

FARMERS SUICIDE IN INDIA

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Public concern regarding farmer suicides in India gained traction in the 1990s, after journalist P Sainath (2005) famously flagged the problem of rising agrarian distress in the country. According to the 2011 Census, farmers (main and marginal cultivators) account for around 25% of all workers in the country, while farmworkers (agricultural labourers) account for 30%. Farmer suicides have always been a sensitive issue in the public sphere, evoking more sentimentality than fact-based responses as the number of farmer suicides rose steadily between 1995 and 2004 from 10,720 to 18,241. In those states, where farmer suicides were higher than the average, it was argued that there could be crop- and region-specific factors responsible for it. The data on farmer suicides, published by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), has been used to validate polar opposite positions—from the neo-liberal policy reforms of 1991 (Aerthayil 2008) to the degrading moral fibre of the Indian society (Peebles 2013).

The farmer suicide issue is mostly seen as emblematic of the agrarian distress caused by neo-liberal reforms, which reduced the ambit of formal bank credit and left farmers at the mercy of market forces. K C Suri (2006) and C R Chandrasekhar (2017) trace the roots of national agrarian distress, which they explain as the primary or obvious cause of rising farmer suicides. This suggested link between agrarian distress and farmer suicides, in fact, has been deeply ingrained in the prevalent literature, despite suicides being a neurological and psychosocial phenomenon. It seems to be a particularly intriguing phenomenon for economists to study, because farmer suicides, linked so closely with agrarian distress, are looked at as deaths that are driven actually by economic hardships, rather than the more complex issues of mental health.

A critical examination of the official data on farmer suicides reveals a poor understanding of the issue. Yet, it also reveals that farmers' suicides, on average, account for 14% of the total suicides in the country. It peaked at 16% in 2004, consequently falling to 9% in 2013. It is a region-specific issue and those states with high farmer suicides have persistently remained so. The underlying causes of farmer suicides and non-farmer suicides may

be similar across states on account of a high correlation between their corresponding numbers, suggesting that the causes of suicides may include factors other than economic and livelihood issues.

The main focus of this paper is to explore the impact of the rise of Farmer Producer Companies (FPCs) on farmer suicides in India. The livelihood of farmers in India has been under threat owing to the liberalization and privatization of the Indian agricultural sector. The effects of the open market and the subsequent competition and pressure that it brings have driven farmers to extreme debt leading them to commit suicides. As per the records of the National Crime Records Bureau, there has not been considerable improvement in the rate of farmer suicides in India. FPCs, in principle, could inarguably be able to organize such farmers into collectives that have the capability to guard against global free falls in commodity prices as well as other associated risks. The purpose of this study is to investigate the feasibility of FPCs in reducing farm-related suicides in India. Design/ Methodology/Approach: The data for the study, which includes secondary data from National Crime Record Bureau's Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India report on farm-related suicides and the number of FPCs from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs website, has been put through statistical tests in order to ascertain the relationship between the two variables. Findings: The paper concludes that the rise of FPCs in India since 2003 has had a negative correlation to the number of farmer suicides in the corresponding period. This means that the rise of FPCs might be categorized as one of the reasons that has led to the reduction of farmer suicides in the country. Research Limitation/Implications: The study recognizes that while FPCs do have a role in the reduction of farm-related suicides in India yet it is only plausible that there are lot many variables that need to be accounted for. This means that the rise of FPCs is only one of the many factors that could have contributed to the reduction of farmer suicides in the country and as such the same needs further in-depth qualitative exploration which this study has not done. Originality/ Value: While there have been numerous attempts to study FPCs and farmer suicides in isolation, this study attempts to look at the two variables in collaboration.

Agricultural sector is the main income for the rural people in India. It plays a significant role in their life. In India, small and marginal farmers account for 70%, according to the 2011 census of the Government of India. These small and marginal farmers took credit from banks and private money lenders. The non-repayment of credit led to an agricultural crisis and farmers' suicide. This study focused on the reasons that caused such a disaster. The study rests on a review of the literature which was extracted from journals, reports, and newspapers from 2004 to 2019. The review identified the following reasons for the agricultural crisis and farmer's suicides-poverty, indebtedness, crop failures, distress, lack of awareness on new technologies, inadequate debt, marketing of produce, the high interest of non-institutional credit, and depletion of water levels. The article concluded noting that-the government had to shift its focus from industries to agriculture and shift its agricultural policies from short-term to long-term ones.

Farmers are an important part of our country. After all, India is an agricultural country. We depend highly on our farmers. However, unfortunately, the case is that farmer suicides are a common issue in our country. Each year we see so many cases of these suicides due to a number of reasons. The government of India needs to take measures to prevent this issue. We need to save our farmers from this misery as they are the ones who feed us. Even the citizens must be aware of this issue and not pay them less so they suffer loss. There are a lot of reasons as to why farmer suicides happen in our country. All these reasons come together to make this worrying issue prevalent. One of the main reasons is droughts. When the crops do not get sufficient rainfall they do not yield much produce. This, in turn, poses as a great loss to the farmers as their money gets wasted and they go in debt. Areas that have frequent droughts have higher cases of farmer suicides. Similarly, floods are also as dangerous as droughts. The crops of the farmers erode away and they do not get any product from those crops. Furthermore, the high debt which the farmers have to pay for the land is another major factor. As they take heavy loans for growing

crops and fail to do so, they kill themselves as they do not have money to pay their debt back. In addition, family pressure is too high for farmers. They fail to make ends meet and thus commit suicide because of this failure. Moreover, capitalization is a very big reason for farmer suicides. Nowadays, people most favor privatization and capitalization. These big firms capitalize on the crops and sell them using marketing strategies.

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