

The background of the image is a dark blue and purple night sky filled with numerous white stars of varying sizes. In the foreground, there is a silhouette of a forest of evergreen trees. The text is centered in the middle of the image.

TOPIC OF THE WEEK

JAN'19 (03 to 09)

Agriculture in India

“Agriculture is our wisest pursuit, because it will in the end contribute most to real wealth, good morals, and happiness.”

Thomas Jefferson knew what he was saying about agriculture when he presented this quote. World know that if we didn't have farmers we would not have three meals a day.

Modern Indian history has been marked by several peasant revolts that were based on underlying economic fault lines.

Currently, the agricultural sector is going through most stressed phase in the last three decades. India saw such distress caused by consecutive deficient rains during the drought of 1986-87 and 1987-88.

As it's a well known fact that around 65% of India's agriculture depending on rain and more than half the population on agriculture, too little or too much rain is always a harbinger of trouble. In recent years there have been many protests led by the farmers of various states such as Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab.

Excessive Interventions on Prices

In India there are several restraints on price control. Those restraints are to be freed from Indian agriculture. Apart from it, commercial risks due to volatile prices, restrictions on movement of farm produce, and the lack of access to global markets are in need of corrective measures.

Many experts argue that the solution to farm distress lay in dismantling the system of state controls that were in effect a massive tax on farming.

Lack of Effective Policies and Distrust among people

Despite several efforts done by the governments in order to solve the problems related to agriculture in India, India has no coherent agriculture policy in place. There is also a broad agreement on the need for a coherent farm policy that addresses issues of sustainability and productivity growth in Indian agriculture.

Poor government policies have also led to distrust among the people and they blame the system. There are both political and economic reasons for the neglect of broad-based farm interventions by the Indian state over the past decades.

Irrigation Facilities

Government statistics have rarely shown any increase in the total net irrigated area in India. Total irrigated area has been rotating around half of the total area sown in the country.

Some improvement in irrigation facility has happened in Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Rajasthan in recent years.

A virtually stagnancy in irrigated area puts questions about the efficiency of the ongoing investments and the quantum of investment that is also required to widen area under irrigation.

The government data also reveals that the ratio of irrigation potential created from public expenditure is higher for minor irrigation projects than medium and large irrigation projects. Making it worse, minor irrigation projects have received only scant attention from policymakers over time. But, in reality, minor irrigation structures are very important for recharging of wells, flood control and drought mitigation.

Conclusion

There has been a paucity of fresh investments in agriculture sectors. Several economists have given various reasons for this. Many believe that land inequality as the root cause of agricultural stagnation. It is argued that under the landlord-tenant farming arrangement, all production expenses were borne by the latter because of the competition to secure tenancy. So these tenants lacked investible resources which adversely affected agricultural productivity. As a result, investments in agriculture were lacking and the sector suffered.

Like India, most of the developing countries after they gained independence in the second half of the past century have ignored the structural development of their agriculture sector. India has focused more on its industrial development than it has thought about its agricultural development.

Suggested Reading:

- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/helping-the-invisible-hands-of-agriculture/article25221707.ece>