

Covid-19 and Lockdown: Economic and Social Impacts on Farming Community in District Sirsa

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ABSTRAT

The present study tries to get an insight into the ramifications of Covid-19 and the imposition of Lockdown for the agriculture sector in Sirsa district of Haryana State. The study tries to understand the challenges and problems faced by farmers during lockdown. How and to what extent, the imposition or restrictions imposed by Indian government affected the farmers of district Sirsa is the prime objective of the study. The study focuses on the economic challenges faced by farmers and the strategies made by them to cope with the situation. Besides, the social impacts and other positive and negative impacts have also been the prime objectives that have been tried to achieve through this study. To achieve these stipulated objectives, a primary data-based study has been conducted on the farmers of district Sirsa. Simple per centage method was used to extract the results.

Keywords: Economic; Challenges; Covid; Lockdown; Social;

1.Introduction

The outbreak of Coronavirus and the resultant lockdown imposed by government of many countries hit each and every section in various degree in almost all the countries of the world. The economy of almost all the countries was affected in negative way to the greater extent. Various sectors of India had also to face very stringent challenges in many terms. However, the agriculture sector remained prominent even during this hard time. But it does not stand for that agriculture sector was not affected by this pandemic and lockdown. There was very serious impact for the Indian agriculture sector also as the farming community had to face some very serious challenges that includes economic, social and other positive and negative impacts. The present study tries to understand the economic and social challenges that were created by the coronavirus and lockdown. The study tries to examine economic and non-economic influences on the farming community of district Sirsa in Haryana.

2. Research Method

The present research study is based on primary data. The study was conducted on the farming community of district Sirsa. The information was gathered by preparing a well-structured questionnaire. A total of 300 farmers were interviewed and the primary information was tabulated by using simple average method.

3. Results and analysis

This section explains the furnished results related to the stipulated objectives in detail that are presented through the following sub-section.

Sub Section 3.1 Economic Challenges Faced during Covid-19 and Lockdown

The furnished results related to the economic challenges caused by Covid-19 and lockdown are presented through the figures presented in table 3.1. It was revealed by the 24 percent large farmers of district Sirsa that the lockdown had affected the farm produce in negative way. As far as the views of medium and small farmers in this relation is taken into consideration, 18 percent medium and 10 percent small farmers expressed the same view as was the case of large farmers. Regarding economic challenges in terms of increased cost of labour, it was found that 98 percent large farmers, 80 percent medium farmers and 8 percent small farmers replied in positive way when asked about the negative impact of increasing cost of labour. Out of total respondents, 62 percent farmers accepted the fact that due to shortage of labour, the cost of labour increased. However, a meagre percent of small farmers was of the same view. It was revealed by 30 percent large farmers that they had to spent on other inputs on farms lands other than labour as the services of these inputs had been inaccessible during lockdown.

Another important economic challenge that was faced by the farmers that their income had decreased during due to the restrictors on the movement of people and other resources that halted the process of earning more money in negative way. It may be due to the wastage of farm produce. 28 percent of large farmers, 14 percent of medium farmers accepted that fact. However, that does not hold good for the small farmers. It is also worth mentioning here that 100 percent farmers of all category were of the view that they had to face economic challenges because of the increase in the prices of food and others necessary facilities and services. What makes their economic condition worse was the delay of payment for their farm product as accepted by 92 percent large farmers. 86 percent medium farmers and 8 percent small farmers respectively. The delay in payment took place on account of delay in online registration. Besides, the farmers were remained stand in the long queue for their turn for selling their farm produce. Another difficulty that was emerged during the survey was that the amount for the farm produce was received collectively for the large number of farmers in the account of middleman that was at the later stage distributed among the farmers who had sold their farm produce. It was also found that lack of technical support from government to farmers create obstacles in maintaining or increasing farm produce that ultimately created economic challenge for the farmers in district Sirsa during lockdown.

Table 3.1

Economic Challenges Faced during Covid-19 and Lockdown

(Figures in Percentage)

Sr. No.	Challenges/Types of Farmers	Large Farmers	Medium Farmers	Small Farmers	Total Farmers
1)	Negative Impact on Productivity/Production	24.00	18.00	10.00	17.33
2)	Increased Cost of Labour	98.00	80.00	8.00	62.00
3)	Increased Expenses on the Services of other inputs	30.00	28.00	0.00	21.33
4)	Loss of other Sources of Income	28.00	14.00	38.00	26.67
5)	Higher Prices for food and other Facilities	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
6)	Delay in payments for the crop	92.00	86.00	8.00	62.00
a)	<i>Delay Online Registration</i>	48.00	52.00	2.00	34.00
b)	<i>Waiting in the queue for their turn to sell their product</i>	54.00	62.00	4.00	40.00
c)	<i>Payment sent collectively in the account of Middleman</i>	56.00	58.00	2.00	38.67
7)	Lacking Technical Support/Knowledge Sharing among Farmers	68.00	46.00	4.00	39.33

