

THE BURDEN OF SURVIVAL: CAUSES OF FARMER SUICIDES

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BEST CITATION – HARSHDEEP RAVINDRA DEORE & SOHAM SANTOSH BANDAL, THE BURDEN OF SURVIVAL: CAUSES OF FARMER SUICIDES, *INDIAN JOURNAL OF LEGAL REVIEW (IJLR)*, 5 (1) OF 2025, PG. 1138-1146, APIS – 3920 – 0001 & ISSN – 2583-2344.

ABSTRACT

What seems to be a social and economic crisis in India is the increasing number of farmer suicides. This issue is often ignored by the government. In this paper, I investigate the causes of the so called “silent crisis,” paying particular attention to the condition of tenant farmers who are most impacted and often ignored as far as the statistical summaries go. The story of Archana Chinchore, a farmer widow from Maharashtra, illustrates the consequences of burdening debt that comes along with deep seated negligence to rural agriculture. Nearly Shocking: India in between 1991 to 2001 has had 8 million Indian farmers stop farming as a profession because it was too risky. This has mostly gone unnoticed, for these lesser-known sections of society like Dalits and Adivasis, which are affected, are further silenced by need of possessing landownership papers like 7/12 document. During this time in Maharashtra alone, 822 farmers suicides were registered in the year 2024.

Farmers face a myriad of issues which become even more complex due to systemic failures like predatory lending and climate shocks. The resulting debt leads to a myriad of issues like poverty, stigma, debt and even education, especially for surviving spouses like Archana who were left with the husbands bills. This crisis is not strictly economic but rather an intricate combination of social, economic and ecological problems that stem from decades of undermined policy.

To tackle these layered forms of anguish, the solutions ought to be multi dimensional. They should also include may other actions like debt cancellation, just pricing of the crops, and implementation of climate smart agriculture. Moreover, to lessen the impact of these unfortunate events, mental health interventions for the affected families need to be attending. Without active and transparent relief aid funding under political promises of loan write-offs and minimum support prices (MSP), there is bound to be failure.

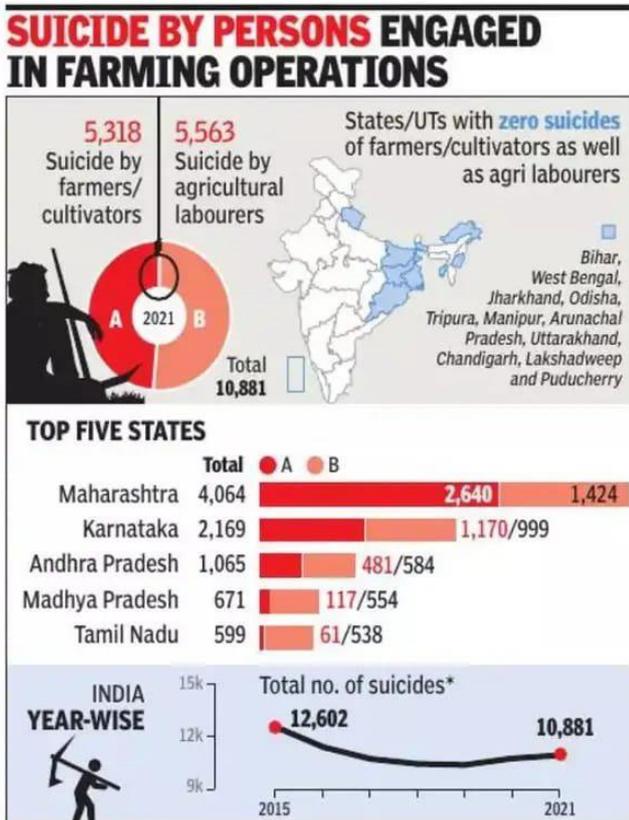
This paper, however, proposes a caring change in policies so that farmers are not treated as mere numbers, but as contributors to the farming economy. We shall advance, through supporting landlord’s rights and gendered approaches to climate change, towards actions which deal with the issues that cause farmer suicides in India. This must urgently be heard to stop the seeming endless suicides by bringing to attention the plight of farmers.

Keywords: f farmer suicides, tenant farmers, agrarian distress, debt relief, climate adaptation, mental health... etc.



