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## **Indian Agriculture: Status, Challenges, Policies and Strategies**

**Prof. Vivek M. Morey,**

Assistant Professor, Department Of Commerce, Arts, Science and Commerce College,  
Chikhaldara Dist- Amravati

### **Abstract:-**

The Indian agriculture witnessed a major technological breakthrough with the Green Revolution during 1970s. The food grain production grew substantially and the country led its way to self-sufficiency. It was a watershed moment for the Indian agricultural sector. However, since then the demand has increased many fold, which has not been met proportionately with the increase in productivity. One of the major roadblocks to the growth of the agriculture in India is the lack of investments on research & development, infrastructure creation and implementation of technology. The aim of the present government to double the farmers' income by 2022 is an ambitious target. If implemented properly, this strategy would address the root causes of agricultural distress in India. This present review aims to provide an overview of the agriculture sector in India and the challenges associated with it, and possible solutions thereof.

**Key words: Green Revolution, Watershed, Investment, Productivity, Development**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this world of unimaginable diversity, a species that stands apart from all other living beings is us, i.e., the Human Beings or simply humans. It is not only the advanced physiology that we have as humans, but also our civilization that imparts a peculiar social character to us. Since the time immemorial human civilizations have constantly evolved, and most of their development has remained centered mainly around food collection and consumption and thus, agricultural practices have been an integral part of their foundation. From a society of nomadic food gatherers and hunters, we have travelled a long way to the present form of systematic agriculture.

With the growth of other sectors, the overall share of agriculture in the Indian economy has decreased over the time from around 51.8% in 1950-51 to around 15.8% in 2018-19 (in terms of Gross Value Added at current prices). However, the agriculture sector still continues to play a significant role in the overall economic scenario in India and it alone employs more 50% of the total workforce, particularly in rural areas. Further, agriculture is also critical for the country's food security. India's current population is estimated at over 1.3 billion and this figure has nearly doubled since the 1970s, it is currently growing annually at the rate of 1.08%. This rapidly growing population and climate change put enormous pressure on our present scheme of farming. Forecasting climate change is complex and controversial. There is a global acceptance of the fact that with the continuing erratic behaviour of weather patterns the climates will become less suitable for current agricultural practices and the places that are comparatively warm and humid will be particularly disadvantaged.

### **LAND-USE PATTERN**

As per the land use statistics of 2014-15, the total geographical area of the country is 328.7 mha, of which reported net sown area is 140.1 mha and the gross cropped area is 198.4 mha with a cropping intensity of 142%. The net area sown is around 43% of the total geographical area and the net irrigated area is 68.4 million hectares. As per the Phase-I results of the Agriculture Census, 2015- 16, the number of operational holdings, i.e., land put to agricultural use, has registered an increase of 5.3% from 2010-11 to 2015-16. The share of marginal holdings (less than 1 ha) in total operational holdings increased from 62.9% in 2000-01 to 68.5% in 2015-16, while the share of small holdings (1 ha to 2 ha) decreased from 18.9% to 17.7% during this period (2018-19).

**CURRENT TREND**

According to the Situation Assessment Survey 2002-03 of NSSO, 40% farmers showed preference to quit farming if there was a choice. Similarly, micro level studies provide strong evidence of youth not interested in agriculture related work (Himanshu et al. 2016). Agricultural development is important for raising the incomes of people dependent on agriculture. There are significant linkages between farm and non-farm sectors. The Indian agriculture has transformed significantly over the last few decades. Multiple factors like growth in household income, expansion in food processing sector, and increase in agricultural exports have facilitated growth in this sector. Rising incomes provide a structural change in the dietary patterns of an average Indian and is diversifying the country's food demand to include high-value foods. According to the National Sample Survey estimates for 2011-12, although cereals account for 26% of the total food consumption expenditure in rural India, high-value foods (like milk, meat, eggs, fish, fruits, and vegetables) account for 42% in rural India (GoI, 2013). In order to assist the agriculture sector, the Government of India has introduced several projects. There is Pradhan Mantri Gram Sinchai Yojana - The scheme aims to irrigate the field of every farmer and improving water use efficiency to achieve the motto 'Per Drop More Crop'. Overall the scheme ensures improved access to irrigation. Around 285 new irrigation projects were to be undertaken in 2018 to provide irrigation for 18.8 million hectares of land.

**MARKET SIZE**

As per the Fourth Advance Estimates for 2017-18, production of rice is estimated at a record 112.91 million tonnes. Wheat production, estimated at record 99.70 million tonnes, is higher by 1.19 million tonnes as compared to wheat production of 98.51 million tonnes achieved during 2016-17. Further, production of nutri / coarse cereals is estimated at record 46.99 million tonnes and total pulses production during 2017-18 is estimated at record 25.23 million tonnes. The total oilseeds production in the country during 2017-18 is estimated at 31.31 million tonnes, which is marginally higher than the production of 31.28 million tonnes during 2016-17. Also, the production of cotton estimated at 34.89 million bales (of 170 kg each) is higher by 2.31 million bales than the production of 32.58 million bales during 2016-17. In addition, production of jute and mesta is estimated at 10.14 million bales (of 180 kg each) during the 2017-18.

