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# **ROLE OF JUDICIARY IN CURBING FARMER'S SUICIDE IN INDIA: A LEGAL STUDY**

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## **Abstract**

Agriculture is the primary sector in India. India has an essentially agrarian economy because about 70% of its people rely on agriculture for their livelihood, either directly or indirectly. Despite rapid expansion in the secondary and tertiary sectors, the majority of Indians still depend on agriculture as their primary source of income. Sadly, though In India, around 12,000 farmers committed suicide each year. Suicides by farmers appear to be quite widespread in India. Suicides by farmers are becoming an epidemic in many Indian states, including Punjab. Thus, the Mass Poverty and debts are the prime cause of farmers' suicides in Punjab. The researcher here tries to answer as what role judiciary has to play in order to curb these suicidal deaths of farmers and also to highlight some affirmative suggestions to de-root this menace from our society.

**Keywords:** Agriculture, farmer's suicide, judiciary

Agriculture has historically served as the cornerstone of the Indian economy and is expected to maintain this role in the future. Maintaining almost 17% of the world's population while using only 2.3% of the planet's land area and 4.2% of its water resources is its responsibility.

The economy is currently experiencing accelerated growth, a trend attributed to the economic reforms initiated in the country during the early 1990s. The GDP has grown at a faster rate in recent years, rising from less than 6% in the early years of reform to over 8%. This occurred mostly as a result of the non-agricultural sector's explosive rise. Between 1980–1981 and 2006–07, there was a very slight decrease in the percentage of workers employed in agriculture, from 60.5 percent to 52 percent. There has been an increase in the suicide rate among farmers and agricultural labourers in recent years, particularly between 1995 and 2005. When compared to

non-growers, cultivators have a greater suicide rate. Farmers in the districts of Sangrur, Bathinda, Barnala, Mansa, and Ferozepur have been found to be more likely to commit suicide.<sup>1</sup> Until the root reasons of farmer suicides are identified and comprehensive policies and programs are developed, the issue will remain unsolved. The disturbing causes behind the suicides of Punjabi farmers call for a thorough investigation. Therefore, a methodical and impartial investigation into the prevalence and reasons of suicides in Punjab is required. The suicides of Punjabi farmers bring attention to the profound rural poverty that is often overshadowed by the prevailing notion that India, a nation of billions, boasts one of the most rapidly expanding economies globally.

## ISSUES RELATED TO AGRICULTURE

### I. Monocropping and Faulty Cropping Practices

The primary factor contributing to Punjab's looming environmental crisis is the Green Revolution's adoption of intensive agricultural practices. Since the 1960s, the region has experienced heightened grain production due to the practice of double monocropping, specifically summer rice (chona / munji) and winter wheat (kanak). However, because of the rising demand for irrigation, this has led to water use that is above sustainable levels. The overuse of chemical pesticides and fertilizers has also contributed to the deterioration of the ecosystem. Within 45 years, Punjab's soils have lost much of their micronutrient content. Punjab's pedosphere, lithosphere, atmosphere, hydrosphere, and biosphere have all suffered from intensive agricultural practices.

Punjab does not traditionally grow rice. In the state of Punjab, the rice crops use approximately 85% of the freshwater resources.

Because of the efficient use of "virtual water" in the form of wheat and rice imports from the Punjab region, India's water resources are being depleted. The situation has become critical, according to the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), which has sparked debates about how much rice can be grown in the irrigated Indo-Gangetic Plains and methods to keep the area productive without depleting water supplies. In addition, there has been a discernible decrease in the production of less water-intensive crops such as fruits, vegetables, lentils, and

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<sup>1</sup> Singh, H. and Manisha. 2015. Crisis in agricultural heartland: farm suicides in malwa region of Punjab, India. *International Journal of Advancements in Research and Technology*. 4(2): Retrieved from <http://www.ijoart.org/docs/CRISIS-IN-AGRICULTURALHEARTLAND-FARM-SUICIDES>.

millet.

## **2. Agricultural Product Marketing and Distribution**

In the state of Punjab, farmers are restricted to selling their goods in mandis, or wholesale markets, located in nearby towns or weekly local markets. Aarthiyas, or commission agents, and mashokars, or middlemen, who gather fees on behalf of the government, supervise the mandis. Most arthiyas also function as moneylenders, and as a result, farmers may be indebted to them. The antiquated and ineffectual agricultural marketing mechanisms in Pakistan and India are to blame for the inefficient distribution and selling of agricultural products in Punjab.

## **3. Insufficient Economic Liberalization**

The agrarian economy of Punjab has struggled to achieve significant diversification. Consequently, intensive farming practices and their associated environmental repercussions have continued unabated. There is an urgent need to encourage private investment from both domestic and international entities to establish a more efficient framework for the processing and marketing of agricultural goods, as well as to relax import and export regulations. However, farmers currently face restrictions on the transportation of their products. The movement of goods from Punjab to other Indian states or to foreign markets is limited. For instance, the Indian government removed the prohibition on wheat exports from all states other than Punjab and Haryana in January 2004.