Source: Field Survey

Sub-section 3.2 Strategies Adopted to Cope with the economic Challenges

The final results related to the large, medium and small farmers in relation to the strategies adopted by farmers to cope with the economic challenges are presented through the furnished figures in table 3.2. When asked about the government help during this hard time, only 46 percent small farmers agreed to the fact that they had received financial help from government during this hard time. Large and medium farmers denied about getting any help from government during lockdown as per the responses recorded during survey on the respondents of district Sirsa. A very small proportion of the respondents also accepted the fact that they got help in the form of donations from other people during that time as 3.33 percent farmers got such kind of help from neighbours or others people from the society. The same per centage of the respondents expressed the fact that they had no option but to sell their livestock or other items to cope with those economic challenges. The most miserable fact was revealed during the survey that 34 percent small farmers accepted the fact that in want of money they had to reduce their food quantity and 28 percent shared that they were forced to reduce their food quality in order to cope with the then economic situation. It was

expressed by 26 percent large farmers, 34 percent medium farmers and 68 per cent small farmers that they had to use their saving to do with the given economic conditions during Covid-19. Out of total respondents, 2 per cent of the farmers were of the view that they sold their extra farm produce to get some money to bear the daily household expenses. A large chunk of the respondents revealed that they had to take loans to cope with the challenges thrown by Covid-19 and consequent lockdown. A small proportion of the farmers were observed to reduce their expenditure on education and health. So, a motley of means has been adopted by the farmers during this economic crisis as a result of the imposition of Lockdown.

Table 3.2

Strategies Adopted to Cope with the economic Challenges

(Figures in Percentage)

Sr. No.	Challenges/Types of Farmers	Large Farmers	Medium Farmers	Small Farmers	Total Farmers
1)	Received Help from Government	0.00	0.00	46.00	15.33
2)	Aid/Donations	2.00	2.00	6.00	3.33
3)	Sell Livestock or another items	0.00	2.00	8.00	3.33
4)	Reduced Food Quantity	0.00	4.00	34.00	12.67
5)	Reduced Food Quality	0.00	4.00	28.00	10.67
6)	Use of Saving	26.00	34.00	68.00	42.67
7)	Take Loans	0.00	6.00	48.00	18.00
8)	Sell Extra Crop	0.00	4.00	2.00	2.00
9)	Reduced Expenditure on Education and Health	2.00	4.00	8.00	4.67

Source: Field Survey

Sub-section 3.3 Social Problems Faced by Farmers or Family

The final results related to the social problems faced by farmers during lockdown are presented through table 3.3. A large chunk of large farmers agreed to the fact that the reverse migration of the labour created disturbances in the social structure of village life. Another negative impact of covid-19 and lockdown was reflected in the fact that most of the people in the village tried to hide their travel history otherwise it may create bridge between him or her and other people of the village society due to the fear of corona virus. So, the social impact of corona was very overt during that tough time. However, the percentage of farmers that expressed these kinds of feelings were not very large. The aggression during Covid-19 was also heightened as everyone was trying to escape himself or herself from being isolated and when asked about corona test, misbehave may became new feature in the society by the

person who was suggested by others for testing for covid-19. So, it has triggered mistrust among neighbours in the farming society. Due to the imposition of lockdown, the cases of domestic violence increased and alcoholism and by sitting idly and play card was also increased in the society as 10 percent of large farmers, 8 percent of medium farmers and 6 percent of small farmers supported this fact during the survey. Regarding another important change that took place during lockdown was the postponement of the family and religious functions or the gathering at these functions restricted that created distance between the people of the farming society.

Table3.3

Social Problems Faced by Farmers or Family

(Figures in Percentage)

Sr.No.	Challenges/Types of Farmers	Large Farmers	Medium Farmers	Small Farmers	Total Farmers
1)	Reverse Migration of Labour	86.00	68.00	16.00	56.67
2)	Hiding Travel History	10.00	16.00	6.00	10.67
3)	Misbehaviour and Aggression	20.00	18.00	6.00	14.67
4)	Mistrust between neighbours	6.00	14.00	4.00	8.00
5)	Domestic violence, Alcoholism and Card-playing	10.00	8.00	6.00	8.00
6)	Disruptions/ Postponed of Family Functions and Marriages	10.00	16.00	6.00	10.67