**CHALLENGES, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES**

The major problem now is that agricultural development itself is not central to the concerns of the policymakers, as the changing paradigms of development theory at the international level and certain developments in India relegate agriculture to an issue of secondary importance. Though the growth in agriculture and farmer profitability improved in the first decade of the new millennium, the predominantly price incentive-driven nature of this growth raises serious doubts over its sustainability in the absence of breakthrough technologies (Chand, 2014; World Bank, 2014). The World Bank quotes the following as some of the crucial challenges to the India's agriculture sector:

- Raising agricultural productivity: Raising agricultural productivity per unit of land will need to be the main engine of agricultural growth as virtually all the cultivable land is under farming.
- Reducing rural poverty: Rural poverty can be reduced by employing a socially inclusive strategy that comprises agriculture along with non-farm employment, so that the rural development must also benefit the poor, landless, women, scheduled castes and tribes.
- Making agricultural growth to factor in food security: The sharp rise in the production of the food-grain during India's Green Revolution of the 1970s enabled the country to achieve self-sufficiency in food-grains and avoid the threat of famine. Despite this, the agricultural growth in the 1990s and 2000s slowed down, averaging about 3.5% per annum, and cereal yields registered a meagre increase of only 1.4% per annum in the 2000s. Notably, the agricultural sector is crucial to the Indian economy, predominantly because the majority (64.2%) of the rural population is dependent on it (Agricultural Census 2010-11). Given the importance of this sector, the Government of India took several steps for its



sustainable development. These include: o Improvement in soil fertility through the Soil Health Card scheme. o Providing improved access to irrigation and enhanced water efficiency through Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchay Yojana (PMKSY). o Supporting organic farming through Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY). o Support for creation of a unified national agriculture market to boost the income of farmers. o A new scheme, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) has been launched for implementation from Kharif 2016 to mitigate the risk of crop loss in agriculture sector.

#### **ENHANCING YIELD OF MAJOR COMMODITIES**

Yield of major crops and livestock is much lower in India in comparison to other regions of the world. Since the scope of expanding the area under cultivation is very limited, increasing the yield of food production seems to be the only viable solution to meet the continuing high demand. In order to bridge the wide technological divide there is a need to strengthen research and development framework. To achieve this goal, a robust network of extension services needs to be created which will lead to a constant flow of information – both top-down and bottom-up between farmers, extension workers, and research institutions to promote the generation, adoption, and evaluation of location specific farm technologies. The genetic yield potential of a large number of vegetables, fruits, fisheries and livestock and products can be increased.

#### **INCREASED INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE AND INFRASTRUCTURES**

The declining productivity and low capital formation in the agricultural sector can be largely attributed to the declining public investment in the sector. This trend is alarming considering the burden on productivity-driven growth in the future. Appropriate policy measures are required to stimulate the slow pace of private investment in agriculture. Recent evidences of resource degradation and declining productivity in some intensively cropped areas is of particular concern.

The tools of modern biotechnology, including genetic engineering, as well as conventional breeding methods are expected to play important roles in the development of higher yielding, pest and stress resistant varieties of crops like wheat, rice, maize, etc. High levels of investments in research and development, and development of highly skilled human resource lie at the centre of the genetic innovations. There is an urgent need for governments and private donors to increase funding for agricultural research. Along with this, every effort must be made to ensure free flow of technology and information so as to achieve a sustainable scenario.

#### **CONCLUSION :-**

Among the major sources of agrarian distress are low levels of farmers' incomes and their fluctuations over the years. The problem is acute and is getting severe with the passage of time, affecting large chunks of the population that make living with agriculture. Persistent low levels of income may also adversely affects the future of agriculture sector in India. Adequate attention is required to improve the agricultural incomes and thus the welfare of the farmers to secure future of agriculture in the country. Reaching this end will reduce persistent disparity between farm and non-farm income, alleviate agrarian distress, encourage inclusive growth and infuse dynamism in the farming sector.

Decent incomes in farm sector will also attract youth towards the farming profession relieving the non-farm job sector of the continuing burden. Doubling farmers' income by 2022 is quite challenging, but it is needed and attainable. To double the farmers' income, a three pronged strategy focused on development initiative, technology and policy reforms is required. Research institutes should come with technological breakthrough for shifting production frontiers and raising efficiency in use of input. Evidence is growing about the scope of agronomic practices like precision farming to raising production and income of farmers substantially.



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