



AN ANALYSIS ON GROWTH AND TRENDS OF FARMERS' SUICIDE IN KARNATAKA

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Abstract: *Agriculture plays an important role in the economy of Karnataka and it is the main occupation for more than 60 per cent of population. But in recent years agriculture sector in Karnataka facing several problems. In Karnataka, which has the second largest arid zone in the country after Rajasthan, has been reeling under a farmers suicide problem. The farmer suicide rate in Karnataka has hit the highest level in a decade, highlighting agrarian distress in the state. According Agriculture Department statistics, 1,002 farmers have ended their lives from April 1, 2015 to January 11, 2016. With this, Karnataka has broken all previous records as far as farmer suicides are concerned. The districts particularly Mandya, Mysore, Haveri, Belagavi, Bidar, Tumkur, Gadag, Dharwad and Davangere districts have recorded the highest number of farmer suicides since April, 2015. With this backdrop the present study is going to examine the growth and trends in farmers' suicide in Karnataka.*

Key Words: *Agriculture, Debt, Farmers Suicide, Irrigation and Rural Areas*

1. INTRODUCTION

The vast majority of poor in India is living in rural areas and engaged primarily in subsistence agriculture for survival, even today. The core problems of widespread poverty, growing inequality, rapid population growth and rising unemployment find their origin in the stagnation and often retrogression of economic life in rural areas. The economic progress, whatever, that has been allowed in India before and after independence, has by passed millions of people (Vandana Shiva). One alarming point of concern of investment pattern in agriculture is public investment. The public investment has been continuously decreasing and directly affecting agriculture negatively with less creation of infrastructure facilities.

Further agriculture in India as well in Karnataka has been facing various problems i.e., production instability, price fluctuations, drought, rural indebtedness and farmers' suicide.



Among these farmers' suicide is one of the huge problems which were taken place in the country from last two decades. The problem of farmers' suicide is severe and attracted the attention of policymakers. Consequently the government has been taking policy initiatives in order to solve the issue but not fully succeeded.

General Causes for Farmers' Suicide

The studies done by various scholars and policy makers have identified different reasons for farmers' suicide in India as well as in Karnataka. The following are some of the reasons for the increasing suicides among farmers.

- a. Failure of institutional credits for small and marginal farmers.
- b. Withdrawal of government intervention from safety nets such as fair price shops (FPS), and the exclusion of poor and indebted from the food distribution system.
- c. Increasing cost of agriculture inputs like seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, etc.
- d. Reduced price of agriculture produces.
- e. Increasing dependence of small farmers on moneylenders, at rates of interest from 24 to 60 per cent per annum, sometimes even more.
- f. Cumulative crop loss.

2. FARMERS' SUICIDE IN KARNATAKA

Agriculture plays an important role in the economy of Karnataka, contributing about 28 per cent of the gross domestic product. More than 60 per cent of population is engaged in agriculture. Karnataka had no history of farmers committing suicide when crops or market failed, although there were agitations of farmers in the past. The first incidence of farmers' suicide, which attracted considerable attention of media and public, was reported on 12 December 1997 when Mr. Shivaraj Mainalle of Siddeshwar village in Bidar district committed suicide who were involved in cultivating Tur Dal, a market-oriented agricultural crop committed suicide. In the initial two years, farmer suicides were largely concentrated in the drought-prone districts in north Karnataka, or confined to economically backward, drought-prone regions such as Gulbarga and Bidar. However, after 2000, the phenomenon shifted to relatively advanced agricultural regions, particularly Mandya, Hassan, Shivamogga, Davanagere, Koppala and even Chikkamagaluru, Kodagu and it also covered ground water region, (Belagavi) assured rain fall region (Haveri), Sugar Cane and Cauvery Irrigation Belt (Muzaffar Assadi).



