

FARMERS' SUICIDE: TRENDS AND TRIALS

Mrs. Atashi Rath*

Prof. Navaneeta Rath**

Abstract

Farmer suicides continue to rise over the years reflecting a serious agrarian threat in the country. In the colonial and post colonial period, it manifested itself in the form of peasant unrests and riots occurring in some selected pockets of the country. However, with the onset of structural reforms, agriculture became vulnerable to a number of lop sided market policies that favoured more of the corporate and industrial houses than agriculture. The poor peasants were thrown open to a number of vagaries that they could not overcome. Agriculture became more and more capital intensive and input driven in character. With the negligible support from the government and the market, the poor peasants committed suicides that were reported in a majority of the states across the country. The current article makes an analysis of the post globalization phenomenon affecting agriculture and tries to study the trend of suicide in the country over the years. It makes a case analysis of the state of Odisha where farmer suicides have become an alarming issue for the regional government. The researchers have also made an attempt to discuss the efforts and initiatives taken by the central government, state governments and civil society organizations to bring down the rate of farmer suicide and the safety nets devised for the poor farmers who are prone to the epidemic through various social security schemes and programmes.

Keywords: Agriculture Farmer Suicide Globalization Corporate Feudalism Social Security

* **Lecturer in Sociology, Rama Devi Junior College, Bhubaneswar**

** **Professor in Sociology, Utkal University, Vani Vihar, Odisha, India**

1. Introduction

Farmers' Suicide is a major developmental challenge encountering India in the period following globalization. It was only in the 1980s, when globalization was slowly making its way into the Indian society, the term of trade in Indian agriculture started taking a different turn. This was the most critical juncture in the agricultural sector when the ideas of commonality and collectivity were evaporating from the farming community and there was an identity crisis which rendered the farmers to struggle individually for their own survival and sustainability. This became the beginning point of farmer suicide in the country.

1.1 Farmer Suicides in India

The Indian peasantry, accommodating the highest number of small farmers in the world, today is facing a crisis of extinction. Two thirds of the Indian population makes its living from the land. Globalisation has made agriculture market driven and market oriented. Thus, agriculture started shedding its cooperative and sustaining character and adopted a corporate and profit catchment nature. This transition has presented the country and its peasantry with the tragic consequence of farmers' suicide.

Farmer suicide cases are on rise in the country. It has become a major social menace today. The highest number of farmer suicides was recorded in 2004 when 18,241 farmers committed suicide. The farmers' suicide in India ranged between 1.4 to 1.8 per 100,000 population, over a 10 year period from 1995 to 2005. In 2012, the National Crime Records Bureau of India reported 13,754 farmer suicides. From 1995 to 2013, a total of 296,438 farmers have killed themselves in India making an average of 16,469 suicides per year. Farmer suicides account for 11.2% all suicides in India (NCRB, 2012)[1]. Activists and scholars have offered a number of conflicting reasons for farmer suicides, such as monsoon failure, high debt burdens, genetically modified crops, government policies, public mental health, personal issues and family problems (Guere and Sengupta, 2011[2]; Schurman, 2013[3]; Das, 2011[4]).

1.2 Farmer's Suicide in India: a Voyage from Non documentation to Academic, Media and Policy Reflection

Farmer suicide in India has a colonial legacy. It started right from the pre colonial era when colonisation was introducing modernization, new policy of taxation and farm interventions which were difficult for the traditional farmers to adopt. Frustration, revolts and high mortality rates, particularly among cash crop farmers in India were on rise since 19th century. The high land taxes of 1870s, payable in cash regardless of the effects of frequent famines on farm output or productivity, combined with colonial protection of money lenders and landowner rights, contributed to widespread frustration among cotton and other farmers, ultimately leading to Deccan Riots of 1875-1877 (Kranton and Swamy, 1999)[5]. The British Government passed the Deccan Agriculturists' Relief Act in 1879 which limited the interest rate charged by money lenders to Deccan cotton farmers. However, it was limited to the areas of British cotton trading interests (Choudhry and Swamy, 2014)[6]. Documentary evidences are limited on pre-colonial and colonial farmer suicide cases.

