



## Examining the Socioeconomic Influence of Indian Agriculture on Society

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### Introduction:

In words of Mahatma Gandhi “Indian Agriculture is a way of life, a culture for a significant population of India.” The importance of agriculture in Indian society and the economy is second to none. The role that it plays in shaping the social order of India and its significance in Indian economy can be easily understood from the fact that agriculture sector provides almost 41.49% of the total jobs available in India combined all sectors and contributes approximately 19.9 percent to the GDP. Agriculture is the only means of subsistence for almost two-thirds of the employed class in India. The agriculture sector of India has occupied almost 43 percent of India's geographical area (Chandra, 2012).

This is true that share of agriculture in economy of our country has significantly reduced over the last few decades due to difficulties involved in converting it into a profitable endeavor because of inherent lack of resources and awareness. But at the same times this is also true that significance of agriculture sector in social and economic fabric of country has become more important

with passing times for three primary reasons. First, three fourths of households of India depend on incomes from rural part of our country. Secondly, the major part of people in rural India is dependent on agriculture as a means of subsistence. Thirdly, the production of the crops such as cereal crops, along with fruits, vegetables and milk is crucial for ensuring food security in India. To achieve this India needs to more efficient, broad based, economical and environment friendly methods which is the need of the hour. India is front runner in ensuring food security for world. India is leading producer of many food products with largest share of milk, pulses, and spices in the world being produced in India as well as having the world's largest herd of cattles (buffaloes) and the world's largest fields of wheat, rice, and cotton. Rice, wheat, cotton, sugarcane, farmed fish, sheep and goat meat, fruit, vegetables, and tea are among the country's top exports. There are 195 million hectares of land under cultivation in the country, with 63 percent of it being rain-fed (approximately 125 million acre) and 37 percent being irrigated (70 million hectare).

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In addition, India's forests encompass 65 million hectares of land (Khan 2023). The three most prominent challenges faced by the Indian agriculture sector which are fundamental to ensure welfare of masses and progress of our country are:

**1. Efficient use of land:** The great part of cultivable land is already being used which makes it mandatory that we must increase the production per unit of land with decrease in water consumption as rival contenders for water and electricity resources is increasing with rise in industrial production and needs of urban population. Every initiative to boost production, such as raising yields, diversifying to higher incentive crops, and building value chains to lower marketing costs, will need to be exploited.

**2. Reducing poverty with a socially inclusive plan that includes both agricultural and non- agricultural jobs:** The impoverished, marginalized, women, lower strata, and schedule tribes must all benefit from rural development. Furthermore, India's poor are concentrated in areas which are largely dependent on monsoon or the eastern part of Indo-Gangetic plains, indicating large regional differences. The British rule ushered with it debilitating levels of poverty and the vicious chain of poverty led to many other

problems which in turn made it difficult to remove poverty. The cause-and-effect relation between poverty and social structure is such that one will not be removed without other being abolished. Agriculture can be both means and an end to remove poverty and improve socio economic standards.

**3. Food security:** There is a direct correlation of inter dependence between increase in agricultural output and rise in the rural income which help uplift the poor from below the poverty line. With green revolution in 1970's we saw an upsurge in demand in menial labour jobs in the agricultural sector which enhanced rural earnings and reduced rural poverty. Here it is important to mention the concept of food fortification were the nutrient value of food is increased to reduce the dietary deficiency in the population. With more of such concepts the expansion of agriculture is limited which has adverse effect upon the rural economy and the social upliftment of marginalized and poor. It is surprising how such positive and beneficial concepts also have the negative effects.

The government should realize that the present system of agricultural practices is insufficient. What is the need of the hour is that we should look for reforms and complete policy setup being made for a much more

efficient, internationally competitive, and diverse sector of agriculture.

### **Focus areas for agriculture in future**

**Boosting agricultural output and rural development:** Agricultural research and extension reform, as well as the promotion of new technologies: Effective reform, increase of research and adequate infrastructure is sine qua non to meet the needs of agriculture sector and ensuring prosperity. As a result of persistent underfunding of infrastructure and operations, the inability to replace ageing researchers, and a lack of general access to cutting-edge technology, these services have worsened over time. Research nowadays has nothing to offer beyond the tried-and-tested methods of the past. Farmers receive little to no new information from public extension organizations, which are already struggling. The mismatch in research qua application and delivery of the services qua masses need's, must be addressed as soon as possible.