## **4. The Pesticide Conundrum**

It includes herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and rodenticides, are used to control a wide variety of pests. Punjab State accounts for only 1.5% of India's land area, but it utilizes over 18% of the country's pesticides. Furthermore, roughly 75% of the insecticides used in Punjab state are consumed in the southwest regions of the Malwa region. The usage of pesticides has been linked to major health issues as well as environmental issues. Research conducted in Punjab has revealed the presence of pesticide residues in fruits, vegetables, and cow's milk.

## **5. GM (Genetically modified) Crops**

In March 2002, This was first planted in India. In 2005, the cultivation of Bt cotton—cotton plants altered with *Bacillus thuringiensis* bacteria—was approved for the north zone, which covers Punjab state. Cotton farmers have discovered that the plant is susceptible to other pests, so it needs antibiotics sold by genetic companies. In Punjab, rapeseed, also

known as brassica juncea or sarson, are more usage oil and food crops. A variety of GM mustard has been created by an Indian business. Because of new genetically modified contains five foreign seeds, its dangerous for Environment and for health Of Human Being. Punjab will also be sensitive to the issue of GM mustard because it contains tobacco ingredient.

### **6. Situation of the Farmers: Suicides and Debts**

Despite the annual increase in the cost of agricultural produce, Punjabi farmers' incomes have not increased. Spending by farmers on pricey inputs for agricultural productivity has increased. They have frequent blackouts, and relying on generators is costly given the rising price of diesel. These days, farming is primarily a debt-based endeavor. The owners of the land have mortgages to banks and moneylenders known as shaukars, and they lack the means to pay back these loans. The state's agricultural debt has almost tripled since 1996, according to the Movement Against State Repression (MASR). The state government of Punjab has verified that 2,116 farmers have killed themselves since 1988. But according to a MASR survey, throughout the previous 17 years, around 40,000 farmers in the state have killed themselves. Agriculture experts are worried about the rising rates of poverty and landlessness among Punjabi farmers. Instead of searching for comprehensive and long-term answers, some regrettably advocate contract farming, technology, and the involvement of large businesses in the agriculture sector.

### **7.Environmental Concerns and Women's Rights**

It is uncommon for women to be acknowledged as economically effective workers on family farms. Furthermore, the men usually have the final say over any money made from this labor. Girls and women do not typically receive pocket money for helping on family farms, but boys do. It is true that panjabi women are heavily involved in cottage industries, livestock rearing, and agricultural output. They execute these jobs on top of their regular household chores and take part in all agricultural producing processes. Women will also have to go several kilometers to get water due to environmental degradation and water scarcity.

### **8.Landless Farmers**

The number of landless people has increased as a result of the Green Revolution's increasing pauperization of marginalized and impoverished peasants. Insufficient industrial growth in metropolitan areas means they have no employment opportunities. Due to their debt, many

farmers are unable to repay their debts. After that, they are made to sell their land and become labourers without access to land. But the majority of these agricultural labourers are impoverished. Some of them take out high-interest loans from the landlords, which add up over time. The loan cannot be repaid after several generations. As a result, the landlords end up using them and their families as bonded labour.

### **9. Sustainable Development and Agricultural Diversification**

The agricultural sector in Punjab sorely needs diversification, with a focus on sustainable techniques, organic farming, green farming, integrated farm concepts, and ecologically friendly approaches. This necessitates the implementation of an all-encompassing approach based on eco-farming practices, agro-ecological theories, and local agroclimatic conditions.

Cropping patterns need to be adjusted to incorporate the planting of fruits, vegetables, fiber crops, oilseeds, mushrooms, and fodder crops. Other examples include medicinal, spice, and aromatic plants. Gardening, agriculture, hydroponics, animal cultivation, apiculture, and silviculture are more roads for Panjabi ranchers to enhance their organizations. Through agro-industries located in the villages, these will create jobs in rural areas. A sufficient infrastructure must also be in place for harvesting, handling, processing, storing, quality assurance, and selling.

### **10. Impact of Climate Change on Agriculture**

Climate change will have a significant impact on Punjab's agriculture systems. Reduced productivity, a poor harvest, and moisture stress will arise from soil water depletion. However, global warming would lessen oilseed frost damage and encourage higher yields of winter crops like legumes. It may cause the rice and cotton growing seasons to shorten, allowing farmers to plant another leguminous crop. On the other hand, increased production costs are likely to result from the increased demand for irrigation. Furthermore, the patterns of land use associated with agriculture and herding would be impacted by climate change. Furthermore, the desiccation of semi-arid regions would pose a danger to the food production capacity of the Punjabi plains. The opening up of agriculture, which will result in a variety of cropping patterns in response to shifting climatic trends, will require Punjab's economic liberalization.