In the post independence period, there are stray recorded references of farmers' suicide. Nandi and his co authors (1979)[7]note the role of freely available agricultural insecticides in suicides in rural West Bengal and suggested that their availability be regulated. Hegde (1980)[8] studies rural suicides in villages of northern Karnataka between 1962 to 1970, and states the suicide incidence rate to be 5.7 per 100,000 population. Reddy (1983)[9] reviews high rates of farmer suicides in Andhra Pradesh and its relationship to farm size and productivity.

Media representation on farmers' suicide in India began in mid 1990s, particularly with the writings of Palagummi Sainath[10]. The escalating number of suicides in the new millenium brought the issue into the ambit of policy attention in the country. Statistical activism on recording incidences of farmers suicide dates back exactly to 1995.

1.3 Globalization and Farmers Suicide in India: The Conditions and the Resultants

The crisis in agriculture was accentuated by the policy of shifting of agricultural pattern from traditional crops to capital-intensive crops in the years following globalisation. Structural adjustment programme initiated innovations in the farm sector. It forced India to open up the seed market to global corporations like Cargill, Monsanto, Syngenta. As a result, farm saved seeds were replaced by corporate seeds, which needed fertilisers and pesticides and could not be

saved. The non-renewable traits of these seeds compelled the poor peasants to buy these seeds every plantation season. This entailed financial burden on the farmers and led to indebtedness among them. The shift from farm saved seeds to corporate seeds also led to monocultures in agriculture. This has led to extinction of a number of rare species and proved fatal for cultivation of a number of crops. Monoculture increased the risk of crop failure and often pushes untested seeds into the market. When Monsanto first introduced Bt Cotton in India in 2002, the farmers lost Rs.1 billion due to crop failure. Even poor peasants of the South could not survive seed monopolies and this became an aggravating point of farmer's suicide. Farmers have now become a consumer of costly seeds and chemicals sold by the global corporate houses through landlords and local money lenders. This has led to corporate feudalism (a lethal combination of global corporate capitalism and local feudalism), in which the farmer falls prey as helpless victims.

Further, transition to a new variety of cropping without much knowledge, skill and training brought disaster to many farmers across the country. Without any viable alternative livelihood options they repeatedly went on incurring loans and the output did not yield dividends to meet the input. All these significantly contributed for accumulating frustrations among them. This accumulated frustration resulted in causing farmers suicide.

Another pressure that the Indian farmers started facing is the dramatic fall in prices of farm produce as a result of free trade policies of the WTO. The rules of WTO have led to mass dumping in agriculture. This has also contributed for higher farmer suicide cases in the country. Removal of quantitative restrictions and lowering of tariffs have also destroyed the livelihood of a number of farmers. Studies and statistics propose the majority of the farmers who committed suicide were reported to be small and marginal farmers and most of them were under heavy debt burden.

2. Results and Analysis

2.1 Trends in Farmers' Suicide Rates in India

Farmers' suicide in India is on rise. From its local centric nature, it is becoming a pan Indian scenario. On an average, there has been one farmer suicide in every 32 minutes in the country. A detailed statistics of farmer suicides has been presented in table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Farmer suicides in India from 1995 to 2013

Sl. No.	Year	No. of farmer suicides
1.	1995	10720
2.	1996	13729
3.	1997	13622
4.	1998	16015
5.	1999	16082
6.	2000	16603
7.	2001	16415
8.	2002	17971
9.	2003	17143
10.	2004	18241
11.	2005	17131
12.	2006	17060
13.	2007	16632
14.	2008	16196
15.	2009	17368
16.	2010	15964
17.	2011	14027
18.	2012	13754
19.	2013	11772

Source: NCRB Data

The above table is presented quarterly in figure no. 1.1.

