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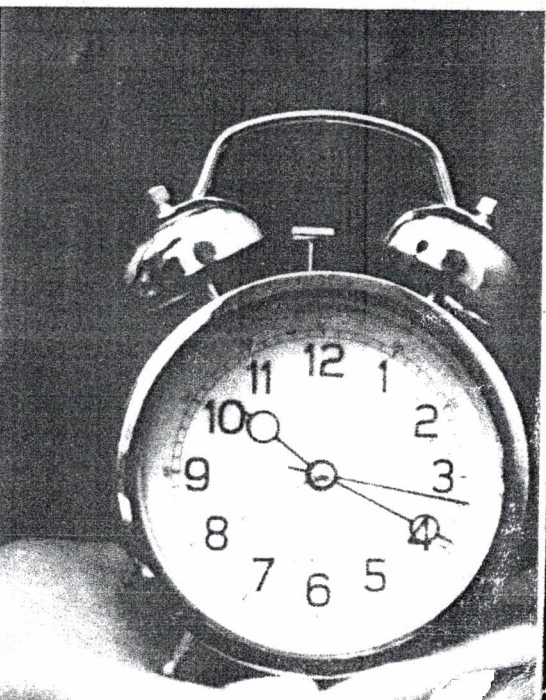
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## 9. Farmers Suicides in India

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### Abstract

At least 10,281 persons involved in the farm sector ended their lives in 2019, accounting for 7.4 per cent of the total number of suicides in India which was 139,516, suggests the Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India report 2019 by the National Crime Records Bureau.

The 2019 figure is marginally lower to 2018 when 10,348 people took their lives. The story, however, changes when one looks at suicides committed by farmers / cultivators, which is 5,957 as against 5,763 in 2018 — a three per cent increase between 2019 and 2018.

The top six states — Maharashtra (3,927 suicides), Karnataka (1,992), Andhra Pradesh (1,029), Madhya Pradesh (541), Chhattisgarh (499) and Telangana (499) — account for 83 per cent of the deaths committed by persons involved in farm sector.

GDP in monetary terms during the first quarter was estimated at Rs 26.90 lakh crore. This was Rs 35.35 lakh crore last year for the same quarter. This means there has been an overall loss of Rs 8.45 lakh crore.

### Introduction

Agriculture was the only sector to grow for April-June 2020 among eight used to compute India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). GDP shrank by a whopping 23.9 per cent according to the National Statistical Office's just-released estimates for the first quarter. The economy grew 5.2 per cent in the same period a year ago. It was expected due to the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the near cessation of economic activities. But what comes as a silver lining is the exceptional show of the agriculture sector.

According to the latest NCRB report; People in the farm sector accounted for 7.4 per cent of the total suicides in India.

**Keywords:-** Agriculture, Farmers, Suicide, India, Covid-19, pandemic, Economy, Debt, etc.





### **Last 2 Years Agricultural Production and Indian Economy**

Gross value added (GVA) by agriculture has grown by 3.4 per cent in this quarter, compared to last year. In other words, the sector has added Rs 14,815 crore in the first three months of the fiscal in absolute monetary terms.

In the overall GVA, the quarter experienced a contraction of 22.8 per cent in comparison to last year.

The lockdown coincided with the Rabi season harvests. The latest GDP figure for agriculture is encouraging given the disruption in the supply chains and the subsequent impact on the income of farmers. The current estimate includes the agricultural production for the Rabi season (including production of dairy products, fishery and poultry).

With the kharif season still on, the acreage has already surpassed recent records. In fact, agriculture has attracted huge private investments in July-August. This is unusual, given the large number of farmers quitting farming in recent years.

But the reverse migration to villages and the uncertainty of future livelihood has forced many to invest back on agriculture.

Its economic impact would be known when the GDP estimate for the next quarter is released at the end of September. But what has emerged since last year is that agriculture is slowly gaining its relevance to the national economy.

Just a week back, when the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released its Annual Report 2019-20, this aspect got buried in other headlines.

The RBI estimate showed that agriculture in 2019-20 recorded a real GVA growth of 4.0 per cent. This was due to the record food grain production.

