

CHAPTER - VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATION

The study is under taken with the objectives as follows:

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To study the socio-economic conditions of the selected farmers.
2. To analyse the cropping pattern, yield levels, economies of agriculture of selected farmers.
3. To identify the contributory factors for farmer suicides and
4. To critically review the relief and rehabilitation measures for the families of the deceased farmers.

2. Hypotheses

1. Social factors have influenced farmers' suicides
2. A strong correlation exists between farmers' indebtedness and suicides
3. Agriculture is a losing proposition in Warangal district
4. Relief and rehabilitation measures have helped the family members of the victims or deceased farmers.

Research Questions

1. Whether agricultural input supply is free from exploitation?
2. What are the contributory factors at the macro-level for agrarian crisis and farmer suicides?
3. Whether economic factors influence the decision of farmers in committing suicides?
4. What are the major challenges encountered in the implementation of relief and rehabilitation packages?
5. Whether addictions to drinking and gambling, and also illegal sexual relations drive farmers to suicide?
6. Whether agriculture is a profit earning enterprise?

Methodology

Warangal district in Andhra Pradesh is selected for the study purposively as it recorded a high rate of farmer suicides.

The study is based on both primary and secondary sources of information and data. Secondary data includes season and crop reports, statistical abstracts of Andhra Pradesh, National Crime Records of Bureau (NCRB), published and unpublished works of scholars, reports and

monographs published by Andhra Pradesh State Government and Central Government.

Primary data and information are collected from the respondents who happen to be close members of the deceased farmers. The data are collected by adopting personal interview method through a pre-tested schedule specially designed for the purpose. Focused Group Discussions (FGD) are also held with the members of the victims' families and the villagers as well to solicit general information and their impressions, views and suggestions pertaining to the issues.

The collected information and data are scrutinised for accuracy and uniformity, and then tabulated. Some statistical tools such as, percentages, averages, range, chi square tests and regression analysis are used in analysing and interpreting the data.

Sample Design

As stated already Warangal district is selected purposively for the study. Three Revenue divisions, namely Warangal, Jangaon and Mulugu are selected for a focused study. Two Mandals from each revenue division are selected as these areas have recorded a large number of farmers' suicides. Further, from each Mandal, all villages which experienced farmer suicides were chosen

purposively. A sample of 163 farmers constitutes the respondents. They are classified into three categories; the first group consists of farmers with less than one acre, while the second and third groups with 1 - 2.5 acres, and 2.5 acres and above respectively.

The study pertains to the periods from 2011- 2013. Data was collected in 2013.

During the pre-Green Revolution period of agriculture development after the Independence, food was the main problem. Bringing new lands under the plough and provision of irrigation were the two measures taken by the Government. During the Green Revolution period, modern agricultural technology, nationalisation of banks and establishment of Agricultural Prices Commission did help the farmers to improve their agricultural production and also get better prices for their agricultural commodities. In the Post Green Revolution period, rich farmers got the benefit while small and marginal farmers are bypassed. During the Reforms period, the New Economic Policy and WTO policies have contributed to the agrarian crisis. Further, the agrarian crisis deepened in the subsequent years. The crisis is manifested in declining output growth rate, farmers' indebtedness, low level of farmers' income, poverty, food problem, low productivity of crops, out migration of poor farmers and labours, loss making agriculture etc.

According to NCRB, (the Government of India) Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Chattisgarh are the five States where farmers' suicides were occurred most.

BCs, SCs and STs form the major part of the farmers committing suicides in the selected Warangal district. The percentage of female population in the selected households is more than male population. The major activity of the respondents is agriculture. The literacy level among the respondents is very low. About 50 per cent of them are illiterates. Only 30 out of 163 respondents are members of the cooperative societies.

