



Jus Corpus Law Journal

Open Access Law Journal – Copyright © 2022 – ISSN 2582-7820
Editor-in-Chief – Prof. (Dr.) Rhishikesh Dave; Publisher – Ayush Pandey

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0) License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Privacy Statistical Analysis of Farmer Impediments in India with Special Emphasis on Suicides

Sanchari Biswas^a

^aAssistant Professor of Law, Indian Institute of Legal Studies, Siliguri, India

Received 25 July 2022; *Accepted* 22 August 2022; *Published* 25 August 2022

The paper tries to signify the reasons for incessant suicides committed by farmers by focusing on some prominent issues which are too dominant to ignore and yet implementation of laws to eradicate the havoc falls short. The paper begins by introducing the significance of agriculture and how framers of the agricultural arena have faced issues over a couple of years in combating major crises. The paper deals elaborately with the statistics of some of such issues which are mainly indebtedness, cost of agricultural inputs, farm laws, the impact of covid, and the land-holding status of farmers subsequently. The paper also addressed the responses government ensued in mitigating the losses and finally concludes with the remedies approachable in the near future to change the status of farmer suicides to nil.

Keywords: *farmer impediments, suicides, agriculture, responses, statistics.*

INTRODUCTION

Despite the grandiloquent image of farming as an amicable and healthy way of life, the Agricultural industry stands derelict when it comes to mortality rate.¹ The 2012 report of the National Crime Records Bureau of India corroborates that 135,445 people committed suicides

¹ P. B. Behere & M. C. Bhise, 'Farmers' suicide: Across culture' (2009) 51 (4) Indian J Psychiatry, 242–243

out of which the number of suicides by farmers amounted to 13,445. 11.2% of all suicides are attempted and committed by farmers.² Issues of farmer suicides involve multitudinous factors. Agriculture signifies a major role in ameliorating the economy of our country, there lays a subsequent demand for its dependency of it on Mother Nature which signifies its categorization as a “gamble of monsoons”. These patterns of monsoons shape any farmer’s survival strategy overall. ³The other major sources of overshadowing a farmer’s life with suicidal thoughts include factors like indebtedness, the impact of covid, lack of awareness, water crisis, interstate water disputes, economic policies, etc.⁴

REASONS FOR THIS MACABRE SERIES OF SUICIDES

Indebtedness: The role of banking sectors in not providing credit or loans to farmers to evade agricultural risks purports anxiety enough for a farmer to commit suicide. Crop loans account for a farmer at the rate of 17%, however credit for housing and buying a car is available in the range of 9% to 11% rate interest.⁵

Exorbitant Impact of Input Costs: Inflated prices of agricultural inputs starting from the cost of chemicals, and seeds to agricultural equipment, add a bunch load of pressure and anxiety. Apart from the basic agricultural equipment, secondary equipment required at times becomes a matter of impossibility for marginal farmers. Hiring labourers and animals also produce an increased surge in input costs which proves to be ultimately detrimental to a farmer’s financial status.

Consternation ensued due to Farm Laws: The three farm Acts which were introduced to bolster the morale and spirit of farming in the market rather became a massive source of

² Trishla Dwivedi, ‘Farmer’s suicides – An issue of great concern’ (*The Times of India*, 25 October 2020) <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/hail-to-feminism/farmers-suicides-an-issue-of-great-concern-27472/>> accessed 23 July 2022

³ *Ibid*

⁴ S S Naik, ‘Farmers’ Suicides in India – Reasons and Responses.Farmers’ Suicides in India – Reasons and Responses’ (*ClearIAS*, 06 January 2021) <[HTTPS://WWW.CLEARIAS.COM/FARMERS-SUICIDES/](https://www.clearias.com/farmers-suicides/)> accessed 23 July 2022

⁵ P. B. Behere & M. C. Bhise (n 1)

exploitation towards farmers which were expressly displayed by the grandiloquent protests of these farmers.

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSED FARM BILLS WITH THEIR SIDE EFFECTS

The three farm acts such as **Farmer's Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020**, **Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020**, and **Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020** brought certain changes from the normal which perturbed and puzzled farmers to the derision of their basic practices.

The **Farmer's Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020** permits farmers to trade outside the physical markets of APMC which petrified farmers because of the absence of the intermediary in the APMC market who trades according to the price discovery of commodities and also with the absence of government backing on the Minimum Support Price which is hope in despair especially when profit is nowhere seen but no loss is suffered as well because of its applicability.

Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 which ensures farmers with a platform to engage in contract farming, where farmers can directly enter into an agreement with a buyer (prior to sowing season) to sell the product to them at pre-determined prices adds to further agitation since farmers feared the exploitation by corporate sectors.

Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020: Restriction in the powers of the government and absence of government backing added to the farmers' consternation with respect to absolute silence by the government with respect to production, supply, and distribution of cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, etc.⁶

⁶ *Ibid*

In *Rakesh Vaishnav & Ors v Union of India & Ors*⁷, the protesting farmers' contentions ensued:

- What validated legislative competence to pass farm laws?
- The invalidity of farm laws with respect to violation of Article 14⁸ of the Constitution of India, 1950.
- Usage of public space by the farmers in their protests directed to violation of residents' fundamental rights?
- Committee intervention in mediation between farmers and government is valid?

After severe contestation regarding the enactment of farm laws between the farmers, farmers' rights groups, and the opposition political parties. The continuous suspicion of the new legislative changes if they can adversely impact the farmers and create a private market exacerbated the situation. With allowing trade outside of APMCs, the farmers assert that private and large companies would be able to advance produce at incidental prices. Possession of agricultural land by corporate entities by the proposed contract farming is a matter of fact that needed to be rectified.

With the onset of the farm laws and intensified farmers' agitation, several petitions challenging the constitutionality of farm laws were filed. Soon, petitions purporting farm laws were also filed. Anticipating scarcity of progress, the Government sought the intervention of a four-member committee in order to negotiate between the farmers and the Government. The members of the committee include - Bhupinder Singh Mann, National President, Bhartiya Kisan Union, and All India Kisan Coordination Committee, Dr. Parmod Kumar Joshi, Agricultural Economist, Director for South Asia, International Food Policy Research Institute, Ashok Gulati, Agricultural Economist and Former Chairman of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, Anil Ghanwat, President, ShetkariSanghatana, Member of the Committee, Bhupinder Singh Mann quit stating that: "I will always stand with my farmers

⁷ *Rakesh Vaishnav & Ors v Union of India & Ors* (2021) Writ Petition (Civil) No. 1118/2020

⁸ Constitution of India 1950, art 14

and Punjab”.⁹ *The mandate to repeal farm laws owing to all the agitations was finally announced on November 19th 2021 by the Prime Minister of India which purported how infructuous the constitutional challenge would be if the repeal is enacted.*¹⁰