INTRODUCTION:

The Silent Crisis of Underestimated Farmer Suicides



In the drought-stricken village of Bhadra, Maharashtra, Archana Chinchore’s life unraveled on a morning that began like any other. Her husband, Hausaji, a 32-year-old farmer, kissed their sleepinson goodbye and left to milk buffaloes never to return. Burdened by crushing debt from failed crops and unrelenting moneylenders, he took his life in the very fields he once nurtured. Archana’s grief is mirrored across India’s heartlands, where farmer suicides have become a grim norm. Yet, her story and thousands like it remain invisible in official records, obscured by systemic flaws that erase the struggles of those without land titles: tenant farmers. India’s agrarian crisis is starkly reflected in the paradox of rising farmer suicides amid a declining farm population.

From 1991 to 2001, eight million cultivators abandoned farming, fleeing a sector riddled with volatility. In Maharashtra alone, 822 farmers died by suicide in 2024, a haunting figure that barely scratches the surface. Official data, reliant on landownership documents like the 7/12 title deed, excludes tenant

farmers, Dalits, and Adivasis groups disproportionately affected by debt and climate shocks. Post-2014 methodological shifts further distort counts, reclassifying tenant suicides as “agricultural laborers,” masking the true scale of despair.

Behind the statistics lies a web of systemic failures: predatory informal loans, unseasonal rains destroying crops, and policies that prioritize industrial profits over fair crop prices. For marginalized farmers, exclusion from relief schemes and mental health support compounds their vulnerability. Archana, now shouldering her husband’s ₹15 lakh debt, embodies the aftermath a cycle of poverty, stigma, and interrupted education for children.

This crisis is not merely agricultural but existential, rooted in decades of policy neglect and ecological breakdown. As political promises falter, comprehensive solutions from debt reform to climate-resilient farming remain urgent. The stories of Archana, Seema Jadhav, and countless others demand more than empathy; they call for a reckoning with systems that render their suffering invisible. Until then, the true toll of India’s agrarian collapse will remain tragically undercounted, and its human cost, immeasurable.

Why Farmer Suicides are Under-Estimated? In our country, those who do not have land titles Will not qualify to be counted as farmers. The Farmers who come under this category are Tenant farmers. Indirectly, it is reflected in the High number of farmer suicides versus the fast Decline in the total farm population in the Country. From 1991 to 2001, around eight Million cultivators quit farming. *Archana Chinchore’s face is a picture of exhaustion. She sits quietly on a plas-tic chair in the centre of her modest kitchen in the family home at Bhadra village of Loha taluka, Nanded district, in Maha-rashtra’s drought-stricken Marathwada region. Her shoulders are slumped and head dropped low as she avoids meeting anyone’s gaze. Her voice is barely above a whisper, soft and fragile, as if it might break under the weight of her grief.

Once a mother who juggled household chores with caring for her four-year-old son, Archana, 30, now struggles to get through the day. Her life forever changed on August 6, 2024—the day her husband,

Hausaji, 32, a debt-ridden farmer, died by suicide. "Around 5.30 a.m., he kissed our son, who was fast asleep, and left to milk the buffaloes. It was just like any other day," Archana re-counts, tears streaming down her face. "But this time, he never came back." Their 10-acre agricultural land, barely a kilometre from the house, became the site of his final moments. In December, the cotton and sugarcane fields are lush, a stark contrast to scenes from May and June, when the summer heat cracks the black soil. The lanes in the village are cement-concrete but are narrow, and Archana's house is reachable only by a two-wheeler.

As she wipes her tears with her pallu, her son tugs at her sari, demanding attention. Hausaji had been burdened by loans: 14 lakh from private financiers and another 1 lakh from a bank. Heavy, unseasonal showers had destroyed his soya bean and cotton crops, leaving him unable to repay his debts. The pressure, according to his grieving family, became unbearable, driving him to take his life. Now, the debts have been carried forward to Archana. Archana's mother, Sagarbai, has moved in from her village, about 60 km away, to help with chores and care for her grandson, and her in-laws go to work in the fields. "She doesn't eat properly or talk to anyone," says Sagarbai, her voice trembling. "She spends hours locked in a room, crying. So, I came to help her and try to get things back on track. I know, the loss is irreversible, but she now has a son to take care of.