However, in the coastal belt, the number of suicides reported was less. This is because of the fact that by and large, in these districts, the people depend more on the non-agricultural activities, with wider linkages which extend to the metropolitan cities like Mumbai, and even to the Middle East. Moreover, in these regions, the primacy of agrarian sector is slowly being replaced by the industrial sector, notwithstanding the fact that certain pockets of coastal belt saw the commercial farming of the areca nut and coco, grown for the past one or two decade. This has linked the farmers to larger market, in the process, making them a vulnerable category. In fact, the land reforms of the 1970s had created autonomous categories in this region. The autonomy was effectively used to enter into the domain of larger market (Muzaffar Assadi).

In fact, there is no precise number of suicides, as the number of suicides accounted by the state had been different from that of the civil society groups. This contention came about as the state refused to admit the reason of suicide as the result of capitalist development. Rather it tries to link the suicide to the personal matters, including the fact that it would dismiss the suicide on flimsy grounds. During 1999- 2001, it was estimated that 110 farmers committed suicide in Karnataka. According to one estimate, 3,000 farmers committed suicide in Karnataka between 1998 and 2006 (Muzaffar Assadi: 1998 &2005). Nonetheless, if we take the report prepared by the Crime Branch of Karnataka, the number of suicide under the heading “farming and agricultural activity” comes to 15804 between 1998 and 2002. The year 2000 saw the maximum number of suicide (2630) followed by year 2001; these are the years when agriculture saw the negative growth. Interestingly, as per the crime branch report, between 1996 and 2002, 12889 male farmers and 2841 female farmers committed suicide. In the year 2014 the total of 768 farmers’ suicide reported in Karnataka. However this estimate has some problem. One of the problems is the fact that the Crime Branch report also includes suicide committed in cosmopolitan city such as Bangalore or Mysore under “farming and agricultural activity”. Secondly in the districts such as Dakshina Kannada the suicide is the reflection of another form of capitalism- it is the reflection of the crisis of metropolitan or cosmopolitan or Middle Eastern capitalism than the agrarian one. Clubbing such issues would make the counting or numbering the farmers’ suicide a difficult one.



Hence, the present study intends to analyse the various aspects of farmers' suicide like, growth and trends of farmers' suicide.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study is based on two important objectives such as

- To analyse the growth and trends of farmers' suicide in Karnataka
- To study the district wise farmers' suicide in Karnataka.

4. METHODOLOGY

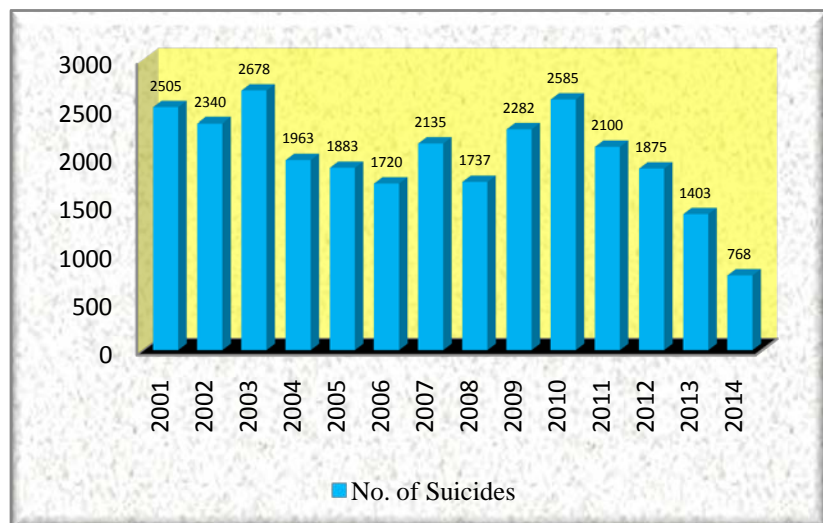
This study based on secondary data collected from various sources like National Crime Report Bureau and Department of Agriculture etc. This study has been used exponential growth model to analyse the growth and trends of farmers' suicide.

5. THE GROWTH AND TRENDS OF FARMERS' SUICIDE IN KARNATAKA

Karnataka has no history of farmers committing suicide even during the situation of acute agrarian crisis. Even the unorganized farmers would resort to other tactics such as throwing the agricultural commodities on the roads, burning their crops, etc. The beginning of the suicides can be traced back to the year 1998 and 2000. Later on the number of farmers' suicide across the district has been increasing. The following table shows the details of farmers' suicide over the period of time from 2001 to 2014.