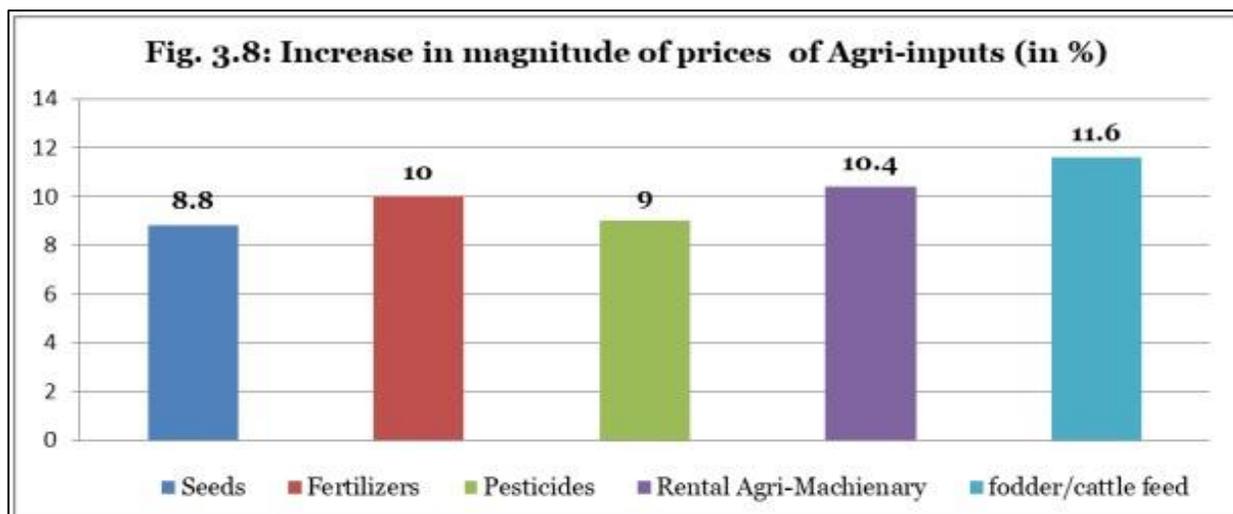
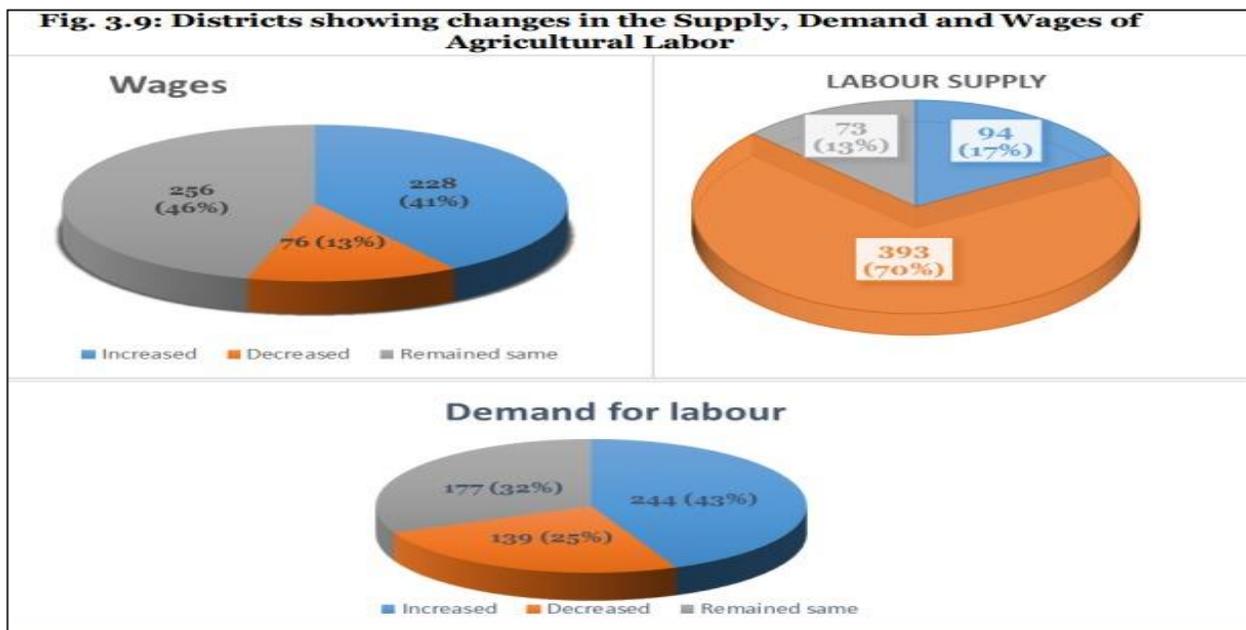
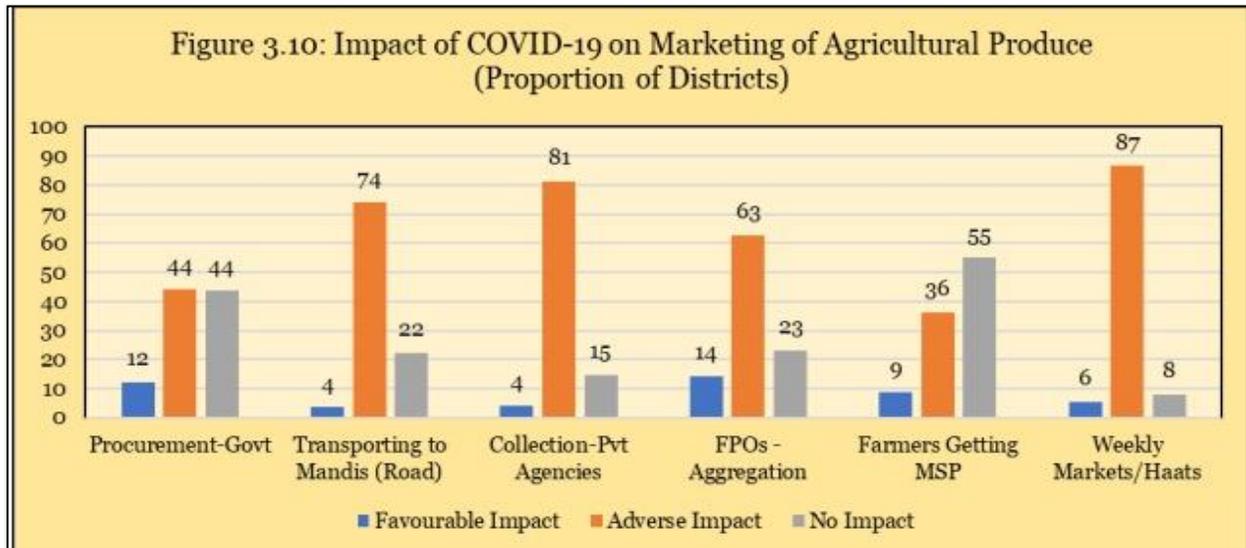
IMPACT OF COVID ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL ECONOMY