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The current study examines farmer suicide. Everyone has the right to life and personal freedom, yet occasionally circumstances like these are brought about by one person encouraging, helping, or assisting another in taking their own life. Such an individual will be accountable for a criminal offense. Men commit suicide for a variety of causes and under a range of conditions. One of the major causes of the early or unnatural termination of priceless human lives is suicide. It is a worldwide issue. A person cannot be found guilty of abetting the suicide of another person unless it is proven that the other person actually committed the suicide. Abetting is defined as the deliberate and mental process of inciting someone to do something or helping someone else accomplish it. Farmers have generally committed suicide as a result of crop failure or excessive debt from loans or expenses incurred over the previous 20 years. There are too many contributing causes to this kind of crises, and not enough attention is given to them. As a result, these elements are building up over time. Consequently, this study makes an effort to understand the issues that the Punjabi farming community faces. The report makes every effort to concentrate on topics like the causes of farmer suicides in Punjab.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Suicides by farmers are becoming a major problem in many Indian states, including Punjab. Initially, the problem of farmer suicides only affected one area of Punjab, but in recent years, many other areas of the province have seen a significant increase in farmer suicides. To determine the specific contributing causes to farmer suicides in each and every Punjabi region, it is imperative to research the subject of farmer suicide in various locations. Farmers, the government, and society will all gain from policy initiatives that prevent farmers from having suicidal thoughts and bring Punjab's most important human capital into the process of economic development. Nowadays, farmer suicide has become a widespread issue. Current study identifies the causes and provides strategies for releasing society from the clutches of offence.

## OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

1. To research the socio-legal analysis of Indian farmer suicides.
2. To investigate the causes of Indian farmer suicides.
3. To ascertain the socioeconomic factors that contribute to farmer suicide
4. to investigate the court's role in lowering the likelihood of farmer suicide.
5. to investigate potential solutions to the problem of farmer suicide in India

## HYPOTHESIS

Suicides by farmers have been occurring all throughout Punjab. Clearly, there are other causes of farmer anguish besides debt. There are a few stubborn factors, such as inadequate irrigation, fragmented land, and insufficient seed; farmers will always have to deal with declining crop prices and insufficient finance sources. In Punjab, widespread poverty is also a major contributing factor to farmer suicides. Punjabi farmer suicide rates have not decreased despite current laws and government initiatives.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main and secondary sources will serve as the study's foundation. The understanding of mental health, the requirements and protections for their rights, and state culpability will serve as the foundation for this investigation. Furthermore, secondary sources such as books, textbooks, journals, periodicals, articles in different newspapers, etc. will also form a part of the study. With limited time, the doctrinal research technique is being employed. Online resources for information are also utilised.

## RESEARCH GAP

The goal of the researcher is to close any gaps, incomplete cases, and shortcomings. The depressing suicide stories never stop. Legislation should be used to make the changes. In order to decrease the number of suicide incidents.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the various reasons why a farmer would take their own life?
2. How do the courts contribute to reducing the threat of farmer suicide?
3. What are the different clauses that punish the criminal for encouraging the suicide of farmer?
4. What international regulations exist regarding farmers who commit suicide?
5. Is it enough for the legal provisions to address the current issue?
6. How do social media and the media contribute to the encouragement of suicide?

## CAUSES OF FARMER SUICIDES

Following Reasons for Rural Suicide

- **Most ranches are little and financially impractical**

The majority of Indian farmers actually only have two acres of land. It is not economically feasible to cultivate such a small area. These tiny farmers are now at risk. Since a large percentage of the profits are used to pay the land's lease, it is frequently the case that farmers are not even the landowners, making profitable farming impossible.<sup>2</sup>

#### • **Rapid increase in debt**

The primary cause of the farmer's suicide is the high level of debt that the farmers are facing. This extreme debt is not a recent occurrence that happened overnight. The credit technique known as establishment has been in place for a while. The mismatch between the cost of production, the market price growers receive at the end of each cropping cycle, and the support price is what leads to the indebtedness itself. Landholding patterns are becoming more and more indebted. The majority of those impacted are small and medium-sized farmers, although huge landowners in the state's rain-fed regions are also feeling the pinch. The farmer debt rate in Punjab is 80.7%, with farmers owing Rs. 21064 crore in debt and households owing Rs. 178934. A study by Punjab Agricultural University found that 73% of suicide victims in the districts of Ludhiana, Fatehgarh sahib, Bathinda, Sangrur, and Mansa committed suicide due to debt, while 27% did so for other reasons.<sup>3</sup>

#### • **Multiple crop failures**

Crop failure has occurred consistently each year. The land's production has decreased for a variety of reasons, including this crop failure. Some of these causes may include abuse of fertilizers and pesticides, an over-reliance on HYV (High Yielding Variety) seeds, and, more recently, genetically modified seeds like Bt cotton. As a result, crop failure stops being a singular event and starts to recur periodically. The farmers have run out of options after experiencing repeated agricultural failures, therefore they have taken their own lives.<sup>4</sup>

#### • **Natural calamities**

Suicides among farmers are caused by natural disasters in addition to economic factors. The

