

Agriculture is a subject that gets least priority in management studies



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I believe that management is a subject in which agriculture gets the least priority and such a response is extremely discouraging. In the month of January, OXFAM released a report at the World Economic Forum in which it stated that the economic wealth of 8 people is to 3.6 billion. India is currently facing a troubling scenario of farmer suicide. Around 318 lac farmers have committed suicide in the last 21 years, in every 41 minutes, constituting to approximately 51 % of farmer's population. The reason could be due to some discrepancy. At one side, India has a handful of people who are becoming richer while the poor get poorer. It is not that farmers are inefficient. They do have the skills to grow food but the problem lies in the design where farmers are analysed to produce food. For example, in the year 1996, a statement was made in a conference at M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation Chennai by the then Vice President of World Bank who looks after sustainable development. He said that "in next 20 years the number of people migrating from rural to urban will be double the combined population of UK, France and Germany" which is around 200 million. This was seen as a warning at that time but eventually we realised that it wasn't just a warning but a directive to India.

In 2008, a World development report stated that this task has not been fulfilled so India should hasten the process through land rentals, skill development programmes so that the younger people should know much beyond how to plough and enhance their skills. I think the lack of skill development in young people in agriculture as target group is prevalent. Norman Borloug, the Noble Laureate and Agriculture scientist coined the phrase "Cheaper Food", one class getting affected because of the other, but what happens to those who are producing this food! Also the land holding of farmers is very small and this land holding cannot sustain a farmer.

In one of my articles, I had been asked to compare the Indian farmers with European farmers but instead, I decided to compare the Indian Farmer with the European cow. It attracted sensibility as to what trade and aid is. Cows in European countries are milked by machines. Each cow, when it needs to be milked, goes to the feed. The cow puts its head into the feed bin which is a carved out hole in the wall. On the collar of each cow, there is a computer chip. The wall is also embedded with a configured chip which gets matched as soon as cow puts its head inside. It can then exactly state the body weight and its food requirements, and accordingly the quantity of food comes out. This means that **COW IS THE MOST FOOD SECURED ANIMAL ON THE PLANET**. This tells how people are rearing their cows and how we are taking care of our farmers. The average land holding

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required to feed the food of each cow is 8-10 hectares. In India at least 15 families would survive in such area given.

Cows in Europe gets phenomenal subsidies. Each cow can travel business class around the world in that amount of subsidy. What this does in process is that it lowers the international prices due to which farmers are lost out.

Yet, in America only 2 % of the population is still in the business of agriculture. Cotton is an important crop in America. But the difference is, India has the largest area under cotton in the world but, America has the largest productivity as far as cotton is concerned. In 2005, I had compiled a report for the World Trade Organisation, in which I analysed that the total output of cotton in terms of value was \$3.9 billion in America. And these 20,000 cotton growers were getting a subsidy of \$4.7 billion to produce crops of \$9 billion which meant that international prices dipped by almost 40 %. As a result farmers in India were priced out and therefore tagged as “inefficient farmers”. If one looks upon more such examples, farmers are queued to go to mars and Indian farmers on the other hand, to nowhere. This is what we can call an International Paradox. This also reflects the concept of a “Nation bribing another Nation” – America to Brazil through providing massive subsidy.

Similarly, if the situation about rice production comes up, although India has the largest area, it still has the lowest productivity. The average production is 3 tonnes per hectare whereas America’s is 7 tonnes per hectare. Indian farmers don’t get the required subsidy

There is assured irrigation of 98% in Punjab and Vidarbha region. Productivity of wheat is 45 quintals per hectare and paddy is 60 quintals per hectare. Still there is no correlation between irrigation and productivity and therefore it becomes the fundamental reason for farmer’s suicide. Crisis lies where there is huge gap between cultivating period and procurement period as price varies.

The crisis is actually linked to a farmer’s income and not to the production or irrigation. Allowances like housing, health, travel and education have not been provided. Instead farmers are unnecessarily asked to decrease their cost of production. Solution to this could only be by giving them an assured income through such allowances. 12, 00,000crores is the income due to the farmers on the part of the government. This clearly indicates the model of development that India is proceeding to. Finally, I shall conclude on the note that there is an urgent need to set up a Farmer’s Income commission that is moving them from villages to towns is not going to work alone. It’s the need of the hour to make everyone economically viable.