 12, 2020)

Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana

Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana

Dairy Entrepreneurship Development scheme

Soil Health Card scheme

National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture

Livestock Insurance scheme

National Agriculture Market (e-NAM)

All the above mentioned schemes are important in providing opportunities and support from the government for farmers development in the agriculture sector. These schemes provided the farmers with opportunities to develop farming and further serves as a support system by providing financial assistance, loans, insurance for livestock and assistance for the agriculture practices.

The Constitution of India, Under Part IV- Directive Principles of State policies Article 43 and 48 explains that “the State shall endeavor to organize agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines....”⁴. to comply with international obligations and treaties, India has also few legislations where it provides certain protection to the farmers.

The Patents Act, 1970 to some extent protected certain varieties of agricultural produces like turmeric and Basmati rice.

The Geographical Indication of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 which provides certain protection of grains, seed varieties and food products under Geographical Indication tag. The traditional knowledge is also protected under this Act.

India is one among few countries which passed legislation to protect the rights of farmers. The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers’ Rights Act, 2001 (PPVFR) provides rights to the farmers to protect their traditional seed varieties and also provides special form of protection to their plant varieties under Intellectual Property Rights.

The National Biodiversity Act, 2002 provides for further more protection where the farmers are protected in utilization of natural resources and benefit sharing.

India is one among the few developing economies which provide legislative protection to farmers. Few legislations like PPVFR provide for compensation when the farmers rights are infringed. But these legislations become successful only if the legislations are effectively implemented.

The Farmers Bills, 2020

Being one among the emerging economies, India tries to provide viable system which would balance the private sector and farmers’ rights.

There were three agriculture sector Bills which was passed in the year 2020 which are considered to be the reason for farmers’ protest against the government. They are as follows:

Farmer’s Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020-

⁴The Constitution of India, 1950, available at https://www.india.gov.in/sites/upload_files/npi/files/coi_part_full.pdf. (last visited on November 15, 2020)

Under the States' Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) the farmers and traders are given a liberty to sell and buy the farm products outside registered 'mandis'. This Bill encourages inter-state and intra-state trade without any barriers. Additionally, to benefit with better price on the farmers' farm produce, the marketing/transportation costs are considered to be reduced. This Bill also encourages for a facilitative framework for electronic trading.

The Farmer (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020- this Bill primarily encourages the business contracts between the farmers and wholesalers, exporters, agribusiness firms with pre-agreed price. Provided, the market risks are transferred to sponsors from farmers. Without the involvement of intermediaries, the farmers can enter into the markets and they can be benefited with full price of the farm produce. This Bill also establishes dispute resolution mechanisms.

The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020- This Bill had removed few farm produce from the essential commodities, such as, onion, potatoes, Oilseed, pulses and cereals with few restrictions on stockholding them except under 'extraordinary circumstances' like war. This Bill also encourages investments relating to farm infrastructures like cold storage and modernizing food supply chain. Further, the price stability is brought in to help farmers and consumers. The Bill also provides for reducing the wastage of farm produce and creates competitive market.

The farmers are not satisfied with these Bills as they have clear reasons to prove that the control of the government on the farmers' agro-produce markets are now shifted to the private agribusiness firms and wholesalers. This may shift the power of regulating the agriculture sector to the private actors and the farmers in India may face many consequences.

CONCLUSION

Both the central and state governments must provide sufficient funds that would provide the farmers with the current requirements. The old policies and legislations which are decades old must be revamped with appropriate amendments. The farmers benefit must be on top priority in the annual budgets. It is very crucial that the development of agriculture and the relevant sectors are dependent on the farmers and therefore the wellbeing of the farmers be necessarily considered by India. In the recent years we see the farmers protesting against the government policies and it is not only going to affect them but the human kind on the whole. Agriculture is one of the oldest forms of civilization which is still continuing with the traditional practices. Protecting the interest of the farmers must be realized as divine. Conversely, without addressing the economic resilience and farmers' well-being the world nations cannot progress towards a sustainable future. Water is one of the major component for agriculture and farmers in India face a huge challenge in utilizing for agriculture purpose. Interlinking water courses will be a great solution for farmers who confront access to water as a major problem. Strengthening the knowledge in the technologies used in agriculture will improve farmers access to market, inputs, data, advisory, credit and insurance. The intervention of AI in the agriculture sector is vital for sustainability. Monsoon and resource intensiveness are the two important challenges which the Indian agriculture confronts in its path of development. To address these issues the intervention of artificial intelligence and technological innovations take up a big role to support the farmers. However, along with few legislations, there are many policies & schemes in India for the development and protection of farmers. But, appropriate legislations which provides technological awareness and assistance to the farmers are inadequate in India. When compared to other farmers in the world – be a developed or developing nation the technologies used by the farmers are far ahead and the status of technological knowledge of the Indian farmers are decades old. When the contribution of Indian farmers in food production and economic growth it is comparatively high with the previous decades but the intervention of AI or AI based technologies along with the capacity of Indian farmers would result in high productivity. The Indian education system of course, provides the importance of agriculture however young minds are not provided with practical knowledge as received by a farmer's child. Today, the media projects the historical protest of the farmers for their rights and the support for them from the general public is very less- only some make their status update in social medias like Face book and whats app tag the word "support farmers" – is sensibly going to help the farmers? "Agriculture is the back bone of Indian economy" every one in India knows this phrase from the school time but the acknowledgement and support by the general public is always less. The sufferings of the farmers for their survival in the agriculture sector is always a challenge and that's the reason why most of the

rural population who are dependent on agriculture are poor. Recently, in western Maharashtra cases were recorded on the bank loan waiver fraud for about 92.43 lakh and 100 crore farm loan fraud in Maharashtra proves how the poor farmers are exploited. The farmers are custodians of agricultural biodiversity but farmers who are in marginal environments face extensive challenges. Therefore, the Governments have to prioritize the farmers rights in agricultural trade.

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