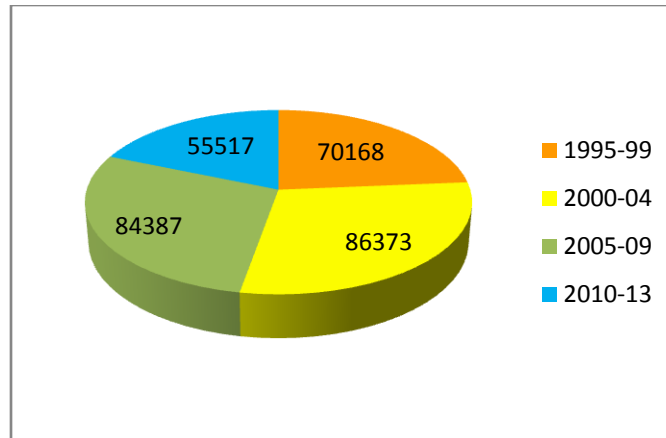


Figure no. 1.1 Total farmer suicides in the country from 1995-2013

It is clearly evident from the above table and figure that farmer suicide cases continues to rise over the years. The total number of farmer suicides were reported to be 70168 from 1995-99 which reached at 86373 from 2000-04. In the year 2005, there is a decline in the suicide rate with 17131 cases of Farmers' suicide. Since 2012 the decline becomes more perceptible with around 13754 farmer suicides and the rate declines further to 11774 in 2013. Therefore, the total suicide cases among the farmers was found to be 84378 in 2005-09 and declining remarkably to 55517 in 2010-13. However, the staggering rate of farmer suicides in different parts of the country continues to haunt the state governments. Farmers' suicide becomes a poll agenda for the opposition parties in state and national politics.

Even if farmers' suicide has a pan Indian character, the magnitude is felt more strongly in some states of the country. These top five states are Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Chhatishgarh. The total number of farmer suicides in these five big states is presented in table no. 1.2.

Table no. 1.2 Year wise total number of farmer suicides in top five states of the country

Sl. No.	Year	Maharashtra	Andhra Pradesh	Karnataka	Madhya Pradesh and Chhatishgarh	%age of all farmer suicides in the country
1.	1995	1063	1196	2490	1239	56.04
2.	1996	1981	1706	2011	1809	54.68
3.	1997	1917	1097	1832	2309	53.12
4.	1998	2409	1813	1883	2278	52.34
5.	1999	2423	1974	2379	2654	58.64
6.	2000	3022	1525	2630	2660	59.25
7.	2001	3536	1509	2505	2824	63.20
8.	2002	3695	1896	2340	2578	58.48
9.	2003	3836	1800	2678	2511	63.07
10.	2004	4147	2666	1963	3033	64.74
11.	2005	3926	2490	1883	2660	63.97
12.	2006	4453	2607	1720	2858	68.22
13.	2007	4236	1797	2135	2856	66.29
14.	2008	3802	2105	1737	3152	66.66
15.	2009	2872	2414	2282	3197	61.98
16.	2010	3141	2525	2585	2363	66.49
17.	2011	3337	2206	2100	1326	63.94
18.	2012	3786	2572	1875	1176	68.40
19.	2013	3146	2014	-	-	-
20.	Total	60728	37831	39028	43483	61.08

Source: NCRB Records

With a figure of atleast 14,027 in 2011, according to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the total number of farmer suicides since 1995 has touched 296445. Table 1.5 clearly

shows that the state of Maharashtra leads among the states facing agrarian crisis, logging 3786 in 2011 against 3337 farmer suicides in 2012. However, in 2013 comparatively a less number of farmers have committed suicide (3146), though the figure still remains alarming. Maharashtra still remains the worst single state for farmer suicides for over a decade now. The total number of farmer who have taken their own lives in Maharashtra since 1995 reached at 60728 by the end of 2013. Of these, 32,669 have occurred in nine years since 2005, at an annual average of 3633. The figure for 1995-2002 was 20,046 at an average of 2506. Significantly, the rate of suicides continues to increase even if the farm population is shrinking.

In 2011, Chhatisgarh claimed a figure of zero farm suicides. However, Chhatisgarh had 7,777 farm suicides in the preceding five years, including 1,126 in 2010. It has been amongst the very worst states for such deaths for several years. The share of the worst (big five) states (Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Chhatisgarh and Madhya Pradesh) as a percentage of total farm suicides, is now around 61.08%. In 2011, four states showed increase of over 50 farm suicides compared to 2010. These include Gujarat (55), Haryana (87), Madhya Pradesh (89), Tamil Nadu (82). Nine states showed declines exceeding 50 farmer suicides of which Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal showed the biggest falls. The figureative presentation of the scenario is presented below in figure no 1.2.

