

RURAL AGRICULTURE: A MIRROR TO ECONOMIC SUSTAINABLE GROWTH IN INDIA

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Abstract

“If agriculture goes wrong, nothing else will have a chance to go right. M. S. Swaminathan”

More than half of the population in the developing world is rural, and globally 1.3 billion (130 cr) people work in agriculture. Rural Agriculture is the backbone for any country's economic development, and it helps the economy to grow and sustain. Rural development is the axis of the economy involving the other factors of business in big way. There are basic needs in rural development for a sustainable future. Rural development is all about a process that seeks social change and sustainable economic development for the rural community's ongoing progress. The goal is to improve their life quality and preserve the environment. Rural agriculture development is a topic which is easy to understand but hard to implement. It focuses upon the up-lift meant and development of the sections of rural economies, that experience grave poverty issues and effectively aims at developing their productivity. It also emphasizes the need to address various pressing issues of village economies that hinder growth and improve these areas. The basic aim of the paper is to analyze the conditions of rural agriculture with its economy and to study the issues & challenges of the villages. The paper aims to frame a strategic framework for the development of the rural agriculture to create a better tomorrow for India.

Keywords: Rural Agriculture, Issues, Challenges, Economy, Sustainability in Economy

I. Introduction:

With a population of 1.30 billion(130 cr), India is the world's second most populous country. It is the seventh largest country in the world with an area of 3.288 million sq kms. It has a long coastline of over 7,500 kms. India is a diverse country where over 22 major languages and 415 dialects are spoken. With the highest mountain range in the world, the Himalayas to its North, the Thar desert to its West, the Gangetic delta to its East and the Deccan Plateau in the South, the country is home to vast agro-ecological diversity. India is the world's largest producer of milk, pulses and jute, and ranks as the second largest producer of rice, wheat, sugarcane, groundnut, vegetables, fruit and cotton. It is also one of the leading producers of spices, fish, poultry and livestock and plantation crops. India's climate varies from humid and dry tropical in the south to temperate alpine in the northern reaches and has a great diversity of ecosystems. India's economic growth in financial year 2019 at 5% in june quarter the slowest growth in six years in both industry and services. India is the world's [seventh largest](#) economy by [nominal GDP](#) and the [third-largest](#) by [purchasing power parity](#) (PPP). Agriculture accounted for approx 17-18% of GDP, and employed 50% of the country's total workforce in 2017-2018.



Agriculture, with its allied sectors, is the largest source of livelihoods in India. 70 percent of its rural households still depend primarily on agriculture for their livelihood, with 82 percent of farmers being small and marginal. In 2017-18, total food grain production was estimated at 275 million tons (MT). India is the largest producer (25% of global production), consumer (27% of world consumption) and importer (14%) of pulses in the world. India's annual milk production was 165 MT (2017-18), making India the largest producer of milk, jute and [pulses](#), and with world's second-largest cattle population 190 million in 2012. It is the second-largest producer of rice, wheat, sugarcane, cotton and [groundnuts](#), as well as the second-largest fruit and vegetable producer, accounting for 10.9% and 8.6% of the world fruit and vegetable production, respectively.

However, India still has many growing concerns. As the Indian economy has diversified and grown, agriculture's contribution to GDP has steadily declined from 1951 to 2011. While achieving food sufficiency in production, India still accounts for a quarter of the world's hungry people and home to over 190 million undernourished people. While agriculture in India has achieved grain self-sufficiency but the production is, resource intensive, cereal centric and regionally biased. Education is a process of human enlightenment and empowerment to achieve a better position in life (Mishra & Mishra, 2020). The resource intensive ways of Indian agriculture has raised serious sustainability issues too. Increasing stress on water resources of the country would definitely need area lignment and rethinking of policies. Desertification and land degradation also pose major threats to agriculture in the country.

II. Objective & Research Methodology

This study has been carried out to establish the need of protection of Rural Agriculture. The study is based on secondary data, to achieve the objective, secondary data is examined which is sourced from website, online sources and scholarly articles, magazines, books, internet, report and newsletters of various Ministries of Govt. of India.

III. Agriculture in Uttarakhand-India:

Agriculture is the backbone of Uttarakhand and is practiced by many people especially those living in the hilly areas of Uttarakhand. Many hilly people of Uttarakhand still have taken agriculture as their main occupation as it gives them bread and butter. The women of Uttarakhand are also involved in agriculture as men leave the hills to find better jobs in cities. Uttarakhand being a hill state offers great opportunity in agriculture and animal husbandry, about 75-85% of the people living in Uttarakhand are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. While those residing in the vulnerable parts are untouched by modernization so they lack knowledge about the new agricultural techniques which results in less produce. However, educating the agro-based communities about hybrid seeds, machinery, bio-techniques, organic farming, haphazard of insecticides and pesticides etc. can help them in raising their productivity.