Economic aspects

It is noted that common property resources have declined drastically in the selected villages which caused great trouble to the farmers. All the selected farm households were small and marginal farmers. About 83 per cent of the farmers depend on rainfed agriculture. Among the selected farmers, as many as 129 are dry land farmers and 39 were irrigated farmers who also possessed dry lands. The live stock position in the selected households was very poor. Majority of the farmers did not possess implements and machinery and consumer goods.

The total outstanding loan per farmer in less than 1 acre group was Rs 36,786. The same in the 1-2.5 acres group is Rs 38,291 and in the third group it is Rs 41,932. It is noted that less than half of the farmers received loans from the banks. Private sources are still dominating rural credit market .Cotton, paddy, maize, chillies, pulses and vegetables are the main the crops grown by the selected farmers. Majority of the small and marginal farmers hired out their labour.

Analysis of contributory factors for farmers suicides

1. Farmers indebtedness

The first and foremost contributory factor for farmers' suicides is their indebtedness. A farmer committed suicide because of debt trap, since the loans outstanding piled up over a period of time. The farmers' major source of loans is the private sources. The rate of interest is considered to be usurious.

The major factors responsible for accumulation of debts are increasing cultivation expenses and unremunerative prices for agriculture produce.

2. Crop loss and failure and risk factor

Crop loss emerged as the second major factor forcing farmers to end their lives. The crop loss is mainly due to adverse seasonal conditions, lack of irrigation, pests and disease attack, inferior quality of seed etc.

3. The input related problems are the seed, fertilisers, pesticides, irrigation, credit etc. Not only the quality of inputs is inferior but also their prices are very high. Further they are not easily accessible, since all these are controlled by private markets forces totally. The role of Government is very marginal.

The institutional finance to the farmers is quite inadequate and inaccessible to many.

The farmers mostly depend upon input dealers for technical advice. Agricultural extension system has totally failed.

Agricultural infrastructure is grossly under developed. No storage or cold storage facilities are available.

The farmers faced the exploitative agriculture marketing system.

F. Agricultural Credit

About 77 per cent of the selected farmers are reportedly not getting institutional finance. About 43 per cent of the farmers stated that the institutional finance they get is adequate for their cultivation purposes. About 90 per cent of the farmers reported that they do not get credit in time, which is so essential for taking up timely farming operations.

4). Failure of Agricultural Extension

This cause for farmers' suicides is highlighted by 70 per cent of the respondents. Technical knowledge of the farmers is found to be very low regarding most of the agricultural production, particularly soils, nutrient status, suitability of soils and weather conditions to different crops, agronomic practices, fertiliser types and doses for different crops, crop pests and diseases and control measures, suitability of crop varieties, etc. It is reported that 16 per cent of technical knowledge is being transferred to the farmers. Several agencies are the sources of technical knowledge to farmers. As per the input dealers provide technical information, while the government extension system has totally collapsed and the farmers suffer from want of unbiased scientific advice. The uniformed input dealers give advice to promote their business.

5). Lack of Storage and Marketing facilities

It is noted from that none of the selected farmer has storage facility to store the agriculture produce. They also have no withholding capacity either in physical terms or economic terms. About 77 per cent of the selected farmers sold their agriculture produce in the market yard. However, about 23 per cent of farmers, mostly farmers of the category -1, resorted to selling their produce to the middlemen with in the village itself.

6. Lack of remunerative prices

An overwhelming number of farmers (about 85 per cent of the farmers on the whole) reported that they do not get fair prices for their produce. Further their loans are linked to sale of produce to the traders at prefixed prices. Farmers have been incurring losses due to this sort of hedging. Minimum Support Price (MSP) fixed by the GoI for various crops are found to be far lower when compared with the cost of production. Minimum Support Price is not implemented in several cases and that is why farmers do not even get MSP to their products. This is the one of the main causes for farmers' distress and suicides.

7. Absence of Agricultural Insurance

In the personal interviews with the respondent farmers and also focused group discussions held in the villages, it is revealed that 80 per cent of the farmers were not aware of the existence of an insurance scheme and none of them got indemnity or compensation for crop loss. Even in the case of insured farmers.

