



A study on reasons behind farmers suicide and the response by the government of Tamil Nadu

R Thilagavathi¹, Dr. S Indira²

¹ Ph.D Research Scholar, K.S.R College of Arts & Science (Autonomous), Tiruchengode, Tamil Nadu, India

² Assistant Professor in Commerce, Thiruvalluvar University Constituent Arts and Science College, Kallakurichi, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

In India the Tamilnadu has occupied an area of 1.3 lakh sq. km with an overall area of around 63 L.Ha for Agriculture. Sadly, suicide is not yet part of the national discourse. Also, a problem of this magnitude needs composite national response where national, state, city and village governments, all public and private corporate, schools and colleges, civil society come together and take a vow, no more business as usual. In Tamilnadu State, Primarily in delta region, news in the media about farmers' suicides and sudden deaths shocked everyone. Initially started with one or two deaths per day, the number rose to ten. It was reported that more than 120 farmers have succumbed to suicides and sudden cardiac deaths in 2 months, primarily in the Delta Region, due to the failure of crops owing to non - availability of irrigation water from Cauvery and the failure of North East monsoon. Mostly in the Cauvery delta, have reportedly committed suicide during a period of one month, and the number continues to rise unabated. Tamilnadu government has declared the State as the one drought affected due to monsoon failure, compensation offered is not according to the ground reality. Although decided upon implementing various schemes for preserve farmers from suicide in delta region. This paper focuses to know the reasons behind farmers' suicide and the reactions of Tamilnadu government for that farmers' suicide.

Keywords: agriculture, farmers suicide, government, Tamilnadu, schemes, demands, innovative technologies

Introduction

Indian economy had a critical sector level of agriculture. It achieved an 8.2 percent of growth in the overall GSDP may not deliver much in terms of poverty reduction unless agricultural growth accelerates. In Tamil Nadu, 56% of population is depending on Agriculture and allied activities for their livelihood. The standard of living of the rural people depends on the agricultural development. The standard of living of the people depending on agriculture needs develop on par with people depending on industrial sector whose life standard is being improved because of dynamic industrial growth in Tamil Nadu.

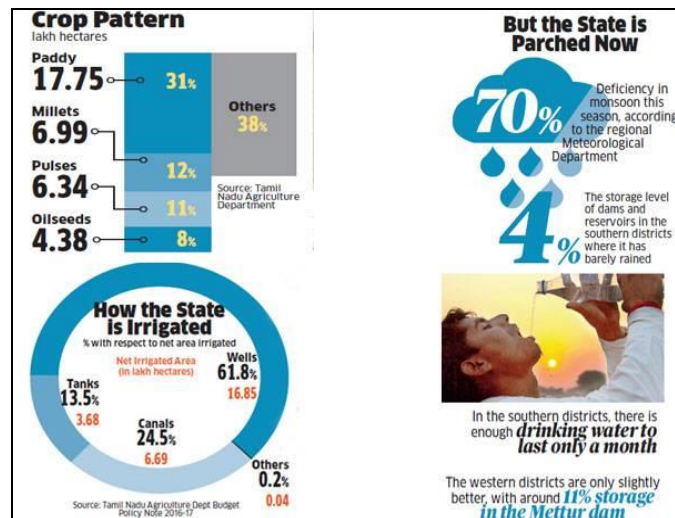
The major crops sown in Tamilnadu are rice, jowar, ragi, bajra, maize, and pulses. Few other crops that are highly cultivated in the regions of Tamilnadu are cotton, sugarcane, tea, coffee, and coconut. Tamilnadu has also gained a commendable status is the horticultural sector in its agricultural department. The horticultural products of Tamilnadu include cash crops and oil seed crops. Bananas and mangoes are cash crops while groundnuts, sesame, and sunflower are oil seed crops. Paddy is the most leading crop in Tamilnadu and is found in 3 kinds namely Kuruvali, Thaladi, and Samba that varies from season to season. River tanks and wells are the main sources of irrigation in Tamilnadu.