Uttarakhand has not been able to improve its agricultural growth in the past 15 years though the majority of its population and area are still classified as rural and the state government has a record of nearly 100% spending of its budgetary allocations. Hill farming is still awaiting special attention from the government as much of the state's agriculture budget comes from

the Centre and most of the agri-development schemes are centrally sponsored. Experts and agriculture department officials say though the state has scope for development in other sectors, farming is the key to checking migration from hill villages.



“There is no alternative to a hill-centric agricultural action plan in the larger interest of the state. However, some important decisions have been taken in the recent past. For instance, the government has resolved to enact a new land consolidation act for hill areas,” says Kedar Singh Rawat, a farmer who played a key role in framing the land consolidation act draft plan.

“This will benefit mainly the hills as farmers will have the opportunity to consolidate their holdings, bringing them together with the help of the local administration and increase their cropped area. Apart from this, those who have migrated from villages would also like to return to their roots with expectations to own consolidated large pieces of land.”

Rural areas of the state are concentrated in nine hill districts and most of the agricultural production comes from the four districts of Haridwar, Dehradun, Udham Singh Nagar and Nainital. Despite demands for a hill-centric development action plan very little has been done by successive state governments to promote agriculture. The contribution of agriculture to the state’s domestic product is about 22% and 75-85% population depends on the occupation for livelihood. While the Uttarakhand government believes that development of hills is primarily linked to the development of agriculture it is yet to come up with a suitable policy boost for either mainstream agriculture or allied activities. Apart from promotion of local and traditional hill crops, farmers need to be given adequate cover in terms of welfare schemes. Besides this, adequate technical and financial support for water conservation measures must be provided to

hill farmers. The hills are constrained in terms of development of large-scale industrialization as well as the service sector. Development of the agriculture sector, therefore, remains the state's economic lifeline.



IV. Some Facts and Figures of Indian Agriculture:

1. Farming is the most important job for a country like India whose population is more than 130 crore.
2. Agriculture contributes to more than 15% of India GDP.
3. Lack of proper agricultural infrastructure is a big problem faced by farmers in India.
4. Every time we consume food, we need to thank a farmer.
5. In spite of the hardships that farmers face, they never give up on their farming and agricultural livelihood.
6. The real contribution to India and nation-building activities are done by the farmers of our country.
7. In many countries, farmers are respected as much as soldiers because without them the country would collapse.
8. The sweat and hard work of a farmer are more important to feed the growing population of our country than anything else.
9. The government and business houses alike should take cognizance of the problems faced by our farming community.
10. Technology-based solutions should be adopted for better agricultural practices in India.

11. Agriculture and farming are one of the few jobs in India that has no holidays or vacation unlike the jobs in the corporate world.
12. Jai Jawan Jai Kisan was the term coined by former Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, to highlight the importance of soldiers and farmers in our country.
13. Scanty rainfalls, unpredictable weather conditions, lack of proper irrigation facilities and technological infrastructure are some of the problems faced by farmers in India.
14. The farmer suicide rate in India is one of the highest in the world.
15. Statistics suggest that more than 70% of our farmers are in debt to bankers and landlord and will not be able to pay back if the proper agricultural yield is not produced
16. Lack of effective marketing pricing policies is the reason for the losses faced by our farming community.
17. Middleman charges less to buy crops from farmers and charged more to sell it to consumers as a result of which both consumers and farmers are at a loss.
18. Given the importance of agriculture for a country of 130 crore population, a separate ministry for agriculture exists that takes care of all the laws and policies for the agricultural industry in India.
19. In the 21st century when every industry is data-driven and technology-driven, agriculture industry shouldn't be left behind.
20. Smart agriculture is a study of the science of agriculture where technology is inculcated in agricultural practices for sustainable farming. Corporations should be incentivised by the government to help the farming community improve production.
21. MSP or Minimum Support Price is the price that the government guarantees to pay to the farmers irrespective of the fluctuations in market prices for a crop.
22. Experts also suggest that Universal Basic Income should be given to the farming community to make sure that they can sustain losses.
23. Financial incentives are one of the ways to reduce farmer suicide rates in India.
24. While financial incentives can be a short-term solution, the long-term solution would be to improve the agricultural infrastructure in India.
25. Building dams, irrigation canals and 24-hour electricity supply are some of the basic facilities that farmers should receive from the government.
26. Food Corporation of India (FCI) buys millions of tons of agricultural products such as wheat, rice and barley from the farmers directly.