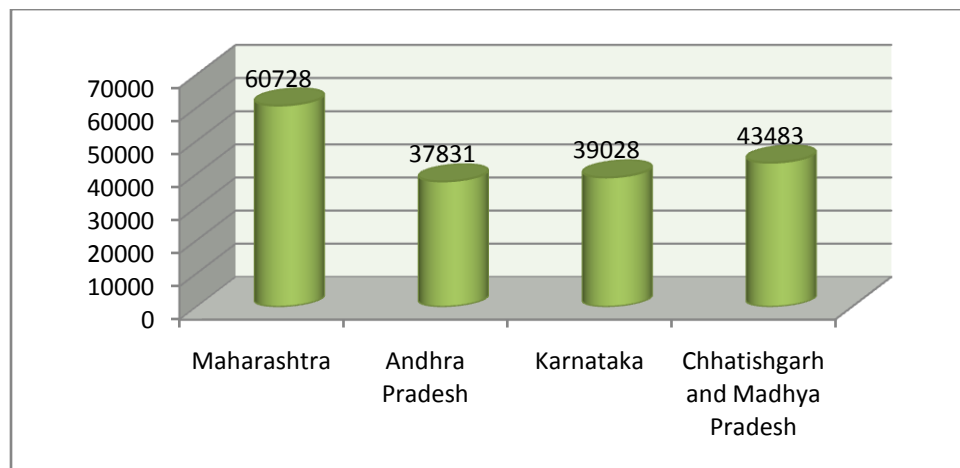


Figure 1.2 Year wise total number of farmer suicides in top five states of the country

2.2 Farmer Suicides in Odisha

Odisha is into much media highlight as a farmer suicide state in the last few years. In the year 2015, the rate has reached an unprecedented number. This has posed a new challenge for Odishan political economy.

Agriculture is one of the crucial sectors of Odisha's economy. 60% of its population draws its sustenance, fully or partly, from farm and farm related allied activities. Out of the total workers, 23.4% are engaged as cultivators and 38.4% are working as agricultural labourers. The share of agriculture to the GSDP in the early 1950s was more than 70%, while it has come down to 15.39% in 2014-15. The land available for agricultural purpose has also been declining in Odisha. The total Net Sown Area (NSA) was 5691 hectares in 2005-06 which has declined to 5424 thousand hectares in 2013-14. The cropped area is about 87.46 lakh hectares out of which only 18.79 lakh hectares are irrigated (Economic Survey, 2014-15)[11].

In spite of the large population relying upon agriculture, the growth rate in this sector has been consistently low during the last four decades, hovering around 1 percent per annum. There has been a steady decline in the new investment plan made by the state government for agriculture and rural development since the official liberalization and opening up of markets began in 1991-92.

The report titled "Situation Assessment Survey-Indebtedness of Farm Households" published by National Sample Survey Organization mentioned that 48 percent of farmer households in Odisha are indebted of which approx 70 percent have less than a hectare of land. It has been observed that to repay the loan obtained from different sources the small and marginal farmers finally sold or mortgage the land which in turn leads to migration or suicide.

Table no. 1.3 projects the number of farmers who committed suicide in Odisha since 1995 and figure 1.3 shows its graphic representation.

Table no. 1.3 Total number of farmer suicides in Odisha from 1995 to 2013

Sl. No	Year	Total no. of suicides
1.	1996-2000	1397
2.	2001-2005	1599
3.	2006-2010	1099
4.	2011 onwards	440