Water Source

Distress in agriculture, compounded by the lack of water to save standing crops, resulted in the suicide of some farmers in Cauvery Delta districts. The South Indian Coordination

Committee of Farmers Movements (SICCFM), which studied the circumstances in which seven farmers died, said four of them committed suicide, and distress in agriculture was the major reason behind the suicides. Water has always been a contentious subject for the State. Tamil Nadu depends largely on the North-East monsoon, from October to December, for its water requirement. Post a 10-day delay, the 2016 monsoons entered the State with "spatial and temporal rainfall", creating a deficit of 62 percent. Drinking water is on the verge of drying up. Authorities say that in the southern districts, there is drinking water to last only a month.

The western districts are slightly better, with around 11% storage in the Mettur dam, the main source of water to these regions. The northern districts are also staring at severe water scarcity in the coming months. Finally the responsible persons said against the water scarcity as the release of additional water is decided by the Krishna River Water Board. More than 50% of crops are lost, says an official with the state Agriculture Department. Wherever there are bore wells or pumps, there will be good harvest. But farmers in areas dependent on rain and dams will suffer. The farming community has been affected to a great extent — this is unheard-of in the recent history of Tamil Nadu. According to the Tamilnadu agricultural department Central team is assessing the losses. The assessment should be based on the suffering of farmers. Drinking water crisis is acute. There is no feed for cattle either. This is a main problem of farmers' point of view.



Source: Tamilnadu Agricultural Department

Fig 1

Then it was time for the samba crop — a longer crop season from August to January when a variety of crops are cultivated. By September, cultivation should have been over but there was little water in the Mettur dam. With the help of academics in the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), we asked farmers in the delta area to switch to dry sowing instead of transplantation this year. In Cauvery delta regions of Tamilnadu 70% of the area, about 6 lakh acres, was brought under dry sowing this time. This was coupled with the release of water from the Mettur dam in September. Water from the dam flows in three directions — the Grand Anaicut canal that irrigates southern Thanjavur and Pudukottai; the Vennaru basin that caters to Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam districts; and the Cauvery basin irrigating upper Thanjavur, Tiruvarur.

Farmers Suicide

The unremitting wave of farmer suicides has resurfaced, now haunting the farming heartlands of Tamil Nadu. Troubled by a severely deficit monsoon which triggered the worst drought in 140 years, over 100 farmers, mostly in the Cauvery delta, have reportedly committed suicide during a period of one month, and the number continues to rise unabated.

- Report given by NCRB for farmers' suicide: No suicides were reported in 1972, 1982 and 1987 when the country experienced its worst droughts. NCRB in its 49th Annual Report on Accidental Death and Suicides in India (2015) provides evidence that the number of farmers committing suicide rose more than 41 per cent in 2015 over 2014. The report also clearly underlines that indebtedness is found to be the single largest underlying cause behind farmers' suicide.
- Government data indicate that farm suicides increased after the loan waiver. As the non-availability of farm credit is reportedly causing distress among farmers; a doubling of the agriculture credit scheme was introduced during 2004-05 to increase the flow of credit to farmers.
- Report of NHRC issued a notice to the Tamil Nadu government on the reported deaths of farmers over a month in the state. Several districts in the state have been reportedly affected by poor monsoon which resulted in

poor harvests—the second in the year—leading to farmer suicides and deaths.

Response by the government

The state government released a package of Rs 54 crore to help save the kuruvai crop a short term crop, mostly paddy, which is sown in the Cauvery delta. "This package was full of subsidies to help farmers irrigate their crops using their bore wells or from wells in neighbouring fields. We provided subsidised PVC pipelines and subsidies for transplanting of paddy saplings using machinery, so that farmers would not lose the season. As against an expected 3 lakh acres, a total of 3.1 lakh acres, a total of 3.1 lakh acres in the delta region were cultivated and harvested," says the agriculture official. Then it was time for the samba crop a longer crop season from August to January when a variety of crops are cultivated. By September, cultivation should have been over but there was little water in the Mettur dam.

Second time in Tamil Nadu's history, the government announced a relief package of Rs 64 crore for the samba crop season. Farmers who adopt direct sowing would get a subsidy of Rs 500 per acre. The TNAU advised farmers to spray PPFM bacteria on their paddy, prevents evaporation and ensures that the crop does not wither away for 10-15 days. Simultaneously, the district administration was revved into action to bring as many farmers as possible under crop insurance scheme. Now the state government is conducting ground surveys to assess crop losses, as per new guidelines issued by the Centre.

