
Agriculture continues to be a burden on capitalism

A handsome rainfall in monsoon season has always brought cheers to the economy, and every Indian would pray for normal rains. If the monsoon is good, agricultural production will be good and vice versa. No wonder, food production has been at an all time high of 273.38 million tonnes this year.

After two years of back-to-back drought, in 2014-15 and 2015-16, agriculture production has looked up. The agricultural growth rate has gone up, which in turn is expected to drive up the country's economic growth rate. But behind the statistical configurations that provide the much needed feel good factor, agriculture continues to be in the throes of a terrible distress.

However, there is also a contrary view that overpopulation is destroying the farming activity. There are simply too many mouths to feed and the farms are shrinking. The supporters of the idea insist that government must look to the urban areas for creating new jobs.

People conveniently forget that the first ever (1974) national report on the state of India's women, Towards Equality had revealed, in no uncertain terms, that the rural agricultural sector was the biggest employer in India. However, unlike male farmers and cultivators, their female counterparts remained doubly burdened during their peak productive period with their reproductive role seen as fundamental to their gender while the duties it entailed were socially created.

The farm sector, even in 1989, employed the largest number of women workers both as cultivators and daily-wage labourers. Still women have not been included in the formal definition of workers in the census reports.

The dark rural underbelly has been gasping for breath for long, but has for reasons that remain largely unexplained agriculture continue to be a victim of apathy and neglect. There is hardly a day when reports of farmers committing suicides, a reflection of the grave tragedy prevailing on the farm, do not appear in newspapers in some or the other parts of the country.

This week, a news report highlights the pitiable condition of onion farmers in Madhya Pradesh. After a bumper crop of potato, which forced farmers to resort to distress sale, hundreds of farmers in Indore have been forced to burn the standing crop or feed it to animals.

In Indore, onion was fetching a price ranging between 50 paise to Rs 3 a kg. Earlier, onion farmers in Maharashtra had to dump their crop on to the streets when they couldn't realize a

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

better price.

Not only onion, irate farmers had been throwing tomato crop on the highways in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka. During the peak season, model price for tomato in some of the Andhra mandis had prevailed at 30 paise a kg to Rs 2 per kg. The slump in market prices is often shrugged off as a seasonal phenomenon, I shudder to think of the economic blow it causes to the livelihood security of farmers who had toiled hard and yet when the time comes to reap the harvest, markets fail.

Take the case of pulses. After a stupendous rise in retail prices of pulses, the government adopted a twin approach to raise availability of pulses. On the one hand it signed a memorandum with Mozambique to cultivate and procure pulses, to be shipped to India and on the other provided an additional bonus over the minimum support price to encourage domestic production. But when pulses production, including that of tur, increased to 22 million tonnes, and the market prices crashed, it just procured enough to meet its buffer stocks requirement, and left majority farmers to face the cruelty of markets.

The food mismanagement continues. If you think 2017 was a particularly bad year for tomato farmers when over-production led to an unprecedented glut, you are mistaken. The story remained the same in 2016, 2015 and 2014.

Even prior to that, farmers had suffered in 2013, 2012 and 2011. Just do a Google search and you will find the same pattern of bumper crops and dejected farmers. Search beyond tomato, and you will find the story of tomato is repeated in other crops – onions, potato, pulses, cauliflower, mustard, soyabean, cotton, chili, castor, and even in wheat and paddy in most parts of the country. And invariably, the state has failed to come to the rescue of beleaguered farming community

Now compare this with the stock markets crash in August 2015. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had swung into action within a few hours of the crash, holding a press conference to assure the investors saying that the government was keeping a close tab. A war room was set up to monitor the developments.

Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian was on his toes throughout the day. But when it comes to farmers, facing an unprecedented price crash, which results in destroying livelihoods of millions of small and marginal farmers, we never saw a fraction of the kind of alertness exhibited at the time of stock markets crash. The disparity therefore is clearly visible.

At a time when fundamentalism and neo-fascism are on the rise and unfettered consumerism and trade treaties are eroding old communities and threatening the environment, when

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP

measures like the ban on animal slaughter are impacting the dairy industry and destroying jobs, diseases due to the contamination of earth and water are erupting everywhere can we afford to sustain gender barriers between human beings unquestioningly? When not just the politicians and media persons but also the farmers regard the impoverished sea of women farmers as a faceless void, they deny them their humanity while diminishing their own.

gradesfixer.com

Need help with the assignment?

Our professionals are ready to assist with any writing!

GET HELP