One-sixth of the Indian National income and employment of 50% of the entire workforce is constituted in the agricultural and allied sectors. The major objective of farmers’ suicides can be also conceptualized with the impact of covid on Agriculture and the rural economy with the statistics available at the All India level:

- The impact of COVID-19 adversely affected 47% of agricultural production in half of the sample districts.
- Availability of agricultural inputs drastically declined due to restrictions imposed on the movement of men/material, closure of business transactions such as seeds (-9.2%), fertilisers (-11.2%), pesticides (-9.8%), fodder (-10.8%), etc. which declined in the range of 9 to 11 percent.
- 58% of sample districts were very adversely affected in terms of the availability of inputs.
- Prices of inputs of agriculture grew exorbitant in the range of 9 to 12 percent such as for seeds tended to be 8.8%, fertilizers tended to be 10%, pesticides tended to be 9%, and fodder tended to be 11.6%.
- 54% of sample districts witnessed an increase in prices of agricultural inputs, possibly due to their non-availability.
- 87% of districts were adversely affected in the operation of rural haats as there was a complete ban on the operation of rural haats by the local authorities in most of the districts of our country.

⁹ ‘Constitutionality of Farm Laws’ (*Supreme Court Observer*, 17 December 2021)
<[https://www.scobserver.in/cases/rakesh-vaishnav-union-of-india-constitutionality-of-farm-laws-case-background/#:~:text=Case%20Description,\(farm%20laws'\)%3Eaccessed](https://www.scobserver.in/cases/rakesh-vaishnav-union-of-india-constitutionality-of-farm-laws-case-background/#:~:text=Case%20Description,(farm%20laws')%3Eaccessed)> accessed 20 July 2022

¹⁰ *Ibid*



STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF FARMERS' SUICIDES

- Recourse by committing suicides was in general practised by a total of 5178 male farmers and 472 female farmers which accounted for 91.6% and 8.4% of total farmers' suicides.
- Telangana reported 31.1%, 29.2%, 14.1% and 11% of female farmers' suicides which is 147 out of 472 suicides.
- Other states like Madhya Pradesh reported (138 suicides), Maharashtra (70 suicides), and Chhattisgarh (52 suicides) respectively.
- In a range of 30yrs and 60yrs, the majority of farmers' suicides accounted for 65.7% of total farmers' suicides during 2014.¹¹

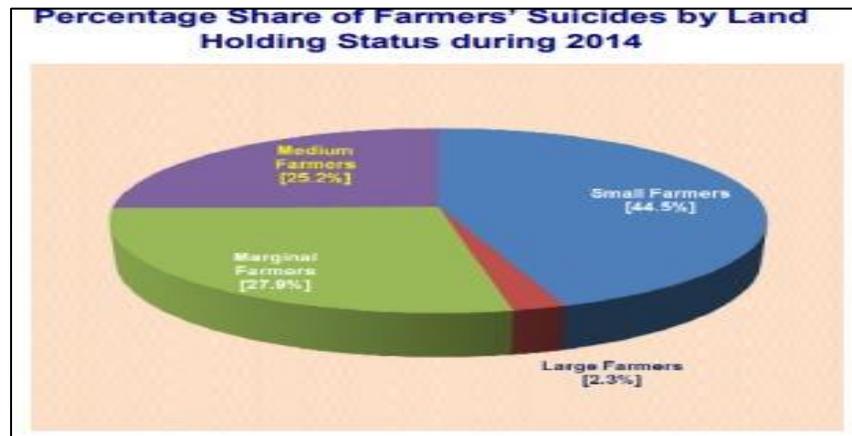
Sex / Age	Below 18 years	18 yrs to Below 30 years	30 yrs to Below 60 years	60 years & Above	Total
Male	35	1,131	3,480	532	5,178
Female	24	169	232	47	472
Transgender	0	0	0	0	0
Total	59	1,300	3712	579	5,650
% Share	1.0%	23.0%	65.7%	10.2%	100%