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<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.change.org/p/pmoindia-central-government-state-government-department-of-agriculture-narendra-modi-raise-the-standards-of-indian-agricultural-sector> visited on 15<sup>th</sup> april 2024

<sup>3</sup> S. Singh, M. Kaur, H.S. Kingra, "Flow of funds to farmers and indebtedness in Punjab", Research report, *Punjab State Farmers Commission*, Government of Punjab, 2007

<sup>4</sup> H. Singh, Manisha, "Crisis in agricultural heartland: farm suicides in malwa region of Punjab, India", *International Journal of Advancements in Research and Technology*. 4(2015) Retrieved from <http://www.ijoart.org/docs/CRISIS-IN-AGRICULTURALHEARTLAND-FARM-SUICIDES.pdf> visited on 22<sup>nd</sup> april 2024

majority of agricultural productivity is contingent upon favourable meteorological conditions. Natural conditions such as heavy rain, floods, droughts, delayed rain, heavy cyclones, and man-made reasons like reduced subsidies, fire, accidents, and so forth have gotten worse due to global warming, deforestation, and other human-caused factors. Farmers are consequently unable to draw from their land both qualitative and quantitative produce. Farmers do not receive a fair return on their product in the market even when all the conditions are favourable for them in terms of output quantity and quality. This is because a decrease in demand for a thing or service causes the price of that good or service to automatically decrease as supply of the good or service increases. Farmers typically aren't able to recoup the cost of their produce. Every year, the state governments set the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for agricultural products. However, the government's declared MSP is lower than the entire cost of manufacturing. These factors make farming an assured loss-making venture, but India's marginal and small farmers have no alternative means of subsistence, so they continue to devote all of their energies to the industry. Suicide is often the result of their aggravation with ongoing losses, which renders them bankrupt.<sup>5</sup>

- **Absence of substitute revenue streams**

The state's primary sector is agriculture, and the vast majority of its residents live in villages. However, weather patterns have a significant effect on farming. Thus, in addition to agriculture, related industries like dairy, poultry, mushroom farming, etc., can provide a second source of income. However, farmers are unaware of this because the government has not taken any action in this area.

- **Financial institutional credit**

The increased financial needs of farmers resulting from the Green Revolution model made them more dependent on non-institutional sources of finance. Even after 68 years of independence, private money lending continues to be the primary source of loan availability for small and marginal farmers. This is because the banking sector is rapidly withdrawing from the credit distribution network.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> K.R. Sadashiv, "Farmers Suicide in India- Causes and Remedies: 2006-2010". *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development* 6 (1), 1-8(2015) Retrieved from <http://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEDS/article/viewFile/18975/19557> visited on 25<sup>th</sup> april. 2024

<sup>6</sup> S. Singh, M. Kaur, H.S. Kingra, "Flow of funds to farmers and indebtedness in Punjab", Research report, *Punjab State Farmers Commission*, Government of Punjab, 2007

**•Exploitation by Arhtiyas**

Farmers who don't have any other sources of income except farming must rely on credit in order to pay for their everyday costs as well as the large sums of money needed for farm equipment, infrastructure, and high-quality inputs. Farmers are dependent on arhtiyas to cover costs like motor burnouts, submersible pump installation (which can run up to Rs 3 lakh), and other household necessities. For temporary formal loans to cover seasonal agricultural costs, cooperative societies provide them. Due to their frequent financial needs and the ease with which loans may be obtained at any time of day, farmers have grown to rely significantly on commission agents, or arhtiyas. Farmers are heavily indebted to these large loans because Arhtiyas take advantage of them by charging higher interest rates. They take their own lives when they are unable to repay these large sums.<sup>7</sup>

**•Increase in Cost of Production**

Farmers are forced to take their own lives due to the sharp rise in the price of fuel, fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds. India's agriculture sector needs a large labour force for tasks including plowing, digging, maintaining the soil, applying herbicides and insecticides, cutting, transporting, and selling goods—all of which cost money. Furthermore, hybrid seeds—which are exceedingly expensive and out of reach for India's marginalized and impoverished farmers—are also necessary for producing goods of a high enough quality and quantity. The recently implemented farming system has raised production costs, which has resulted in debt and, ultimately, in the suicide of farmers.<sup>8</sup>

**•Ground water depletion**

Groundwater in particular has been overused in Punjab as a result of intensive agriculture focused on paddy-wheat monoculture. Presently, about 1.3 million of the nation's 20 million tubewells are located in Punjab, which accelerates the extraction and depletion of groundwater. The region in central Punjab, known as the "sweet water zone" and dominated by rice crops during the kharif season, is where the overexploitation of groundwater resources is particularly problematic. The average annual fall in the groundwater table in central Punjab from 2000 to 2005 was 91 cm, which is alarmingly high, despite the fact that the decline was 17 cm in the 1980s and 25 cm in the 1990s. The state's water table is dropping in 110 of its 142 blocks as a

