



Farmer Suicide Cases in Karnataka; An overview

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ABSTRACT

For the last one decade, the issue of farmer suicides has attracted attention of researchers and policy makers. A number of studies were undertaken to explain these suicides. The main explanations were problems like crop failure due to bad weather, rising cost of cultivation, mounting indebtedness and bottlenecks in agricultural marketing. To mitigate this problem, government of India has announced a number of packages. In this paper, an attempt has been made to understand the issue of farmer suicide in the state of Karnataka using secondary level information.

KEYWORDS

Karnataka, Farmers, Suicides

I. Introduction:

In present situation of agrarian distress in different states of India including farmers' suicides major issue in all paper as well as TV news have attracted attention. It is shocking to note that, the figures on farmers' suicides in India between 1995 and 2003 were 9.26 lakh. Regarding the number of deaths of farmers in Karnataka, Veeresh Committee (2002) reported that during 1996 and 2000 there were 10,959 victims under the farming and agricultural activity category. Though farmers' suicides have been occurring in Karnataka since 1998 (Shrishaail.2011). Suicides among the farming communities in states like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka have been hitting the headline for the last couple of years. While state governments attribute the deaths to crop failure due to bad weather, the media emphasizes the rising cost of cultivation, mounting indebtedness and bottlenecks in agricultural marketing. A number of studies have been undertaken to explain these suicides, particularly in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The causes are attributed mainly to agro economic problems like crop failure, indebtedness, etc [Shiva and Jafri 1998; Deshpande 2002]. Others highlight politico economic issues, blaming the state for the tragedies [Assadi 1998; Revathi 1998; Vasavi 1999; Sarma 2004]. Parthasarathy and Shameem (1998) opined that growing indebtedness is the main reason for the strain on the farmers. Most of these studies have analyzed the issue at the macro level. Taking into account above studies an attempt is made to study the former suicide cases in Karnataka an overview.

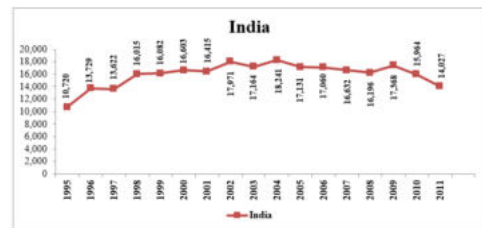
II. Objective and Data Base:

In this paper mainly focused on a specific objective of to examine the agrarian crisis including farmers' suicides cases and over a period of time government rehabilitation packages in the state. We are used secondary data for study was collected from various sources like journals, published reports, newspaper and agriculture department website etc.

III. Farmer Suicides in India and Karnataka:

Several cases of farmers committing suicide have been reported in different parts of the country as well as the state over the last 10 years. Farmers indicated several causes for the distress leading to suicides. Taking into account of this we made an attempt to know of farmer suicide in the country as well as the Karnataka state.

Figure 1: Year wise Farm Suicides in India and Karnataka 1995-2011



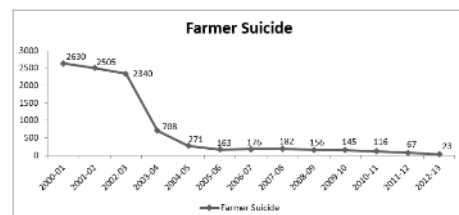
Source: The Hindu, Tuesday, July 3, 2012 – Pg no.11

It is evident from figure 1 as shown that the numbers of farm suicides cases were reported is significantly highlighted in India. It is really shocking that from 1995-2011 farmer suicide cases were increased over period of time in the country. In the other side we also observe that though Karnataka accounts for 6 percent of total population in the country, in terms of farmers suicides cases the state accounts for around 20 percent. Thus looking to overall among the Indian states, the situation is more critical in Karnataka state.

Farmer Suicides in Karnataka:

It is clearly present in the Figure 2 depicts year wise number of suicides by farmers in Karnataka state during the period 2000-01 to 2012-13. In these thirteen years, the number farmers' suicide is highest seen in three years 2000-01, 2001-02 and 2002-03 farmer committed suicide 2630, 2505 and 2340 respectively in the state.

Figure .2 Farmer Suicides in Karnataka State 2000-2001 to 2012-13.