MACRO-LEVEL PERSPECTIVES OF AGRARIAN CRISIS AND FAREMRS' SUICIDES

Agrarian crisis and farmers' suicides is analysed from two important policy perspectives at the macro level. These are:

- a). New Economic Policy (NEP) and
- b). Globalisation of Agriculture Trade

Relief and rehabilitation packages promise and performance

After the death of the farmer, who is generally the head of the family, the remaining members of the family have a greater sense of insecurity. Social stigma is also attached to them. They lack a reliable source of income and are ensulted by fear of survival. The lenders start harassing them for repayment immediately after the death of the farmer. Lack of capital and credit also threaten their lives and they could not continue their cultivation. If a male

farmer commits suicide, the female members of the deceased family face a lot of difficulty in continuing the agriculture. They face the problems of lack of income to conduct their daughters' or sons' marriages. The education of the children also suffers for lack of income. Even medical treatment has become next to impossible for lack of money.

Mass organisations. The Government formulated the following three important relief and rehabilitation packages, following widespread agitations.

1. The G.O. 421
2. Prime Minister's Relief package
3. Indira Kranthi Patham: Letter No. 3-farmer suicides- POP-SARP-2012 dated: 15th October, 2012.

The foregone discussion clearly establishes that there is a big gap between the Governments promises and implementation. Not only are the packages designed properly but are also not implemented sincerely and faithfully. The failure of the Government in this regard is all pervasive. The nature of the Government is not to help or serve the poor but to promote the interest of the private corporate companies, both domestic as well as multinational.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

1. It is recommended that the solutions to the problems of farmers' suicides as suggested by various commissions and committees appointed on farmers' conditions and related aspects should be implemented by the government immediately and fully to solve the problem of agrarian distress and farmers' suicides.
2. Since the members of the kind of the deceased did not derive much benefit from government in their distressed conditions. Efforts must be made to ensure quicker disbursement of the relief to the kin. As the relief and rehabilitation packages are not properly designed, these should be redesigned or reformulated to meet the requirements of the families. The implementation should be free from obstacles like corruption and delays.
3. Indebtedness is the most important contributory factor for suicides. All the farmers, not only those who have taken loans from public financial institutions but also those who have taken loans from private sources, should be relieved from their debt burdens. In addition to the debt waiver scheme from public institutions, debt relief scheme even from private sources should be implemented. The farmers' dependency on the private exploitative credit market should be reduced. All the farmers, especially small, marginal and tenant farmers should be provided with institutional

credit at a zero rate of interest. Loan should be provided for all crops according to the scale of finance. No security should be demanded from farmers borrowing less than Rs one lakh as per the guidelines of RBI and NABARD.

4. Crop loss has emerged as the second major cause for farmers' suicides and hence both preventive as well as relief measures should be extended to the farmers. Preventive measures include development of irrigation through minor and macro irrigation facilities. Better and effective plant protection measures should be taken to prevent crop loss due to pest and disease attack. Drought resistant crop varieties need to be developed for dry land farmers. The farmers should be paid input subsidy and indemnity or compensation amount without delays.
5. The government should supply at least 50 per cent of agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, pesticides etc. at 50 per cent subsidy from the public institutions or agro-service centers.
6. Infrastructure including electricity, road connectivity, storage and warehousing and cold storage facilities, agro-processing, improving services at the market yard etc. should be created for strengthening the base of the farmers.

7. Remunerative prices should be provided to farmers based on the recommendations of the Prof. M.S. Swaminathan's Commission.

8. RESEARCH AND EXTENSION

Public funded research in agriculture shall benefit farmers, particularly small and marginal. The research efforts at agricultural research station, Warangal have to be diversified and intensified so as to evolve straight varieties in crops. The seeds of straight varieties are invariably cheap. The foundation seed may be given by the agricultural research station directly to the farmers for multiplication and use. The cost reducing and yield increasing technologies have to be evolved so that the cost of production of crops is reduced and farmers are benefited.