Source: Field Survey

Sub-section 3.4 Positive and Negative Impacts of Covid-19 and Lockdown

The positive and negative impacts of covid-19 and lockdown are reflected through the furnished figures presented in table 3.4. Regarding negative impacts of Covid-19 and Lockdown on farmers of district Sirsa, it was revealed that as many as 8.67 per cent farmers were got infected by coronavirus out of which 10 percent farmers belong to large category while 4 percent were from medium category and 12 percent were came from small farmers category. 0.67 percent of the respondents suffered deeply by corona as they had to lose their family members during this pandemic. During lockdown, the farm activities reduced drastically as expressed by the farmers. 38 percent large farmers. 70 percent medium farmers and 46 percent small farmers have accepted that the farm activities had reduced due to Covid-19 and Lockdown. A proportion of the farmers shared that covid-19 and lockdown increased the level of anger, anxiety, Depression, fear and stress among farmers. So, The Covid-19 and Lockdown had very serious ramification for the farming community in district Sirsa as far as the negative impacts of Covid-19 and lockdown is taken into consideration.

In relation to positive effects of covid-19 and lockdown, it was found that because of that pandemic and lockdown, it was an opportunity to spend time with family members that increased the focus on family and home. Except to that, they got free time to spend on hobbies and other enjoyable activities that after lockdown got due consideration and attention. It is worth mentioning here that 82 per cent of large farmers, 25.60 per cent medium farmers and 6 percent small farmers took Covid-19 in the sense that it had improved hygiene and it provided an opportunity to being more hygiene. Some of the farmers were found to earn more than before the Corona Virus situation as this pandemic and lockdown led the price to rise in case of some of the commodities. The exposure to sun and exercise provided them with better health.

Table 3.4

Positive and Negative Impacts of Covid-19 and Lockdown

(Figures in Percentage)

Sr. No.	Challenges/Types of Farmers	Large Farmers	Medium Farmers	Small Farmers	Total Farmers
Other Negative Impacts					
1)	Infected by Covid-19	10.00	4.00	12.00	8.67
2)	Death from Corona in the family	0.00	0.00	2.00	0.67
3)	Reduced Farm Activities	38.00	70.00	46.00	51.33
4)	Increased level of Anger, Anxiety, Depression, Fear, Stress	18.00	28.00	8.00	18.00
Other Positive Impacts					
1)	More Focus on family and Home Life	46.00	25.60	24.00	34.00
2)	More Focus on other Activities (Hobbies etc)	12.00	25.60	6.00	8.67
3)	Improved Hygiene	82.00	25.60	78.00	76.00
4)	More Philanthropist	36.00	25.60	6.00	18.67
5)	More Opportunities to earn	10.00	25.60	10.00	8.67
6)	Better Health due to exposure to Sun and exercise	10.00	18.00	4.00	10.67

Source: Field Survey

4. Conclusion

On the basis of the above discussion, it was found that a proportion of the farmers of district Sirsa revealed that lockdown had affected the farm produce in negative way. Regarding economic challenges in terms of increased cost of labour, very surprising results in negative way were surfaced. Some of the farmers revealed that they had to spent more on other inputs on farmlands other than labour as the services of these inputs had been inaccessible during lockdown. It was also found that lack of technical support from government to farmers created obstacles in maintaining or increasing farm produce that ultimately created economic challenges for the farmers in district Sirsa during lockdown. Regarding adoption of strategies to cope with the situation, it was found that only small farmers agreed to the fact that they had received financial help from government during this hard time. A very small proportion of the respondents also accepted the fact that they got help in the form of donations from other people during that time The most miserable fact was revealed during the survey that 34 percent small farmers accepted the fact that in want of money they had to reduce their food quantity and 28 percent shared that they were forced to reduce their food quality in order to cope with their economic situation. A large chunk of the respondents revealed that they had to take loans to cope with the challenges thrown by Covid-19 and consequent lockdown.

In relation to social impacts, it was found that the reverse migration of the labour created disturbances in the social structure of village life and most of the people in the village tried to hide their travel history shows that social impact of corona was very overt during that tough time. it triggered mistrust among neighbours in the farming society. Due to the imposition of lockdown, the cases of domestic violence increased and alcoholism and by sitting idly and play card was also increased. Regarding another important change that took place during lockdown was the postponement of the family and religious functions or the gathering at these functions restricted that created distance between the people of the farming society. It was revealed that farm activities had reduced due to Covid-19 and Lockdown. So, The Covid-19 and Lockdown had very serious ramification for the farming community in district Sirsa as far as the negative impacts of Covid-19 and lockdown is taken into consideration. For some of the respondents, it was an opportunity to spend time with family members and it had improved hygiene. Some of the farmers were found to earn more than before the Corona Virus situation as this pandemic and lockdown led the price to rise in case of some of the commodities. The exposure to sun and exercise provided them with better health.

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