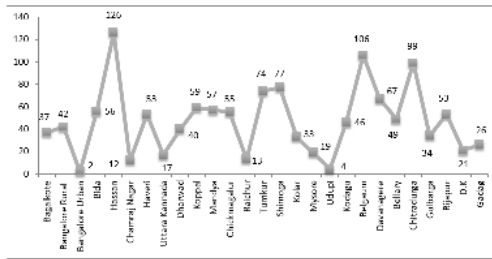


Sources: Prabhu (2012), GOK (2002): "Farmers Suicides in Karnataka"

The state was reeling under severe drought during the period of 2003-04 the number of farmer suicides cases is 708 are reported. After the years, the number of suicide farmer cases was declined. In the meanwhile, some extent evident from the figure 3 reveals that the district wise farmer suicide cases has highest recorded in Hassan district and next Belgaum and Chitradurga districts were during the years of 2003-2007 in the state is 126,

106 and 99 respectively. In addition, very few cases were found in Bangalore urban, Udupi district were 2 and 4 cases respectively and other than these district were not crossed in-between in the state.

Figure 3: District wise Farmer Suicide in Karnataka 2003-2007(in Numbers)



Source: The Department of Agriculture, Karnataka

Reasons for Farmer Suicide:

Farmer suicide cases are more in such cases where the household had to borrow heavily for purchase of high cost inputs like seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. In many cases, these loans were obtained from informal moneylenders or traders at high rates of interest. Failure of crops due to adverse seasonal conditions or uncontrolled pest attacks resulted in the inability of farmers to discharge the loans obtained by them. Also even when the production was good, a slump in the prices resulted in huge losses for the farmers, leading to default on the loans obtained. Failure of bore wells installed with heavy investment also resulted in farmers defaulting on loans. In some cases, the farmers were unable to discharge their liabilities due to unforeseen factors like accidents, illness of a member of the family leading to heavy medical expenses, expenditure on social obligations etc (Purnanand.2011). Taking account of this we have an attempt made to know the reasons for farmer suicide in major district in Karnataka. It is observed that the reasons wise percentages of farmer suicide in major districts of Belgaum, Chitradurga, Chikmagalur and Kodagu due to highest percentages of crop loss and in Hassan and Shimoga districts more farmer suicide for other reasons.

V. Government Rehabilitation Packages:

Moving rehabilitation the Union Government released the rehabilitation package of Rs.2689.64 crore which included interest waiver of Rs 209.81 crore. In addition, specific schemes for watershed development, seed replacement, horticulture and extension services, and subsidiary income through livestock, dairying and fisheries introduce. As per the records, in Karnataka, agricultural loans amounting to 1,248.78 crore for 2, 86,549 accounts was re-scheduled as on August 2008 and the fresh loans to the tune of 9,787.04 crore were sanctioned to 90,226 account holders against rescheduled loans. Credit flow increased to 9,093.21 crore benefiting 2,29,620 accounts. RRBs and Cooperatives together shared 70 per cent of the total rescheduled accounts and 30 per cent of the rescheduled loan amount. The NABARD agreed to provide the loan under RIDF for the development of 892 minor irrigation projects in the selected 6 districts in the state.

State Government Packages:

The Government of Karnataka announced the package of Rs. 840 crores for the rehabilitation the farmers in distress and also payment compensation to the members of the victim's family. The farmers were exempted from the payment of interest on crop loans. Further they were exempted from the payment of water tax and land revenue and supply the seeds at the subsidized rates to the small and marginal farmers and these farmers encouraged to grow horticultural crops, to reach this objective the loan facility was extended. Support price was given for certain agricultural products and farmers were exempted from the penalty for the non-payment of electricity bill used for the purpose of irrigation. The government prohibited private money lending business since 2002. Introduced Yashashwini Co-operative Health Care Scheme, in 2003 which is

an insurance scheme launched for the first time in the world for the benefit of farmers who are members of the cooperative societies.

Apart from the above concessions, the state government has introduced some more schemes for the farming community like providing agricultural loan at 3% interest through co-operative institutions, supplying of free power for irrigation pump sets. The government is also gradually encouraging organic farming.

VI. Conclusion:

In recent years, the issue of agrarian distress in different states of India including farmers' suicides have attracted attention of policy makers and researchers. The reports of suicides by farmers are still coming from different news and TV media. Some studies and reports have highlighted that the implementation of the Prime Ministers Rehabilitation Package for Farmers suicide prone districts of four states is not effective and the Karnataka government has failed to spend allocation made for payment of ex gratia amount to distressed families of farmers and distribution of certified seeds. Therefore, proper implementation of central and state government rehabilitation package is very urgent in the state. In addition, to creating of awareness regarding the problem of suicide and training given to the farmers by agricultural assistants regarding use of pesticides and fertilizers and created among farmers regarding scientific farming of different crops to get better yield and good price for their products. Encourage the farmers to adopt the allied activities like dairy, poultry etc along with farming activities. Than only we expect completely stop the worst affected farmer suicide cases in the state as well as the country.

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