This accounted for 15.2 per cent of the overall economic growth. For the agriculture sector, this is a new record. It surpassed the industrial sector's contribution to economic growth, that was just 4.7 per cent in 2019-20.

This was for the first time since 2013-14 that agriculture regained this economic prominence. RBI estimated that this growth positively impacted the economy of 48.3 per cent of the country's total households.

"As regards the evolution of aggregate supply conditions in 2019-20, agriculture and allied activities provided a silver lining, with record food grains and horticulture production and

favourable terms of trade for the farm economy,” said RBI, which otherwise has termed the last fiscal year as one of the worst in terms of economic growth.

But it gave a warning as well which has been a nagging problem for farmers in recent years: the challenge of managing supply gluts, particularly in cereals.

Farmers have not been earning a fair price for their produce even though food inflation has been high, or consumers have been paying more for agricultural produce.

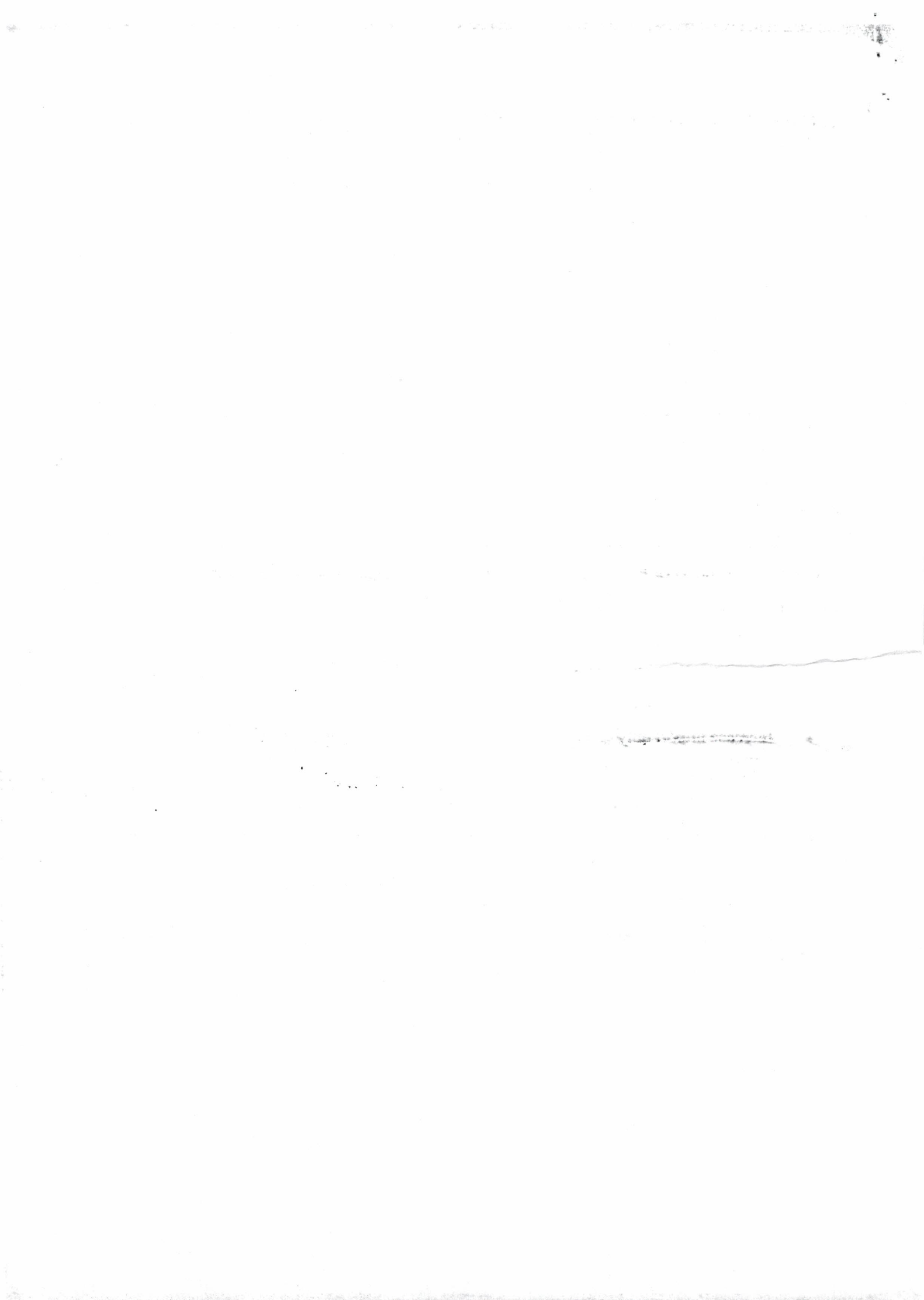
In July this year, given the surge in kharif acreage and in a clear sign of revival of interest in agriculture, tractor sales went up by 38.5 per cent. This also means that farmers are investing more this kharif season, not just on inputs but also on big facilitating machinery like tractors.