Government must strengthen agricultural extension services by equipping with men and material adequately and suitably to transfer the technology from Lab to Land. Investment on agricultural extension should be enhanced.

9. Sustainable Agriculture/Organic farming / Ecological agriculture

Chemical agriculture, which is being adopted by farmers in Warangal district, is not only highly expensive but also environmentally damaging and health hazardous. Sustainable agriculture with farm produced seeds, organic manures, non-pesticide management etc is

proved to be cost-effective. Hence, Government should extend incentives, subsidies, credit and other support to sustainable agriculture to reduce farmer's expenditure on cultivation and to make agriculture profitable and sustainable.

10. Irrigation

Tank Irrigation system in Warangal district has to be strengthened, as tanks have to play a big role in the provision of irrigation to farmers. A separate board may be established with necessary funds to take up the development of tank irrigation system.

Indiscriminate tapping of ground-water should be stopped by adopting various measures for recharging ground water and controlling digging of new borewells recklessly and irresponsibly by strictly implementing Water, Land and Three Act (WALTA)

11. Cooperative Service Societies / Producers' Associations

These institutions provide quality inputs at fair prices obtained from manufacturing or Distribution Companies through enhanced bargaining power and also market farmer-members' produce at competitive prices. Farmers are thus helped by saving them from exploitation of middlemen and corporate forces. It is, therefore

suggested that farmers may be motivated to become members of the cooperative service corporative and produces' Associations. Government has to take steps to establish these institutions.

12. Agricultural Insurance should be extended to each and every farmer, as he is constantly facing crop loss and risk factor. Insurance should be delinked from loans. Small and marginal farmers may be provided insurance with 50% subsidy in premium. All the crops may be covered with insurance facility. The compensation should be provided to the framers within a month after the harvest. This will infuse confidence in farmers and may act as a deterrent in taking a drastic step of forced death.

13. Counseling and Help-lines

Camps are suggested in the villages to extend counseling to farmers in general by the competent psychologists. Government may take steps in this direction. Help-lines, which were started earlier by Government may be made functional to help the farmers who vulnerable.

14. Protection to farmers from global market forces

Government may formulate a long term import-export policy in the interest of domestic farmers. Restriction or regulation on import of agricultural products is necessary so that demand for domestic products is not slashed and prices declined.

15. Since agriculture sector is in deep crisis, top most priority needs to be given to agriculture and allied sectors by enhancing budgetary provision at least to 10% of the total budget of the State and the Central Governments.

Conclusion

Gyanamudra and Vijaya Kumar .T (2006), while discussing the issue of ‘suicides’, stated that suicide is one of the most selfish, cowardly and irresponsible act that a person can commit. The one who commits suicide leaves a family and friends behind. It is not an isolated act committed in a vacuum. It brings humiliation and disgrace to their family members. It brings deep anguish to relatives and friends. losing a father, mother, husband, wife, brother, sister, son or daughter in such a sudden and disgraceful way is a calamity. Such a loss will haunt them for the rest of their lives unlike in any

other form of death. This very consideration alone should make them to realize how important for them to live in.

Whatever may be the trials and tribulations, sufferings and pains, social humiliations and economic compulsions, harassment and tortures they are subjected to, farmers should defeat suicide tendencies by facing all the above bravely and confidently. It is the duty of the powers that be to infuse confidence in them consistently through appropriate policy formulations and implementation through good governance.

The development of agriculture and farmers is extremely important for the overall development of the nation. A agrarian crisis and farmers' suicides are crippling the nation's economy and also breaking the spine of the farmers. The unabatedly continuing spate of farmers' suicides should be stopped forthwith. The family members of the deceased should be taken care of. Agriculture should be protected and farmers saved in the interest of the people of the country as a whole. The suggestions based on this specific study will go a long way in providing solutions to the agrarian crisis and farmers' suicides, provided the Government implement them sincerely and faithfully.