<sup>7</sup> P. Kaur, "Why Punjab farmers are driven to suicide", *The Tribune*, June 11, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> K.R. Sadashiv, "Farmers Suicide in India- Causes and Remedies: 2006-2010". *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development* 6 (1), 1-8(2015) Retrieved from <http://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEDS/article/viewFile/18975/19557> visited on 29<sup>th</sup> april 2024

result of excessive water extraction. It is anticipated that in central Punjab, the water table depth will drop below 70 feet in 66% of the territory, below 100 feet in 34% of the land, and below 130 feet in 7% of the region by 2023. Due to the depletion of groundwater resources, the cost of irrigation for wheat and rice crops has skyrocketed in recent decades. Farmer indebtedness has increased as a result of the growing cost of deepening wells and switching from centrifugal to submersible pumps. This has a relatively bigger detrimental effect on small and marginal farmers who lack the resources to make these investments.<sup>9</sup>

#### •Technological change

Since the green revolution, new hybrid seeds, insecticides, herbicides, and agricultural cultivation technology have made farming considerably easier and more productive.

However, these breakthroughs and technologies are so expensive that small and marginal farmers cannot afford them.

#### • Small farmers are not reached by government programs

In order to support more than 36 million farmers, the government launched an agricultural loan waiver and debt reduction program in 2008. The program also provided direct agricultural loans to farmers who were experiencing financial difficulties via the Kisan Credit Card. However, the poor farmers do not gain from most of the social programs and subsidies that the federal and state governments have promised. Conversely, the only people who profit from those methods are large landowners.<sup>10</sup>

#### •Political reasons

In addition to ideal economic and meteorological conditions, the political environment is crucial for the success of any firm or profession. The agricultural industry is completely ignored by politicians who have significant influence over policy and decision-making. They regularly announce different farmer aid programs but never really put them into practice. Thus, the benefits of such packages are not received by the farmers in need.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> S. Kaur, K. Vatta, Groundwater depletion in Central Punjab: pattern, access and adaptations. *Current Science*. **108** (4): 485-490(2015).

<sup>10</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.newsgram.com/the-farmer-question-6-main-problems-of-indian-agriculture-and-9-solutions-to-fix-them/amp/> visited on 30<sup>th</sup> april. 2024

<sup>11</sup> K.R. Sadashiv, "Farmers Suicide in India- Causes and Remedies: 2006-2010". *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development* **6** (1), 1-8(2015) Retrieved from <http://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEDS/article/viewFile/18975/19557> visited on 30<sup>th</sup> april. 2024

**•Illiteracy, traditions & culture**

In addition to illiteracy, tradition, and culture drive farmers to take their own lives. Farmers lack literacy and information, thus they do not see the value in schooling. Due to their lack of education, they resort to orthodoxy and other religious practices, which again cost additional money. They occasionally took out large loans with exorbitant interest rates from private money lenders in order to carry out these activities. In addition, farmers who marry their daughters are required to offer their son-in-law a sizable sum of money and gold. The farmers feel frustrated and consider suicide if they are unable to carry out all of these customs and cultural practices.<sup>12</sup>

**•Lack of work culture**

In the past, farmers worked their fields on their own, with assistance from family members who would lend a hand when needed. Today, farming depends solely on labour hired by the farmer. They merely hire the labour; they don't look into the caliber of the labour's output.

**•Nuclear family**

Joint families have broken up. Nowadays, every household purchases a submersible pump, a motorcycle, a tractor, or even a car, and landholdings decrease as a result of divisions. The majority of suicide victims were from nuclear families, which provided credence to the theory that the recent dissolution of joint families in rural areas is a hidden cause of suicide. Compared to a nuclear family, there are less expenses in a mixed family.

**LANDMARK JUDGEMENTS ON FARMER'S SUICIDE**

The highest judicial authority in India is the Supreme Court. Prior to anything else, though, we must comprehend the function of the legal system. In India, courts have the authority to hear cases and render judgments on a wide range of topics, such as whether two states may share resources or how a school should handle its pupils. Additionally, courts have the authority to punish offenders.

After considering a public interest litigation (PIL) petition submitted by **Citizens Resource and Action Initiative (CRANTI)**, which brought attention to the problems faced by farmers and the fact that their inability to repay debts frequently drives them to take their own lives, the

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*

Supreme Court issued an order. The Bench, presided over by Chief Justice of India JS Khehar, gave the Central government a six-month window to address the concerns of the farmers.