"Hausaji's story is one of many. In Nanded district alone, 146 farmers ended their lives in 2024, contributing to the 822 farmer suicides recorded in the Marathwada region between January and November, according to a report by the Divisional Commissioner's office in Chhatrapati Sambhaji-



jinagar (Aurangabad). Beed district in the Marathwada region, which has had drought for over 10 years now, has seen 160 deaths, followed by Nanded, Dharashiv (Osmanabad) with 143, and Chhatrapati Sambhaji- gar with 132.

Jalna, Latur, Parbhani, and Hingoli reported 76, 72, 64, and 29 farmer deaths by suicide, respectively.

In 2023, 1,088 farmers ended their lives in eight districts of the region, say data from the Divisional Commissioner's office. In 2022, Maharashtra recorded 38% of all suicides in the agricultural sector, the highest in India, going by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data. Debt was the common thread tying all victims together.

For the survivors, the financial burden persists – now compounded by the anguish of loss and the social stigma that comes with a loved one's suicide. Older children, especially girls, drop out of school to support mothers and younger siblings. For Archana, who has grown up hearing about farmers taking their lives, the grim statistics mean little. Her son has just joined school and life ahead seems long. "My husband never told me about debt. Maybe he thought I was too sensitive. I have to start working. I am left to deal with everything on my own," she says, adding that she does have the support of her family. Married in 2012, she remembers Hausaji as a quiet man who took charge of their family farm at a young age.

Cropping trouble Senior journalist Himanshu Nitnaware, who reports on crises for Down To Earth magazine, says currently farmers, especially small-scale cultivators, are compelled to resort to nonbanking financial corporations (NBFCs) that do not allow them to come out of the vicious debt cycle. "Loans with low interest rates from government banks can prevent farmers from approaching private moneylenders," he says. In Degaon, over 50 km from Bhadra, in Chhatrapati Sambhaji- nagar district, Seema Jadhav, 32, is mourning her husband, Dinesh, 35, who died by suicide on December 13.

A mother of three two daughters and a son – Seema struggles to make sense of why her husband chose to take his life. On that morning, Dinesh had left their home without a word. "It was unusual, but I thought

he was just stressed and in a hurry, but when he didn't return for lunch, I started to worry," she recalls. By evening, her fear turned into reality.

Seema says the bank had refused to grant him a fresh loan as the previous loan was still reflected on documents. "But he had cleared this loan," she adds. Two days after her husband's death, Seema's over-a-century-old family home is filled with relatives and neighbours trying to console her and Dinesh's parents. She sits on a plastic chair, her eyes vacant, trying to piece together her husband's final thoughts. "He had been quiet those last few days. I know it was about getting the loan to clear a few 'hand (emergency) loans' and get a motor for the borewell. But he didn't share the details. Maybe he didn't want to worry me," she says softly. Their turmeric crop across 2 acres had been damaged due to heavy rains in September, says Dinesh's uncle Sanjay Jadav. "Apart from finances, extreme weather events such as drought and excess or unseasonal rainfall ruin standing crops, usually when they are about to be harvested," says Nitnaware. In 2021 and 2022, excessives and unseasonal rainfall destroyed crops, further deepening the crisis for cultivators. Ironically, within Maharashtra, Marathwada remains the most drought-prone region.

In 2023, the then Eknath Shinde-led Mahayuti government declared 42 talukas as drought-hit, 14 of them in Marathwada. Two MLAs from the region, Abdul Sattar and Dhananjay Munde, had held the Agriculture portfolio. According to NCRB data, 11,290 people involved in the farming sector died by suicide in 2022, including 5,207 farmers or cultivators,



and 6,083 agricultural labourers. In 2021, up to 10,881 farming-related suicides were recorded, of which 5,318 were farmers. Veteran journalist and

author P. Sainath says the way farmer suicide data is being recorded, particularly for the NCRB, is problematic.

"For the first 15 to 19 years (from 1995 to 2014), the errors in NCRB data were largely omissions," he explains. "They excluded many groups, especially women farmers. Whenever a farmer ended their life, officials conducting the panchanama (sequence of events) asked for the 7/12 document (land title deed). Tenant farmers, who didn't have a 7/12, were often left out. Dalits and Adivasis were also excluded as Dalits often operate redistributed government land, and Adivasis are viewed as encroachers. These exclusions drastically reduced the reported numbers," he says. Sainath says since 2014, changes in methodology have impacted the data. "Now, these are sins of political omission. In 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government introduced a new methodology for recording suicides and the result is that the data from 2014 to 2024 is entirely incomparable to earlier years. Farmers are now divided into categories 'farmers', 'tenant farmers', and 'agricultural labourers'.