**Irrigation:** A key component required for producing crops is water. Without water it is not possible to produce crops. For most of these needs' farmers are dependent on monsoon which is neither even nor regular. Irrigation of large mass of cultivable land is the answer to this problem. Moreover, another facet of problem related to water is that with increase in demand from the urban households and industries and at the same time decrease in

availability of water, the ground beneath our feet is shrinking. So, what is required is that we utilize the available resources to maximum possible levels keeping in mind need for other sectors as well. "More crop per drop" is a welcome initiative in this direction. Along with this use of pipe for transferring water, efficient water delivery system like drip irrigation is the need of the hour. Efficient use of the ground water is a must if we are looking at long term sustenance of the water resources and the pragmatic approach for the same is the only way to sustainable development. Furthermore, timely completion of irrigation projects ensuring long term viability of projects is required to secure of agriculture in India.

**Diversifying the crop:** One of the adverse outcomes of rain fed crops and the fluctuation in price of crops is that farmers stick to producing cash crops. The solution to this problem lies in diversifying the crops so that the soil is also not made uncultivable by the farmers producing same crop year after year, converting the land into a barren land. The higher value crops will also help farmers earn more and convert it into profitable business. Moreover, the farmers will required to be help by better food processing, marketing, transporting and supporting them at each stage of production ensuring farmer choose crops conducive to the area which

serve the dual purpose of profit to farmers and at the same time use the sustainable cropping patterns. The government can adopt regulatory framework for the same as long as it does not become a hurdle in the process.

### **Focus on agriculture sub sectors:**

There are certain crucial agriculture sub-sectors which have room for expansion. The dairy products contribute a whopping one fourth of the contribution by agriculture sector to GDP. The present needs are also not met and with increase in demand at 5 percent per annum, provides lot of scope for rapid expansion. This sub sector also ensures gender equality and promotes financial self-reliance to the women as women contribute equally in providing the dairy products.

This is the area in which women can contribute equally to men if not more. It already provides livelihood to 70% of rural households. This area has lot of untapped potential. The use of technology can be helpful in increasing production in this sector as the genetically advanced livestock can increase production many folds. This can reduce poverty levels as well and prove to be bane to society.

**Role of government:** India was known to have license raj with excessive control and interference from government which adversely affected the domestic and international trade by increasing transportation cost, expensive


and horrid marketing for agricultural commodities. Though there is some respite from the private sector which seeks to invest in the processing and marketing. The pace of investment has not been able to match with the requirements of the agriculture sector of India. However, some restrictions have been lifted a lot needs to be done. Another requirement of farmer is that they are provided with sufficient funds to carry on their affairs with enough independence and capabilities. Bank must be made able to provide the loans to needy farmers without security at cheap interest rates. Moreover, the requirements of the farmers outpaced the subsidy provided on the fertilizers, electricity etc which resulted in sidelining some important aspects like research and development in agriculture sector.

**Removal of poverty:** While the development in agriculture will have incremental effect upon the rural families but the income must be ensured by the government to be disbursed amongst the marginalized and poor. The role of self-help group in this regard is very crucial. They will be helpful in distribution of resources and also be required to share power in local government. These self-help group also helps the poor some power to bargain and negotiate terms to their advantage.

**Sustainable development:** Water is the most precious and scare commodity. It

must be used sparingly and its judicious use is the key to success. Depleting ground water is the biggest problem faced by the farmers. There are several other prominent threats like soil erosion, climate change etc. which need to be managed more efficiently. The thing is all these problems have proven solutions. The quicker we will fix them the better it is going to be for us.

**Conclusion:** The full potential of agriculture can be realized only with the help of technology and tackling the challenges discussed and removing the difficulties systematically. Moreover, future of agriculture in India is bright and in safe hands which needs to be attained for meeting the needs of future. A large population with rising middle class is further increasing the demand. All this holds the key for economic transformation of farmers and emergence of an inclusive India.



### References

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