LANDHOLDING STATUS OF FARMERS WHO HAVE COMMITTED SUICIDES AS PER LAND HOLDING STATUS

Categorization of Farmers based on the land-holding is as such: Farmers holding less than 1 hectare of land were termed as Marginal Farmers, Small farmers were those who held land between 1 hectare to below 2 hectares while Medium Farmers are those holding hand between 2 hectares to below 10 hectares and 'Large Farmers' are ones holding more than 10 hectares of Land.

¹¹ *Ibid*

Statistical analysis verifies that small and marginal farmers succumbed to approaching suicides more asserting statistics of 44.5% and 27.9% respectively which together accounted for 72.4% ie 4095 out of 5650 total farmer suicides. Maharashtra reported nearly 53.1% and 14.5% of small farmers committing suicides which is nearly 1135 out of 2516 total farmer suicides. Telangana reported 366 suicides out of 2516 suicides during 2014.¹²



RESPONSES AND MEANING

The responses of farmers or overall remedies suggested by the government constitute a path-breaking difference in its implementation. Whether what amounts to the concept of suicide and whether any amount of help can suffice the breakdown and loss suffered is another aspect of the same coin of difference and indifference.

- *Is Suicide a matter of Economics?*

The National Mental Health Association of the USA¹³ states that “No matter the race or age of the person; how rich or poor they are, it is true that most people who commit suicide have a mental or emotional disorder”. **Suicide is therefore not a matter of economics.** The significance of the statement is essentially corroborated by the data released by the World Health Organization in 2011 which states that while the suicide rate in India, an agrarian economy, was 13 per 100,000; that of industrialized, rich countries were often higher or

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ P. B. Behere & M. C. Bhise (n 1)

comparable- South Korea - 28.5, Japan - 20.1, Russia - 18.2, USA- 12.6, Australia- 12.5, and UK-11.8.¹⁴

- **Responses initiated against Farmers' Suicides**

Some of the major relief packages and debt waiver schemes announced by the government of different states owing to the different rates of macabre series of deaths faced are summarized below:

1. **2006 relief package** - 31 districts of the four states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Kerala had high incidents of farmer suicides where the relief worked as a special rehabilitation package to mitigate farmers' distress.
2. **Agricultural debt waiver and debt relief scheme, 2008** - At the cost of 65000 crores, the schemes benefitted over 36 million farmers which basically improvised writing off part of loan principal with the interest owned by the farmers.
3. **2013 diversify income sources package** - In 2013, the Government of India launched a *Special Livestock Sector and Fisheries Package* for farmers' suicide-prone regions of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Kerala. The package aimed to diversify the income sources of farmers in order to mitigate their losses.¹⁵

CONCLUSION

Farmers' suicides are a growing disaster that needs variations in remedial strategies to implement a less to no suicides policy at all. The only way to fight this havoc is to initiate and implement remedial measures to not exacerbate further farmer suicides which include some of the following:

- Crop damage can be precluded if an all-inclusive approach integrating biological, chemical, mechanical, and physical methodology could be used as policies to eradicate crop damage.

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ *Ibid*

- Assisting fertilizer industries with deteriorating costs, through internal funding rather than external borrowing should lower costs of input.
- State seed policies that focus on new genotypes, contract farming, and sensitization with respect to adverse weather conditions can be ensured to improvise.
- Farm equipment policies can be innovated to mitigate the growing havoc
- Corporate Social Responsibility advancing amelioration towards capacity-building and skill development should be ensured.
- Rather than catering to the elites within the farming community, adequate financing should be ensured.
- Cooperation between marginal, small, and large farmers should be maintained so that one category isn't left to reap benefits.
- Sustainable agriculture to reinvest and restructure emphasizing healthier income suppressing loan-waiver scheme can be another recourse mechanism.
- The role that the state has been playing is one of emancipation, but what the primary sector and the farmer need amounts to empowerment.¹⁶
- NABARD and local administration must take control of the situation and play a greater role in curbing farmers' suicides.
- Community-led awareness should be initiated by employing a role model approach highlighting the progress of farmers who have benefited from sustainable & climate-tailored agricultural practices.

¹⁶ *Ibid*