According to the court decision, within the next six months, farmers' initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Yojana, which currently cover 40% of farmers, must cover roughly 50% of the target population. As a result, nowadays, only 53.4 million of the 120 million farmers are receiving benefits from government programs, and only 30% of all farmland is protected by the Central government's crop insurance programs.<sup>13</sup>

In the case of **Principal Secretary, Government of Maharashtra v. Secretary, All India Biodynamic and Organic Farming Association, and others**<sup>14</sup> reported in, the Bombay High Court Division Bench resolved that corrective action should be taken by the government at the end of 113.16 pilos in order to prevent farmer suicides. The Tata Institute of Social Sciences' report was cited by the court in the aforementioned ruling, and paragraph 16 of the ruling included the following instructions. Considering the results, the following can be used to summarize the main causes of suicide among cultivators in the State of Maharashtra:

1. Growers commit suicide primarily because of their heavy debt load at the moment. It did not happen overnight that this loan became due. It is caused by the credit policy that has been in place for a number of years;
2. Growers incur debt when their crop expenditures are not covered by the price they receive at the end of each cropping cycle.
3. Based on field statistics, it appears that crop failures have occurred often during the past four years. For a number of causes, the land's production has decreased as a result of these crop failures. The overuse of pesticides, an excessive dependence on HYV seeds, and, more recently, a certain quantity of genetically modified seeds, such Bt cotton, are some examples of these problems. Crop failure thus turns into a recurring phenomenon rather than an isolated incident;<sup>15</sup>
4. High levels of debt are dispersing over landholding patterns. In that regard, the majority of those impacted are small and medium-sized farmers, however huge landowners in the state's rain-fed regions are also feeling the pinch;

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.livelaw.in/farmers-suicides-should-not-just-merely-come-down-sc-tells-centre>

<sup>14</sup> 2006(3) B.C.R. 867

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

5. Based on field data, it appears that even after 55 years of independence, small and marginal farmers still mostly obtain loans via private money lending. This is the outcome of the banking sector swiftly withdrawing from the credit distribution network;
6. The main method of cultivation in Maharashtra is rain-fed. Due to the lack of a reliable source of irrigation, small and marginal landholders are not affected by the subsidies provided for fertilizers, herbicides, irrigation, and energy. Therefore, people who grow income crops that need irrigation are forced to rely on rainfall, which can be unpredictable even in the best of times. The system is under extreme strain as a result. Since subsistence farming cannot meet the cultivator's demand for liquid capital to survive, the cash crop takes on the status of a sort of necessity. Small and marginal farmers are being forced to grow commercial crops under duress more and more, which is exacerbating the debt situation;
7. The agents of seed and fertilizer businesses provide the farmers with most of their access to a knowledge base;
8. The government's strategy can be described as blatantly indifferent. For example, the government's extension system is concealed even though it could give growers access to an unbiased database of data;
9. There is essentially no safety net for cultivators, particularly small and medium-sized ones; approximately 80% of casualties have not received any form of government compensation.

Regarding **Secretary of the All India Biodynamic and Organic Farming Association v. Maharashtra Government Primary Secretary and Others**,<sup>16</sup> learned counsel representing the petitioner heavily relied on the ruling of the primary seat. This petition supports the reason behind farmer suicides. We cannot accept the submission of learned Counsel, even though learned Counsel appearing on behalf of the petitioner heavily relied on the above referred judgment. This is because the farmers who committed these suicides were depressed and did not have any support from organizations. As a result, depressed farmers took drastic measures, and the Court took this into consideration. There is no question whatsoever about the Court's assessment of the subject of the suicide of farmers, the majority of whom were illiterate and disorganized.

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<sup>16</sup> 2006(3) Bom.C.R. 867

It is also argued in the case of **City Industrial Development v. Platinum Entertainment**<sup>17</sup> that no agricultural land, no trees, and no greenfield will remain in Indore, Dhar, Jhabua, and Ratlam Districts if industrial buildings are built. The air will become contaminated throughout. The nearby communities will experience a range of illnesses, and the subterranean drinking water will also become contaminated. Twelve villages in the Indore District do not have portable water due to the presence of arsenic, iron nitride, and other contaminants, according to a newspaper clipping dated September 26, 2016 (Annexure-P/10). The distribution of land to bank defaulters poses a risk to the safety and possessions of Madhya Pradesh's citizens, thereby contravening Article 21 of the Constitution.

The petitioner's learned senior counsel has also brought forth the fact that 75% of the produce in Indore is destroyed, and the farmers are not given access to insurance or assistance. Heavy industrialization is the reason why farmers are killing themselves and fleeing their homes. As mandated by the NFS Act, the State Government is not giving food grains to residents in areas hit by the drought. Despite the Apex Court's clear directive in the case of **Swaraj Abhiyan (supra)**. Additionally, the State Government is not paying compensation to those whose land has been acquired in a timely manner.

The Indian Supreme Court wrote to the governments of Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and **Sanjeev Bhatnagar v. Union of India and Others in 2006**<sup>18</sup> regarding farmer suicides. The court is reviewing the nation's agricultural policy in response to a public interest litigation (PIL) that requests that it intervene due to the increasing number of farm deaths caused by poverty and debt. The panel consists of three judges: Chief Justice Y K Sabharwal, Judges C K Thakker and Markandey Katju. The court pushed the respondents to provide an explanation for why more preventive steps weren't being taken to stop the suicides.

The High Court of Judicature recently chastised Telangana State and Andhra Pradesh in **Jana Vignaya Vedika V. State of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh**. The High Court also asked both governments for their responses to the actions they had taken. The bench ruled that "you are not taking serious this issue" during the hearing of a Public Interest Litigation petition asking the government to take action to stop farmer suicides. You are merely providing compensation; you haven't taken any welfare actions to stop farmers from killing themselves.