Most tenant farmers who end their lives are recorded as agricultural labourers, skewing the data," he says. During the Lok Sabha and Assembly election campaigns last year, farmers' distress became a central issue for both the ruling Mahayuti and the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA). The Prime

Minister had promised a minimum support price (MSP) of ₹6,000 per quintal for soya bean, while Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said his party would give ₹7,000 per quintal. Crop loan waivers, higher MSP, crop insurance, and free electricity had also topped their campaign agendas, highlighting the urgency to tackle the challenges faced by farmers in the State. Systemic gaps More than 200 km from Seema's village, a small trek leads to Meena Dhere's home in Pali, Beed district. Meena, who is the same age as Seema and also has three children, left her younger daughter and son with their grandmother, Ranjana, who recently underwent a cataract surgery, to work in onion fields for ₹250 per day.

The money was needed to run the house and clear the debts her husband, Ashok, 35, had accumulated. Ashok had taken a loan of around 3 lakh and took his

own life on January 27, 2024. "Since then, we have been struggling to eat and pay the interest," says Ranjana, wearing dark glasses to shield her eyes from the light. "I'm at home now because of the surgery, but otherwise, we would have taken the children with us to work as there is no one else to care for them." Chandigarh-based food policy expert Devil der Sharma says the root cause of the persistent distress in agriculture is that prices of farm produce are kept low to keep the industry buoyant.

"Crops provide raw material for industries and supply cheap labour" as marginal, distressed farmers work as daily labourers in factories. "If farmers were paid fairly, industries would suffer losses, and profits would decline. The problem isn't that agriculture is unproductive – it's that we don't pay farmers what they deserve." Sharma points out that many farmers are driven to suicide because they cannot recover. Farmers' suicides have been receiving a lot of social and Public policy attention, particularly in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Punjab and Maharashtra, in recent years. A brief review of issues indicates that the dependence on agriculture is largely among marginal and small farmers and agricultural labourers.

Background: To explore the various perceived reasons for farmers' suicides in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, their common factors, and to suggest solutions. **Methods:**

The present formative research was undertaken in the 23 villages surrounding the Anji Primary Health Centre, located in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, India. A triangulation of Free list and pile sort exercises was used. The data was analyzed by Anthropic 4.98.1/X software. This was followed by a semi-structured focus group discussion. To increase the validity of the results, these findings were presented to the participants and later they were circulated to the 26 farmers' Clubs in the villages for comment and discussion during their monthly, village based meetings. **Results:**

Farmers perceived debt, addiction, environmental problems, poor prices for farm produce, Stress and family responsibilities, government apathy, poor irrigation, increased cost of cultivation, Private money

lenders, use of chemical fertilizers and crop failure as the reasons for farmers' suicides.

Participants suggested solutions such as self-reliance and capacity building among farmers, A monitoring and support system for vulnerable farmers, support and counseling services, a village-

level, transparent system for the disbursement of relief packages. **Conclusions:** Farmers' suicides in Vidarbha are caused by the complex interplay of social, political and environmental constraints.

Hence, a comprehensive intervention to ensure self-reliance and Capacity building among farmers in modern farming techniques, monitoring and support system For vulnerable farmers, a village-level, transparent system for disbursement of relief packages is Required to prevent farmer suicides in the near future. Apart from this, there is a need to strengthen The National Mental Health Program at primary health care level to offer support and counseling To vulnerable farmers in rural area.

A suicide is the complex interplay of multiple factors. A number of risk factors can coexist and one particular individual can come across all or none of the risk factors identified by us. In our sample, the minimum number of risk factors is two and the maximum is nine. The most common was indebtedness (86 per cent). From all those indebted, 44 per cent were harassed for repayment of loans and in 33 per cent of cases the creditor insisted on immediate repayment.

Next in importance is the fall in economic position (74 per cent). Indebtedness per se will not lead to a fall in economic position, but if it reaches a stage that will lead to a sale of assets then it can be associated with a fall in economic position. Similarly, a fall in economic position can also lead to greater reliance on credit and thereby increasing the debt burden. In 55 per cent of cases, it was observed that the individual concerned had not discussed his/her problem with other family members. He/she was shouldering the entire burden that was troubling him and was not sharing his/ her difficulties with others. An avenue for letting out one's pent up feelings and frustration was closed.