Source: NCRB Data

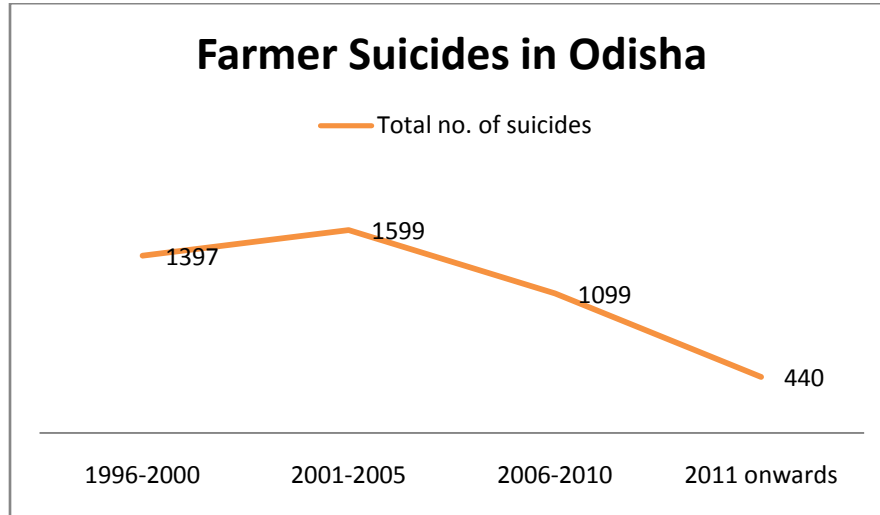


Figure no. 1.3 Farmer Suicides in Odisha

The above table clearly projects that the issue of farmer suicide is a matter of great concern in Odisha. About 1397 farmers committed suicide between 1996-2000. The rate of suicides continued to grow during 2001-2005 reaching at 1599. However, there is a fall in the rate of suicides among the farmers during 2006-2010. The rate almost fell to 1099 and further slid down to 440 since 2011. But, in 2015 there is an alarming increase in the rate of suicide among farmers inviting policy interventions to arrest it on an immediate basis.

2.3 States' Response to Farmer Suicides

The Government of India and various other state governments have taken a series of initiatives in the form of measures as trials to arrest farmer suicide. Various Commissions and Committees have been appointed to study and suggest measures to resolve the crisis in the sector. The Government of India has set up the National Commission on Farmers in February 2004 under the Chairmanship of well known agricultural scientist Dr. M.S. Swaminathan. The Commission

started its work with a declaration that "Serving Farmers and Saving Farmers". The National Commission for Farmers is formed with the objective to prepare the road map for sustainable development of agriculture and optimizing its contribution to growth and development of economy, particularly improving the income and standard of living of the farmers. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during his visit to Vidarbha in 2006 promised a package of \$110 billion. The families of farmers who have committed suicide were also offered an ex-gratia grant of Rs. 100,000 by the government.

In 2006, the Government of India identified 31 districts in the four states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Kerala with high relative incidence of farmer suicides. A special rehabilitation package was launched to mitigate the distress of these farmers. The package provided debt relief to farmers, improved supply of institutional credit, improved irrigation facilities, employed experts and social service personnel to provide farming support service, and introduced subsidiary income opportunities through horticulture, livestock, dairying and fisheries. The Government of India also announced an ex-gratia cash assistance from Prime Ministers National Relief Fund to the farmers.

The Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Government of India has been implementing various agricultural development schemes for the benefit of farmers through state governments. The Government of India schemes are broadly of two types from from the point of view of extent of implementation: applying to the entire country and special schemes for specific states. The major policies formulated for the farmers in India can be broadly categorized under the following heads:

Schemes to raise productivity

National Food Security Mission

This is a central scheme of Government of India launched in 2007 for 5 years to increase production and productivity of wheat, rice and pulses on a sustainable basis so as to ensure food security of the country. The aim is to bridge the yield gap in respect of these crops through dissemination of improved technologies and farm management practices. Its salient features include, increasing the production of rice, wheat and pulses, restoring soil fertility and

productivity at the individual farm level, creating employment opportunities and enhancing farm level economy i.e. farm profits to restore confidence amongst the farmers and to save them from starvation.

Preservation Schemes

Gramin Bhandaran Yojana/Rural Godown Scheme

Under this Gramin Bhandaran Yojana or Rural Godown Scheme, government provides supports to an individual, a company, a farmer, local government, NGOs and various associations, if they build or renovate rural godowns. Government will provide 25% of the capital investment made in such a venture. If the godown is built or renovated by a woman farmer, the government support is 33.33% of the total capital investment.

The major objectives of the scheme hover around creating scientific storage capacity and thereby preventing distress sale and encouraging private and cooperative sector investment in the creation of storage infrastructure in the major producing zones in the country and reducing the pressure on the transport system in the post harvest period. All these are expected to bring a better sale of the product to the farmers and arrest farmer's suicide.

Risk Management and Coverage Schemes

National Agricultural Insurance Scheme

The Government of India introduced National Agricultural Insurance Scheme or Rashtriya Krishi Bima Yojana in 1999-2000 covering all farmers, both loaners and non-loaners, under the scheme. At present, this scheme is implemented in 23 states and UTs.

The major objective of NAIS includes providing insurance coverage and financial support to the farmers in the event of failure of any of the notified crop as a result of natural calamities, pests and disease so as to restore their credit worthiness for ensuing season, encouraging the farmers to adopt progressive farming practices, high value inputs and higher technology in agriculture.

Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme

The National Agricultural Insurance Scheme was reviewed and modified in order to make it more farmer friendly. It was launched as a pilot scheme in 50 states and Union Territories. In addition to payment of claims for yield loss on area approach basis (as under NAIS), its additional features include:

- Unit area of insurance reduced to village/village panchayat level for major crops.
- Indemnity payment for prevented sowing/planting risk.
- Coverage of post harvest losses due to cyclone in coastal areas.

Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme

Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme was announced in the Union Budget 2007-08. This scheme aims to mitigate the hardship of the insured farmers against the likelihood of financial loss on account of anticipated crop loss resulting from incidence of adverse conditions of weather parameters like rainfall, temperature, frost, humidity etc. Some of the states where it has been piloted are Andhra Pradesh, Chhattishgarh, Gujarat, Harayana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan etc. The objectives of the scheme are:

- To offer insurance security to the farmers against untoward weather incidence, such as shortage and surplus rainfall, high or low temperature, humidity etc. which are held to effect adversely the crop production.
- It has the advantage of setting the claims within minimum possible time.

National Initiative on Climate Resilient Agriculture

National Initiative on Climate Resilient Agriculture was launched in February, 2011 by Indian Council of Agricultural Research with the funding from Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India. Objective of this initiative is to enhance the resilience of Indian agriculture covering crops, livestock and fisheries to climate variability and climate change through development and application of improved production and risk management technologies. Under this initiative, the site specific technology packages are demonstrated on farmer's fields so that they can be educated for adapting to current climate risks. Another objective is to enhance the capacity of scientists and other stakeholders in climate resilient agricultural research and its application.

Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme

The Government of India implemented the Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme in the year 2008 to benefit over 36 million farmers at a cost of 653 billion. This spending was aimed at writing off part of loan principal as well as the interest owed by the farmers. Direct agricultural loan by stressed farmers under so called Kisan Credit Card were also covered under this scheme. Despite numerous schemes and laws to help the farmers, very few of the intended beneficiaries feel the impact of these. The real beneficiaries became the big farmers and landlords. As a result, numerous farmers across the country are committing suicide which has posed a new challenge for the government.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana is a crop damage insurance scheme implemented in the year 2016. This scheme would replace National Agricultural Insurance Scheme and Modified NAIS. The scheme covers, kharif crops, rabi crops and other commercial and horticultural crops. For kharif and rabi crops, 2 percent and 1.5 percent premium would be charged for the insured sum, respectively. For commercial and horticultural crops, premium amount would be 5 percent. The remaining share of the premium amount would be borne by the central government and respective state governments equally. There will be one insurance company for the whole country, Agriculture Insurance Company of India Limited (AIC).

The scheme will also cover post-harvest losses. The scheme aims to cover 50 percent of the Indian farmers within next 3 years. 25 percent of the claim will be settled directly on farmers' account.

Farming Community Wellness Schemes

Biju Krushi Kalyan Yojana

Biju Krushi Kalyan Yojana is a health insurance scheme introduced in 2013-14 by Government of Odisha for the farmers and their families. It provides insurance cover of 1 lakh annually to five members of every family.

Schemes for Marketing Products and Ensuring Profit

Rashtriya Krishi Vikash Yojana

Rashtriya Krishi Vikash Yojana is a special Additional Centre Assistance Scheme which was launched in August 2007 to orient agricultural development strategies, to reaffirm its commitment to achieve 4% annual growth in the agricultural sector during the 11th plan.

RKVY is a state plan scheme. The amount of assistance depends upon the amount allocated in the state plan budgets for agriculture and allied sectors. The states are encouraged to converge the scheme with other programmes such as NREGS, SGSY, BRGF etc.

At present, RKVY has following sub-schemes:

- Bringing Green Revolution to Eastern India (BGREI)- Targets improvement in the rice based cropping systems of Assam, West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Chhatishgarh
- Integrated Development in Rainfed areas
- Promotion of oil palm
- Initiative on vegetable clusters
- Nutri cereals- To promote balanced nutrition, higher production of bajra, jowar, ragi and other millets will be promoted
- National Mission for Protein Supplements: To take up activities to promote animal farming, piggery, goat rearing and fisheries in selected blocks
- Accelerated Fodder Development Programme- To accelerate the production of fodder through intensive promotion of technologies to ensure its availability throughout the year
- Rainfed Area Development Programme- This programme aims at improving productivity of crops in rainfed areas
- National Saffron Mission
- Vidarbha Intensified Irrigation Development Programme

All these are intended to aid the farmers in multiple ways to arrest immediate suicides among them.