According to ANI, the Supreme Court said it was "painful to hear farmers are committing suicide and the state government is not taking enough steps". It directed the government in Tamil Nadu to file a detailed reply in the case. In a significant order, the Madras High Court had on April 4 directed the Tamil Nadu government to waive loans of all drought-hit farmers and restrained cooperative societies and banks from recovering their dues.

Prevent actions of government of Tamilnadu behind farmers suicide

In every year, 10th September conducted "International Suicide Prevention Day". A report published by World Health Organization (WHO) in 2014, "Preventing Suicide: A Global Perspective", reported that in India, in 2012, 2,58,057 (158,098 men and 99,977 women) people committed suicide. This was the largest number for any country in the world.

The Supreme Court told to the Tamil Nadu government to concentrate on preventing farmers' suicide and not to go around distributing compensation after they commit suicide. "Your approach has to be preventive and not compensatory".

In the previous year of drought in 2012, the Government of Tamil Nadu had sanctioned relief to the extent of Rs. 1377 crore to help the drought-affected population. Likewise, consequent to the floods of 2015-16, the government disbursed a sum of Rs. 407.57 crore as relief to 7.62 farmers in order to enable them to get out of their misery as 8.67 lakh acres of their crops were affected. Now TN had said it also sought central assistance to the tune of Rs. 39,565 crore through its drought memorandum submitted in January 2017. Above the submission of farmers suicide report on the extent

of drought and farm deaths by an official team, the chief minister recently declared the entire State drought-hit and announced measures worth Rs 160 crore and Rs 350 crore to alleviate the water crisis in urban and rural local bodies respectively. The chief minister has said about Rs 78 crore is to be spent on meeting the fodder needs of cattle, and has ordered the rescheduling of farm loans, the cancellation of land tax and compensation for lost crop to drought-affected farmers.

Suggestions

- The prices of farm inputs have skyrocketed in recent years, reducing the profit margin realised by farmers.
- Urgent steps need to be taken to bring down the cost of cultivation without affecting the productivity of crops.
- A one-time loan waiver will not end the farm suicides.
- Recommended by the National Commission on Farmers (2006) and the Working Group on Agriculture Production (2010), the minimum support price (MSP) for different crops that is fixed should be at least 50 per cent more than the actual cost of cultivation.
- The serious physical limitation to the delivery of agriculture credit needs to be tackled. Efforts need to be undertaken to restructure MGNREGS by linking it with the farming work to reduce the cost of cultivation especially during peak seasons.

Conclusion

In this paper concluded that if the government and farmers work together the Central and State government should frame policies to protect the welfare of the farmers, because farmers are the backbone of Indian economy. The government should provide special incentives and motivation to the farmers lastly, suicide and suicide attempt is an individual act though there are clearly identified and identifiable vulnerable groups. At a broad level, different approaches will be required for different groups and finally at micro level, the suicide prevention activity has to be delivered intelligently and compassionately at the individual level. There is no easy solution. But time to start is now. And Mission Zero Suicide –thy time has come now. WHO says there is one suicide globally every 40 seconds and by 2020, there will be one every 20 second. And countries like India will be main contributor.

References

1. Buncil PC. Agricultural Problems in India, Vikas Publishing Private Ltd, New Delhi.
2. National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). Reported deaths of farmers in Tamilnadu state, Chennai.
3. UNI report of. Farmers' suicide: Apex court sets two weeks for response by Tamil Nadu government" Apr 13, New Delhi.
4. The National Human Rights Commission delivered their report for. To improve the economic status of the cultivation sector January 10, 2014, Chennai.
5. NGO reported against Tamil Nadu Govt to file a detailed reply on Farmers' Suicide Issue, New Delhi.
6. Deccan Chronicle, Painful to hear about farmer suicides, TN govt not doing enough, Apr 13, 2017, New Delhi.

7. The Indian Express, Supreme Court pulls up Tamil Nadu Govt. on farmer suicides: Take preventive steps rather than compensator, July 2017, New Delhi.
8. The Hindu. Prevent farmers suicides rather than give compensation, SC tells TN July 07, 2017, New Delhi.
9. www.google.com
10. <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/india/gdp-from-agriculture>.