Table1 & Figure 1: Suicide reported under Farming Activities in Karnataka 2001-2014

Year	No. of Suicides
2001	2505
2002	2340
2003	2678
2004	1963
2005	1883
2006	1720
2007	2135
2008	1737
2009	2282
2010	2585
2011	2100
2012	1875
2013	1403
2014	768



Source: collected from various ADSI Reports (2001-2014)

The table 1 and figure 1 represents the details of farmers' suicide in Karnataka from the year 2001 to 2014. As per the given table, there is a huge variation in the growth of farmers'



suicide during the study period. After 2003 though there was a declining trend in farmers' suicide, again it was started to increase after 2007. Global economic crisis of 2008 has its own impact on this. These challenges are the outcome of globalization and privatization. From 2012 we can witness declining trends in farmers' suicide; finally it has reduced to 768 numbers of farmers' suicide in 2014.

Table 2: Growth of Farmers' Suicide in Karnataka

Model Summary and Parameter Estimates							
Dependent Variable: Farmers' Suicide							
Equation	Model Summary					Parameter Estimates	
	R Square	F	df1	df2	Sig.	Constant	b1
Exponential	.385	7.516	1	12	.018	2737.120	-.047

The table 2 reveals the results of the exponential growth model of farmers' suicide in Karnataka. As per the results, the farmer's has negatively grown on an average by 4.7% during the study period and it is significant at 5% level of significance. The goodness of fit value is 38.5%.

Table 3: District wise number of farmers' suicide in Karnataka, 2015 (Until July)

Sl. no	District	Farmers' Suicide	Sl. no	District	Farmers' Suicide
1	Bagalkote	4	16	Haveri	17
2	Ballari	4	17	Kalaburagi	6
3	Belagavi	10	18	Kodagu	2
4	Bengaluru Rural	2	19	Kolar	2
6	Bidar	6	20	Koppala	4
7	Chamarajanagara	3	21	Mandya	29
8	Chikkaballapura	1	22	Mysuru	14
9	Chikkamagaluru	6	23	Raichur	8
10	Chitradurga	5	24	Ramanagara	9
11	Dakshina Kannada	3	25	Shivamogga	4
12	Davanagere	8	26	Tumakuru	12
13	Dharwad	11	27	Udupi	3
14	Gadag	6	28	Uttara Kannada	2
15	Hassan	11	29	Vijayapura	2
16	Haveri	17	30	Yadgir	3

Source: Ministry of Agriculture

The above table 3 shows the district wise number of farmers' suicide in Karnataka in until July 2015. The Mandya district topped the list in farmers' suicide, while Chikkaballapura stands in last place. It is a quite contrary result, because farmers' suicide is very high in some



districts (Mysore, Mandya, Hassan etc) which are highly irrigated and prosperous. It is because of cumulative crop failure, lack of proper price mechanism, increasing cost of agriculture inputs and reduced price of agriculture produces.

6. CONCLUSION AND POLICY SUGGESTIONS

The overall conclusion emerging from the analysis on growth and trends of farmers' suicide in Karnataka is that, the farm sector in Karnataka is in crises and it is reflected through the growing number of suicides by farmers. In the period of Global economic crisis -2008 there were more number of farmers committed suicide. This scenario is the outcome of impact of globalization and privatization on agriculture.

Indian agriculture to a major extent depends on natural rainfall, which is often a failure. Drought is a common phenomenon. Karnataka State is often hit by drought conditions. There is depletion of ground water and indebtedness by farmers is growing. As a result there is distress in agriculture sector. Further, farmer suicides were largely concentrated in relatively advanced agricultural regions, particularly Mandya, Hassan, Dharwad, Tumkur and Mysore. And it also covered ground water region (Belagavi), assured rain fall region (Haveri). This is because, reduced price of agriculture produces, increasing cost of agriculture inputs like seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, etc. and cumulative crop loss.

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