Minimum Support Price Scheme

The Minimum Support Prices were announced by the Government of India for the first time in 1966-67. The MSP is announced by the Government of India for 25 crops currently at the

beginning of each season viz. rabi and kharif. If there is a fall in the prices of the crops, after a bumper harvest, the government purchases at the MSP and this is the reason that price cannot go below MSP. So this directly helps the farmers.

Schemes for Alternate Livelihood Options

National Horticulture Mission

National Horticulture Mission is an Indian Horticulture Scheme promoted by Government of India. It was launched under the 10th five year plan in the year 2005-06. The NHM's key objective is to develop horticulture to the maximum potential available in the state and to augment production of all horticultural products (fruits, vegetables, flowers, plantation crops, spices, medicinal aromatic plants) in the state.

National Dairy Plan

National Dairy Plan was drafted for 14 major dairying states (accounting for more than 90% of India's milk production) on initiatives to launch a scientifically planned programme to increase bovine productivity and milk production.

Banking Support Schemes

Small Farmers' Agriculture-Business Consortium

Small Farmers' Agriculture Business Consortium was established in 1994. This consortium supports the new ventures in agro-based industries. Under the scheme, the eligible entrepreneurs are provided venture capital for those agri-business projects which are to be started with the participation of nationalized banks, SBI and subsidiaries/IDBI. The SFAC funds up to 10% of the total project cost, or 26% of the total project equity or Rs. 75 lakhs, whichever is lower.

National Project on Organic Farming

National Project on Organic Farming is a central sector scheme launched in 2004 i.e. during 10th five year plan by subsuming National Project on Development and use of bio-fertilisers under the Ministry of Agriculture. The major objectives of this scheme are:

- Promote organic farming practices to reduce the burden on chemical fertilisers, to ensure effective utilization of farm resources

- Financial and technical support for setting up of organic input production unit such as fruits and vegetables market waste compost, bio-fertilizers and bio-pesticides and vermin culture hatcheries.
- Human resource development and awareness creation and market development for quality control of organic inputs.

Orissa State Agriculture Policy, 2013 (Economic Survey, 2014-15)¹² aims to inspire the new generation farmers to cope up with the emerging challenges. The policy is targeted at making growth more inclusive. The decline in agricultural growth coupled with declining profitability in the agricultural sector and the rapid growth of non-farm sector is one of the major concerns. The major objectives of the policy include:

- Shift from sustenance to profitability.
- Promoting sustainable agricultural development.
- Enhance productivity of crops through better water management, farm mechanization and technology transfer.
- Focusing on poultry, dairy and fisheries to augment income of the farmers.
- Encouraging organic farming and modern farming system.
- Increasing access to credit for small and marginal farmers.
- Facilitate appropriate market linkages.
- Creating appropriate institutional facilities to undertake regulatory, enforcement and quality assurance activities.

2.4 Civil Society Interventions to Arrest Farmers Suicide

NGOs and pressure groups in India have played a significant role in the farmer suicide cases to highlight the issues nationally and internationally. Navdanya is a national NGO founded by Vandana Shiva (prominent activist in agriculture) which focused on the concepts of organic farming, seed saving and biodiversity conservation. Navdanya has helped set up 65 community seed banks across the country, trained over 50,000 farmers on seed sovereignty, food sovereignty and sustainable agriculture over the past two decades and helped set up the largest direct marketing, fair trade organic network in the country.

M.S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) an NGO established in the year 1988 with the objectives to work on 'the coastal Systems Research', 'Biodiversity and Biotechnology', 'Ecotechnology and Food Security', 'Gender and Development', and Informatics. The MSSRF initiated some programmes in May 2006 to alleviate the farmers' families in distress in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra like Educational Support of Children and Livelihood and Rehabilitation of widows.

Project SHARE was implemented as pilot project in 2009 by a joint effort of the NGO Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals (ISAP) and American Seed Corporation Monsanto. It aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of 10,000 small marginal cotton and corn farmers in three states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. Its major objective was to increase the yield and income of the farmers. Part of the programme was to give training to farmers on pre-sowing practices, Integrated Nutrient Management, Integrated Pest Management, good agricultural practices and post harvest technology.

