

Agricultural productivity among different countries and agrarian crisis in India: A comparative analysis

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines the situation of agricultural productivity and different types of agrarian crisis in India. It outlines the fundamental malaise behind the current global food crisis and shows comparative analysis of agricultural productivity among different countries of the world. Finally, the paper provides different ways to sort out the agrarian crisis in India. The paper explains why we need to boost agricultural productivity on the size and scale that we have achieved in industry and services. Clearly, there is need for a greater focus on the growth of the agricultural sector. What is also needed is an institutional mechanism to bring in effective public-private partnerships that can change the face of Indian agriculture.

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While the overall economy has been growing at about 8% per annum for the past couple of years, the growth of agriculture has been dismal at about 2% per annum since 1997-98. This is in sharp contrast to the growth rate of more than 4% per annum which agriculture registered during 1992-96. It is this steep decline in agricultural growth rate that is causing distress in Indian agriculture.

There is a pronounced tendency among policy makers as well as in academic and media debates to look at the agrarian crisis in India in terms of its overt manifestations such as farmers' suicides, shortages in domestic food grain supplies and environmental degradation. Measures to tide over these problems do indeed demand urgent attention. But, unless we pay attention to the roots of the agrarian crisis, such measures will remain palliatives.

Agricultural productivity among different countries:

The fundamental malaise behind the current global food crisis is that, the world over, the yield of agricultural

crops has been nearly flat for over a decade (Table 1).

Let us consider the productivity of wheat in India. It was 2.71 tonnes per hectare in 2002. It fell to 2.63 tonnes per hectare in 2007. India's productivity in rice was 3.14 tonnes per hectare in 2002. This has moved up marginally to 3.18 tonnes per hectare in 2007. The productivity of wheat in America has inched own from 2.7 tonnes per hectare in 2002 to 2.6 tonnes per hectare in 2007. Even Brazil's sugarcane productivity has slightly climbed up from 70 to 71.10 tonnes per hectare in the same five-year span.

If we scan the accompanying Table 1, we can see that there has been practically no tangible increase in the yield of wheat, rice, corn, soybean or sugarcane in any part of the world over the last 10 years. Agricultural productivity has stagnated internationally, while the consumption of agricultural products has steadily increased with the increase in income levels and population growth.

Let us come closer home. India's average rice yield today is 2.9 tonnes per hectare. By comparison, China's average rice yield, at 6.3 tonnes per hectare, is more than double that of India. South Korea has achieved an even higher rice yield, *i.e.*, 6.8 tonnes per hectare.

Reasons for low agricultural productivity:

Traditional agriculture is patterned on a single annual crop and a single harvest, *i.e.*, only one planting season in a year (Agarwal, 1980). The average yield of food grains

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