27. Business models should involve such that the retailers buy directly from the farmers by eliminating the middleman to eliminate corrupt practices in the pricing of crops
28. Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is responsible and accountable for all the laws and policies in the agricultural sector of India.
29. The entire value chain, right from the production of crops to processing of the same crops in industries till it reaches the consumers, should be regulated by governmental authorities.
30. Given the nature of manipulation and corruption in the pricing strategy for crops, farmers are at a loss and will not be able to cover their debts. Governments should waive off agricultural loans taken by farmers since will not be able to pay it back because of unpredictable forces that leads to undesired production of crops

V. Government of India Initiatives in Agriculture leading to overall economic development in India:

Some of the recent major government initiatives in the sector are as follows:

- On February 24, 2019 government of India has launched the **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana** with an initiative of Rs 2,021 crore (US\$ 284.48 million).
- **Transport and Marketing Assistance (TMA)** scheme was also launched to boost agriculture by financial assistance.
- By 2022, India's agricultural exports aims to increase to US\$ 60 billion and US\$ 100 billion in the next few years under the **Agriculture Export Policy, 2018** policy which was approved by government of India in December 2018.
- **Under Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan** in September 2018, the government of India announced Rs 15,053 crore (US\$ 2.25 billion) policy under which states can also partner with private agencies to ensure fair prices for farmers in the country and decide the compensation.
- Now **100% FDI** has been allowed in marketing of food products and in food product e-commerce under the automatic route.
- New concept was introduced **AGRI-UDAAN programme** with an aim to boost innovation and entrepreneurship in agriculture.
- **The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)** approved Rs 5,500 crore (US\$ 820.41 million) assistance package for the sugar industry in 2018.

- Digital technology was introduced by the Indian government in **Primary Agricultural Credit Society (PACS)** by investing Rs 2,000 crore (US\$ 306.29 million).
- For development of irrigation our government of India has launched the **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana** which will be providing a permanent solution from drought with an investment of Rs 50,000 crore (US\$ 7.7 billion).

VI. Achievements in the Agriculture Sector:

- Sugar production in India has reached 27.35 million tonnes (MT) in 2018-19 sugar season, as of March 15 2019, according to the Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA).
- The Electronic National Agriculture Market (eNAM) was launched in April 2016 to create a unified national market for agricultural commodities by networking existing APMCs. Up to May 2018, 9.87 million farmers, 109,725 traders were registered on the e-NAM platform. 585 mandis in India have been linked while 415 additional mandis will be linked in 2018-19 and 2019-20.
- Organic farming is one of the newest forms in rural agriculture.
- Agriculture storage capacity in India increased at 4 percent CAGR between 2014-17 to reach 131.8 million metric tons.
- Coffee exports reached record 395,000 tons in 2017-18.
- Between 2014-18, 10,000 clusters were approved under the **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana**.
- Around 100 million **Soil Health Cards** (SHCs) have been distributed in the country during 2015-17 and a soil health mobile app has been launched to help Indian farmers.

VII. Suggestions:

India is expected to achieve the ambitious goal of doubling farm income by 2022. The agriculture sector in India is expected to generate better momentum in the next few years due to increased investments in agricultural infrastructure such as irrigation facilities, warehousing and cold storage. Furthermore, the growing use of genetically modified crops will likely improve the yield for Indian farmers. India is expected to be self-sufficient in pulses in the coming few years due to concerted efforts of scientists to get early-maturing varieties of pulses and the increase in minimum support price and rural agriculture will play crucial role in this development.

Indian government has to improve water management, increase agriculture production and productivity, as per the department of agriculture's objectives we have to reduce crop losses and increase food security in rural areas also.

VIII. Conclusion:

Last year 2020, despite the pandemic, agriculture grew at 4% and credit also grew substantially. There is good potential for aromatic and medicinal plants in rural areas, which remains untapped due to lack of serious efforts. It is also important to introduce organic farming practices to enrich soil and increase soil depth for sustained development of agriculture in the long run in India.

The social aspects around agriculture have also been witnessing changing trends. The increased feminization of agriculture is mainly due to increasing rural-urban migration by men, rise of women-headed households and growth in the production of cash crops which are labour intensive in nature.

India also needs to improve its management of agricultural practices on multiple fronts. Improvements in agriculture performance has weak linkage in improving nutrition, the agriculture sector can still improve nutrition through multiple ways: increasing incomes of farming households, diversifying production of crops, empowering women, strengthening agricultural diversity and productivity, and designing careful price and subsidy policies that can encourage the production and consumption of nutrient rich crops. Diversification of agricultural livelihoods through agri-allied sectors such as animal husbandry, forestry and fisheries has enhanced livelihood opportunities, strengthened resilience and led to considerable increase in labour force participation in the sector and this can lead to economic development in India.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT:

The author declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.