Chapter 3

Stakeholder Strategy to Lessen Agriculture Distress

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture distress is a reality. Hence, the phenomenon of farmer suicides continues. This is, in spite of government support through financial aids. On the other hand, climatic conditions have undergone huge change and enhanced natural calamities like drought or floods. Thus, farmers’ life is at stake and these natural calamities make it further difficult to repay the debts they avail for cultivating farming. Statistics reflect an increase in farmers suicide in the past two years. This is a cause of worry and may further increase if proper, and effective solutions are not in place. The issue is serious. Hence, there is a dire need to look into and act on priority to find stable solutions. Instead of granting repetitive financial packages, the need is to adopt suitable schemes. Hence, adopting a mixed-method approach with an in-depth literature review, the chapter aims to propose a stakeholder strategy to lessen agriculture distress. This is not mandatory, but adoption is likely to benefit a large number of poor farmers.
INTRODUCTION

Large number of families of poor farmers earn livelihood from the agricultural produce by putting in own labour, dedication to the work and facing hardships. This is due to venerable historical occupation that has kept the uneducated class of aged and young people occupied in most of the parts of India. However, the tradition of continuing agro-business on a large scale is being condensed day by day owing to the quirky and vague nature of the climate. Majority of the farmers although possess low level of education have grown in agro experience. These farmers are divided into two main classes such as the rich and poor. The poor farmers owning a small piece of land cultivate it wherein most of the family members are engaged, combined with borrowed funds, which they use for buying seeds, fertilizers and for land preparation expenses. Such farmers who are recognized as small have been observed to borrow a sum of 2 to 3 Lakhs of Rupees at an interest of about 4% per annum either from banks or from the private lenders under mortgage of the land as security. The farmers who are presently in this agro-business, have been cultivating lands to get crops like Wheat, Paddy, Maize, Jowar, Bajra, Ragi, Barley, Cereals like Gram, Lentil, Peas, Urad, Moong, Arhar, Cowpea, Moth. Pulses like-Groundnut, Rape / Must, Til, Sunflower, Soyabean, Linseed, Castor, Safflower, Niger / others; Oilseeds- Cotton, Jute, Mesta, Fibre like Potato and others depending upon the type and quality of the soil of the land. They take loans with the anticipation that once there is a harvest, they would earn sufficient amount to earn and repay the loan. However, the game wholly depends upon the whims and vagaries of nature. There have been reports coming from various places in the State of Maharashtra and Gujarat that the farmer community believes that the nature has played hard game with the lives of the farmers thereby making their life highly uncertain and challenging. The effects of these unfavourable climatic conditions are so severe that the farmer community takes it as a negative consequence of their destiny as life has failed to offer them peace and prosperity and so end up life by committing suicide. Few of such farmers, who are mentally strong to survive, are capable to bear the conditions, have been observed to get into dishonest practices like a evolving in crimes, engaged into the acts of theft, robbery, cheating, frauds and the like.

The scheme of rural employment launched by Government of India previously is already continuing. In that connection, Kareemulla and others, CARJ (2002) have reported about the impact of national rural employment guarantee scheme in India, on rural poverty and food security. A study based on regional and micro level household data was taken up to inquire into the impacts of a national rural employment guarantee scheme (NREGS) in India. Studies in four sample districts in predominantly rainfed areas, which benefited from the scheme for the last six years, indicated that the scheme attempted to address the core issue of rural unemployment.
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