So, the profit has to be proportionate. But this depends on whether the farmers get the right price for their produce.

### **Causes**

There are various economic ,social , political , individual and environmental causes of farmer's suicide in India. The causes of this crisis are complex and manifold, they are dominantly related to public policy and economic strategy.

- Lack of Government Vision and clarity of intention to benefit the poor and small farmers.
- Lack of credit availability for small farmers. There has been minimal financial
- Reduction of agriculture subsidies.
- Absence of adequate social support infrastructure at the level of village.
- Indebtedness of farmers. Rising cost of cultivation.
- support from the government for small farmers.
- Uncertainty of agricultural enterprise in India.,
- Lack of irrigation facilities.
- Environmental pollution.
- Rehabilitation packages e.g. Package of Central Government, Package of State Government, Lone Waiver Proposal, etc are not implementing in proper way to relief needy farmers.
- Monocultures and uniformity increase the risk of crop failure , as diverse seeds adapted to diverse to eco-system are replaced by the rushed introduction of uniformity and often





untested seeds into the market. When Monsanto first introduced Bt Cotton in 2002, the farmers lost 1 billion rupees due to crop failure.

- Bad health and illness and inability to meet the necessary expenditure on medicine and health services.
- Lack of increasing in the prices of agricultural products compare to agricultural inputs. Indian farmers are facing is the dramatic fall in prices of farm produce as a result of the WTO's free trade policies.
- The drinking habit which atrophies the productivity of the farmer.
- Extravagant expenditure on marriages.
- Government has destroyed Important public institutions.

### Remedies

Farmers need protection through protective legislation as nothing is typically done to help them settle their debts or tackle the unprecedented price rise that leads them to commit suicides. Mere lip sympathy by political parties and government officials is not enough to bridge the widening demand-supply gap in the agricultural sector.

- Minimum Support Price mechanism for agricultural produce should appropriate with consideration increase in agricultural inputs.
- Increase import duty on cotton: Tariff barriers should used to discourage import.
- To integrate surface and groundwater irrigation schemes and integrate the line department in order that the schemes are implemented efficiently.
- Ensure that the formal banking system in the rural areas covers all the credit requirements of farmers and others, and that the coverage of the formal financial system is extended to all rural households.
- Set up a Distress Fund that will provide support to banks in chronically drought prone areas, and permit some debt relief to cultivators in extreme distress.
- Focus on increasing agricultural productivity with sustained growth and lower costs of production.
- Develop a land use strategy with particular reference to drought-prone areas.
- Identify input needs and monitor the provision of inputs to farmers
- Promote relevant public research in agriculture, particularly dry land agriculture, for the development of drought and disease resistant seeds of cereals and pulses.





- Analyze the relationship between input costs and market prices, and suggest appropriate and timely interventions by the state/central government agencies, in order to ensure remunerative prices to the farmers
- Monitor the adverse effects of droughts and pests on agriculture and bring in the required initiatives by the appropriate agencies to mitigate distress on account of these calamities.
- Oversee the settlement of land records, registration of all tenancies, and issue of passbooks to all cultivators including tenants.
- Improve infrastructure for crop markets and the post-harvest management of the produce
- Identify proper opportunities to promote rural employment, including nonfarm employment, encourage diversification within and out of agriculture; develop value addition activities such as agroprocessing in rural areas in a way that benefits farmers.

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