In the state level, the Shetkari Sangathana, a farmers organization in Maharashtra, strives to attack the faulty government policies for the situation as well as urge for the agricultural lobbies that came in the way of any meaningful agricultural policy initiatives and later on, directly target the government for purposely keeping cotton prices low to fulfill the interests of the cotton textile mills in the state.

In the state of Karnataka, the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) initiated a campaign for encouraging the natural farming traditionally practiced in India. KRRS has asked the government to ensure the farmers a respectable rate for their crops.

NGO named Ryot Jagruti Vedike (Farmers Awareness Forum) was established in 2003 at Bijapur, Karnataka with the objectives of creating awareness among farmers about the general agrarian crisis and to find out possible ways to overcome the problem by arranging lectures, seminars, distributing pamphlets instilling confidence among farmers not to commit suicide, appealing the private money lenders not to harass the loanee-farmers, arranging rallies on special occasions to express solidarity among farming community in distress.

Chetna Organic Agriculture Producer Company Ltd (COAPCL) is a part of Project Chetna, a development initiative aimed at improving the lives of small holder and marginalized cotton farmers in different rain-fed cotton growing regions in India. The Chetna Organic and Fair Trade Cotton Intervention Program (OCIP) was launched in 2004 to promote organic, non-pesticide agriculture and Fair Trade. OCIP was established with the aim of improving the livelihood of cotton farmers in the states of Maharashtra, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh.

Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti is fighting for the cause of small and marginal farmers since 1998. The main thrust of this organization is targeting the issue of farmer suicide. The continued follow up and Jan Andolans by Vidarbha has resulted in a number of success like waiving up of small farmers crop loans, interest remission to marginal farmers, provision of alternative source of employment etc.

Regional Centre for Development is working in Bolangir, Nawrangpur and Koraput in the state of Odisha . It is working with the farming communities who have faced drought, crop failure, indebtedness and exploitation. RCDC is involved in supporting these communities to abate indebtedness and check migration through measures such as providing alternative livelihood options, encouraging organic agriculture as an alternative to cash cropping, linking up people with government schemes etc.

3. Concluding Comments

Irrespective of the trials, the trends of farmer suicide donot show a matching decline in the country. The government and the civil society interventions have been initiated to restrict the spread Till the date the trials are from the front of the system of governance and the civil society. Policy initiatives, or civil society interventions are supportive factors to tackle the situation. These are external protections. It is high time to develop farming community's resilience to manage the situation. The farming community should take up this challenge. It has to take the benefit of the programmes and find out alternative livelihood options in order to overcome the burdens of crop failure. Suicide should not be taken as an option or a compulsion to overcome the agricultural crisis, but it should be taken as a cordish attempt and a forbidden choice to bring a lasyting solution to the issue.

REFERENCE

1. National Crime Records Bureau, ADSI Report Annual-2012. Government of India, Pg-242, Table no. 2.11.
2. Gruere, G. and Sengupta, D. (2011). "Bt. Cotton and farmer suicides in India: An evidence based assessment". *The Journal of Development Studies*. 47(2), 316-337.
3. Schurman, R. 2013. "Shadow space: Suicide and the predicament of rural India". *Journal of Peasant Studies*. 40(3), 597-601.
4. Das, A. 2011. "Farmer's suicide in India: Implications for public mental health". *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*. 57(1), 21-29.
5. Kranton and Swamy. 1999. "The hazards of piecemeal reforms: British civil courts and the credit market in colonial India". *Journal of Development Economics*. Vol.58, 1-28.
6. Choudhry and Swamy. 2014. *Protecting the borrower: An experiment in colonial India*. Yale University.
7. Nandi et al. 1979. "Is suicide preventable by restricting the availability of lethal agents? A rural summary of West Bengal". *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*. 21, 251-55.
8. Hegde, R.S. 1980. "Suicide in rural community". *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*. 22, 368-370.
9. Reddy, Ratna. 1993. "New technology in agriculture and changing size productivity relationships: A study of Andhra Pradesh". *Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*. 48(4), 633-648.
10. Sainath, P. *Everybody loves a good drought: Stories from India's poorest districts*. Penguin Books.
11. *Odisha Economic Survey, 2014-15*. Retrieved online from www.odisha.gov.in/pc/Download/Economic_Survey_2014-15.pdf
12. Ibid; Odisha Economic Survey, 2014-15.