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<sup>17</sup> AIR 2015 SC 340

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You must ascertain the actual causes of the agrarian problem. The bench remarked, "Why don't you form a committee to find the reasons and solutions?"

In a different case, **S. Sundareshan v. Union of India**<sup>19</sup>, a public interest lawsuit that addressed the nationwide problem of farmers killing themselves was denied by the Supreme Court. The lawsuit requested that the Center implement the expert body's suggestion to establish the minimum support price (MSP) for all agricultural products.

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS:

The primary cause of the suicides among growers is their high level of debt. This extreme debt is not a recent occurrence that happened overnight. Its foundation is the credit policy that has been in place for a while. The indebtedness arises from a mismatch between the cost of production, the support price, and the market price that growers get at the end of each cropping cycle. Debt never goes away: The farmer's suicide does not bring an end to the financial hardships linked to these tragedies. The remaining family is frequently forced to take on the debt, which means that children must drop out of school in order to help maintain the family. These young farmers, who are even more dependent on the farm than before, start purchasing additional seeds in the hopes of having a bumper crop and wind up deeply in debt. Without any other source of income, farmers must rely on credit to pay for their everyday expenses as well as the large sums of money needed to invest in agricultural equipment, infrastructure, and high-quality inputs. Farmers have to rely on arhtiyas for expenses such as motor burnouts, installing submersible pumps (which can cost up to Rs 3 lakh), and even other essentials for their homes. For temporary formal loans to cover seasonal agricultural costs, cooperative societies provide them.

Due to their frequent financial needs and the ease with which loans may be obtained at any time of day, farmers have grown overly reliant on commission agents, or arhtiyas. Under such circumstances, even seemingly ordinary needs—such as giving their kids a quality education and covering unexpected medical costs—become enormous burdens that break the farmer's back. The farmer, like everyone else, is forced to seek out more expensive private alternatives as a result of the public education and health institutions' continued inability to deliver effective services of a decent Caliber. Farmers who lease land for agriculture are also responsible for

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<sup>19</sup> O.A.No.3391/2012

paying the additional land rent. Because loans from authorized sources cannot be obtained against property purchased on lease, these farmers are once again forced to rely on illegitimate sources like Arhtiyas for the costs of cultivation in addition to the lease rent. In an effort to break the vicious cycle of taking out more expensive loans in the hopes of improving their financial situation and repaying earlier loans with high interest, farmers are forced to take informal loans at outrageous interest rates (18 to 36 percent) and under unfair terms, such as having to sell their produce only through their lenders.

## **SUGGESTIONS:**

### **Crop diversification**

Crop diversification and rotation are concepts that many Indian farmers are unaware of. Rural areas in general and the agriculture industry in particular have received little attention from the government, despite the fact that urban schooling has substantially improved. This is the reason why farmers don't know enough about the many government initiatives. They ought to receive instruction on crop diversity and rotation. Growing a variety of crops, such as papaya, ginger, turmeric, and so on, will benefit farmers financially. In order to address the problems posed by the expanding global agricultural market and the evolving requirements of the populace, numerous South East Asian nations have resorted to crop diversification as a means of boosting productivity and producing high-value crops with favourable results.

### **Collective Farming**

For small and marginal farmers, collective farming offers an excellent alternative in which a group of farmers can work together on large farms using shared inputs. As a result, safe storage space may be accumulated at the village level to minimize waste, lower transportation costs, and sell produce when and where prices are favourable.<sup>20</sup>

### **Technology Advancement in Agriculture**

Economically, it is possible to boost young engagement in agricultural fields by implementing farm techniques that ensure a certain success. The only way to do this is to use new technologies. In order to produce crops with greater yield potential and improved pest resistance, research activities should be continued. It is important to impart agricultural technology innovation to small farmers.

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<sup>20</sup> Nirmal Sandhu, "Simply put, radical change is the only way out" *The Tribune*. February 2, 2016.

### **Water Management Techniques**

There should be less reliance on nature for agriculture. This necessitates efficient water management during favourable monsoon seasons. Preventing crop failure ought to be the primary objective of the administration. The efficiency of water management can be increased through interstate cooperation on water resources, where surplus water from perennial rivers can be diverted to the areas in need.<sup>21</sup> The area of cultivable land that is now without irrigation facilities. With the exception of regions with permanently flowing rivers, the majority of agricultural fields lack irrigation facilities. Water shortages are typically caused by improper water management rather than a lack of available water. Modern irrigation and rainwater collection techniques should be improved and implemented.

### **Agricultural Insurance**

Agricultural Insurance is necessary, and under the direction of the district collectors, claims should be handled promptly. Conventional crop insurance bases a farmer's reimbursement on a direct assessment of the harm they have experienced. However, because the majority of our farmers are small holders, field loss assessment is frequently neither practical nor affordable. Simplifying the application process for crop insurance is also necessary.

