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Effect of Covid-19 on Farmers and their Families

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ABSTRACT

It's been a worst year for everyone in the world in the Covid -19 situation especially the lockdown situation. People suffered allot and things are getting back to normal with restriction but the situation hasn't changed with the farmers it still remains the same. The pandemic has also highlighted the likely public health crisis in anticipation of rural part of India and farming communities as well. In a country where there is already shortage of water and where there is irregular water supply in lots of areas like rural and urban, repeated handwashing is a lavishness that cannot be put into practice. Moreover, social distancing and remoteness are a huge challenge for farming communities who depend on daily labor and wages for their survival. This article will show the current situation of farmer communities in this very harsh pandemic. Further, it will explain a whole lot about small landing farmers and the market reforms of current circumstances.

INTRODUCTION

In India nearly 120 million smallholder farmer contributes over 40% of the countries grain production, and half of it are fruits, veggies, oilseeds and many more crops. The global share of food staples such as rice and wheat is produce by India and nearly half of the population in India is depended on agriculture for their living. Every year farmers faces the difficult and take risks such as scarcity of rain, price fluctuation and higher debts. But risks for this covid pandemic are putting these farmers in a difficult challenge in the sector where already circumstance is under fear. The Coiv-19 lockdown is very unfortunate time for farmers. This lockdown have created both a shortage of labour and equipment migrant workers / labourers in India usually move to rural areas during harvesting season and small land holding farmers often rent harvesting equipment so they can purchase it cheaper. As a result, farmers were not able to harvest crops like cereal and oilseed harvest in this season because of covid. In some pace crops have been abounded, while in others the harvest is become late almost taking months, in hand with limited and expensive labour. Another issue that is cause for concern is the accessibility to seeds, fertilizers and pesticides for the next crop season. Post the rabi harvest in April, farmers arrange for the next season in May. Though, the COVID-19 induced disruption have reduced production capacity for farm inputs and have led to an raise in price, making

these resources unreachable to small land holder and marginal farmers in the country. If we see large landholding farmers and businesses that may be able to withstand these shocks, they put massive pressure on smallholders who work with limited resources and income. Resuming business operations will be there to ensuring harvest security in the coming season.

Impacts on small land holding farmers

In India nearly 80% of the agriculture sector comprises of small and marginal farmers(said by- Minister of agriculture and farmers welfare, 2015) .Agriculture and any other sector related to it are source of livelihood of approx 54.6% of the population (source by – Economic survey 2019-20) and it the contribution in GDP is around 16.5%. Moreover, small land holder contributes to both diversification and food security extensively in terms of production of high value crops. The Covid-19 pandemic has disturbed maximum involvement in agriculture and supply chain. The communication gaps and understanding between central and the state govt. towards the agriculture sector has been obvious in terms of releases of notification and circular agriculture activities during lockdown situation. As well, there are disruptions for maximum agriculture products yet consumers are paying more. It has become clear that income of these small land holder farmers has been declined, even for those who can still work on land and harvest on their crops. It is becoming difficult for the farmers to sell their harvest, because the farmers market is shut and transportation is limited. There can arise the financial problem in later stage and unfortunately these small holding farmers do not produce food any longer. Under the pressure of decades of neoliberal policy in the agro sector, most field are filled with flowers, cotton and fodder. Such products are grown widely for an international market. Those farmers that do grow edible crops only provide limited food security. This is due to monoculture and restricted processing possibilities on site even with an entire village , it will be difficult to eat an entire farm of watermelons or cabbage . That is why the rotten part of the field is sell in a cheap price.

Market Reforms

The APLMA was introduced in 2017 with a hub on rebuilding market communications for both public and private players. It limited several events aimed at betterment of overall welfare, particularly of farmers. States like Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan adopted seven provisions of the APLMA both states took single point levy of market fee, single unified trading license, e-trading, direct marketing, establishment of private markets, and separation of powers and functions amongst administrative functionaries. And states like Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, and Haryana adopted five provisions each, four of which are common to Madhya Pradesh and Haryana. For wheat, the uneven is based on the number of provisions of the APLMA that a state adopted. In the case of tomato and onion, the variable captures whether or not a state removes fruits and vegetables from the purview of a more restraining earlier APMC regulation.

State Provisions adopted:

- i. Uttar Pradesh :Single point levy of market fee, single unified trading licence, E-trading, direct marketing, private markets, administrative reforms, declaring warehouse/cold storages as deemed market
- ii. Madhya Pradesh: Single point levy of market fee, Single unified trading licence, E-trading, direct marketing, deregulation of marketing of fruits and vegetables
- iii. Rajasthan :Single point levy of market fee, single unified trading licence, E-trading, direct marketing, private market, administrative reforms, deregulation of marketing of fruits and vegetables
- iv. Punjab :Single point levy of market fee, single unified trading licence, E-trading, direct marketing, private markets
- v. Haryana: Single point levy of market fee, Single unified trading licence, E-trading, direct marketing, deregulation of marketing of fruits and vegetable

Future Steps

The national government recently introduced new laws, which seeks to encourage private sectors to get involve with agriculture market by permitting farmers to sell their goods outside mandis, and remove some crops from the list of essential commodity list – thereby reducing the govt. to encourage private investment in these market.

These reforms draws policymaker’s shift in focus away from short-tem,Covid-19 related laws, and towards the design if India’s agriculture sector in long –term .Uncertainly around the ongoing situation it makes this very difficult to determine what policies are needed to lessen risk.

Planning for the upcoming harvesting season is complicated by lasting uncertainty about the duration of the lockdown. If the farmers harvest succeeds, they might be able to sell some crops, but profits will be low compared to good flower growing season. Which means that they are possibilities of financial crisis soon in the longer period to buy water for irrigation and other farming necessity? Not only in India but places likes morocco and Zimbabwe the small holders faced similar problem. Also, some farmers cannot afford gas for their water pumps to aces groundwater. Which means they cannot irrigate and will rely on rainfall for harvest. The impact of the crises most likely will affect famers in the years to come.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 crisis is not permanent, but it has magnified the vulnerabilities already present in the food system in India. Taking stock of the issues can help governments and businesses create stronger, more resilient supply chains and measures to support smallholder farmers, who are critical to the food supply chain.

The fear of covid for India is far from over, but the leaders understood the need for the economy control and start functioning it properly. Yet, it is now consider that business back to normal is the things from past.

As we build the “new normal”, we will need to be innovative in our thoughts and ensure to save the most essential sector of the country. Our efforts to rebuild are sensitivity to the needs and

circumstances of small holders farmers and farmers in general. By such way we can protect and support the flexibility of local food supply, while also taking steps to ensure future systematic shocks can be handled quickly and effectively.

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