### **Other Revenue Sources**

Small farmers should be given training by the government so they can learn new skills and become more motivated to begin earning income from other sources. To lessen reliance on agriculture as the primary source of income in drought-affected regions, the government ought to initiate projects aimed at developing alternative labour opportunities. An alternative route could be a small, Agro-based enterprise. Farmers ought to create goods that are in high demand and sell for a profit.<sup>22</sup>

### **Professionalization of Agriculture**

It is necessary to counsel and direct farmers on cost-effective farming practices that will help them save money. The small farmers should inherit the agricultural technology advancements. Farmers may be assisted in switching to the cultivation of crops that would be simple and affordable to cultivate in unfavourable conditions if the current crops did not fare well under the current drought and weather conditions. Agriculture is not a traditional occupation; rather,

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Retrieved from <https://brainly.in/question/4023889> visited on 5th May 2024

it should be approached professionally. The government can also look into the idea of combining small farmers' farms to create a larger area of land that can be farmed profitably. By pooling their fields, small farmers can take advantage of the economies associated with larger-scale farming. It is imperative that separate agricultural zones be established, akin to industrial zones, wherein only operations related to farming and agriculture are allowed.<sup>23</sup>

### **Institutional Finance/Credit**

Another crucial strategy to protect farmers from moneylender debt traps is to make institutional financing accessible to all farmers. If institutional financing is available, the poorest farmers should have easy access to it. This necessitates doing away with complex procedures and regulations for getting the loans. Effective oversight of the monies being disbursed is also necessary because, frequently, a larger landowner benefits from the loan while the impoverished farmer is merely utilized as a front end. Furthermore, oversight is required to guarantee that the farmers are allocating the money appropriately. Small and marginal farmers continue to have disproportionately limited access to financing even in the face of an increase in the overall supply of institutional credit. One important source of credit for agriculture is cooperatives. Farmers that find institutional funding insufficient or burdensome borrow money at exorbitant interest rates from private, non-institutional sources. In order to increase their outreach and guarantee that farmers receive agricultural financing that is appropriate, timely, and affordable, efforts should be made to streamline the operations of the cooperative credit infrastructure. Capital investments in the livestock and agriculture industries should have access to credit facilities with reasonable interest rates.<sup>24</sup>

### **Facilities for Marketing**

To attract more investment and provide farmers more options, the Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act should be changed to allow direct farmer marketing and the growth of private marketplaces. Regarding wheat and paddy, farmers are assured of both pricing and marketing. There are no equivalent agreements for other crops, like vegetables, fruits, legumes, oil seeds, and maize. For long-term sustainability, these are the crops that are advised in terms of diversification and partial replacement of rice area. To make handling and aggregating food easier for buyers, product-specific markets should be formed, such as those for milk products,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.newsgram.com/the-farmer-question-6-main-problems-of-indian-agriculture-and-9-solutions-to-fix-them/amp/> visited on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2024

potatoes, chilies, flowers, and maize. In all of the state's major municipalities, producer's markets modeled after Apni Mandi or cooperative marketplaces ought to be promoted. It is necessary to put up a regulatory framework to ensure that both public and private markets are regulated and run effectively.<sup>25</sup>

### **Contract Farming**

Enforcing mutual contracts between parties can promote contract farming as a way to guarantee producers a market. To guarantee the seamless execution of the contract between the contracting farmers and the contractor, measures for contract farming should be included in the APMC legislation modification or a separate contract farming legislation should be enacted.<sup>26</sup>

### **Delivery of Extension Services**

Improving the rate of technology adoption and agricultural productivity primarily depends on farmers receiving the technology package created by the university or institute. Farmers should be persuaded of the benefits of modern technology through demonstrations held in their fields, encouraging them to embrace it. In the cattle industry, extension services are virtually non-existent, and in the crop sector, including horticulture, they have not kept up with farmers' knowledge needs. Clearly, the extension services must be revitalized in order to satisfy the needs of each and every client, or farmer. Through a yearly induction of extension officers against the resulting vacancies and development of new posts, the endeavour should be to build an efficient, well-organized, and result-oriented extension service system.

### **Skill Based Education**

Farmers have become averse to physically demanding labour due to their over-reliance on farm machinery and migrant labour. The earlier farmers worked on their fields on their own, with assistance from their families who supplied additional labour. Therefore, in order to boost productivity and subsequently revenue, farmers and their families must receive skill-based production.<sup>27</sup>

### **Simplifying Life and Needs**

Punjabis everywhere have a tendency to flaunt themselves at weddings, naming rituals, and

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Retrieved from [https://mpr.ub.uni-muenchen.de/35675/1/MPRA\\_paper\\_35675.pdf](https://mpr.ub.uni-muenchen.de/35675/1/MPRA_paper_35675.pdf) visited on 10<sup>th</sup> May. 2024

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

funerals; this should be reduced. Individuals ought to be encouraged to live modest lives and refrain from overspending during these special times. Instead of focusing on their position, the people should consider their true financial situation.