Crop failure was mentioned in 40 per cent of the cases and most of these also mentioned a loss in second or third sowing due to delay in rainfall.

There were a few cases which mention fire or theft. Crop loss can also happen due to excessive untimely rain, say, during the harvest. Crop failure can lead to economic downfall and make it difficult to repay existing loans. This will also increase the need for additional credit. Crop failure leading to a fall in economic position is quite straight forward, but the causal links can also be the other way round. A household faced with a downfall in economic position or with greater debt burden could not take additional loans for investing in agriculture (say, during a pest attack) and this can lead to a reduction in yield or total crop failure.

Change in social status was identified in 36 per cent of the cases. This can be associated with a fall in economic position. Harassment by creditors or their agents due to nonpayment of loans can also lead to social disgrace.

Crop failure due to unsuccessful experimentation by a farmer who was recognised as successful entrepreneur may find a change in his social status—people who earlier came for advice are now providing solace. A socially important role of a brother/father is to get one's sister/daughter married. Communities have norms in terms of age and expenditure.¹⁰ A farmer is largely dependent on a good return from his produce to fulfil this obligation.

Thus, crop failure, greater credit burden or a fall in his economic position can come in his way of fulfilling this obligation. Inability to conduct a sister's/daughter's marriage can be socially humiliating. It can also increase intra-household conflicts.

To complete this social obligation a farmer may also take loans thinking that he can repay the amount after the harvest. The recent marriage of a sister/daughter or inability to get one's sister/daughter married has been identified as a risk factor in 34 per cent of the cases. We have also taken note of recent suicides in a nearby village and identified them as an additional risk factor in 32 per cent of the cases. This

was done because an individual who is facing some similar socio-economic problem can

relate to the earlier incident and contemplate suicide. There could be an imitation effect. 11 Addiction (particularly, alcohol) was identified in 28 per cent of the cases.

It is said that under intoxication an individual may indulge in an act of self-harm without being aware of the consequences. Alternatively, getting intoxicated could itself be a reaction to get out of depression that can be associated with some socio-economic problem. The 95 suicide cases had outstanding debt from 163 loan transactions and 55 non-suicide controls had outstanding debt from 71 loan transactions. Thus, the average number of loans with outstanding debt in suicide cases (1.8) was higher when compared with nonsuicide controls (1.3). Analysis of the source of loan indicates a greater reliance on cooperatives in the formal sector and moneylenders in the informal sector. The reliance on moneylenders and friends/relatives is higher for suicide cases (54 per cent of 163 transactions) than non-suicide controls (39 per cent of 71 transactions).

A very high amount is indicated for suicide case households under commercial bank because a large farmer (owning 28 acres) having an outstanding loan of Rs 2.5 lakh which was incurred for marriage in the family (in fact, the individual had taken a loan of Rs 5 lakh and had already returned Rs 2.5 lakh).

After excluding this extreme case, the distribution of total outstanding debt indicates that 42 per cent is from cooperative banks, 36 per cent is from moneylenders and 13 per cent is from friends/relatives. In non-suicide control households, after excluding a loan transaction with outstanding debt of Rs 98,200 from a rural bank, the distribution of total outstanding debt indicates that 38 per cent is from cooperative banks, 33 per cent is from moneylenders and 15 per cent is from other unspecified informal sources.

The purpose of loan is given in Table 7. After excluding the transactions where the purpose is not available, 67 per cent in the suicide cases and 89 per cent in the non-suicide controls are of agricultural purposes

only. This proportion further increases if we Take into consideration transactions from formal sources only Next to agriculture is marriage, which is mostly from informal Sources. For each specific purpose the number of transactions With outstanding debt and the average outstanding debt per ,Transaction is higher among suicide case households when compared with non- suicide control households.

The average amount Of outstanding debt per transaction for agricultural purposes is Greater than Rs 10,000. For marriage, after excluding an extreme Observation with outstanding debt of Rs 2,50,000 from a commercial bank by a suicide case household, the gap is Rs 2,324 Only. There was one suicide case household where a loan for Health expenditure was to the tune of Rs 1.5 lakh. From total Outstanding debt (including those where the purpose is not Available), agriculture being the sole purpose accounts for 65 Per cent of the outstanding debt in suicide case households and 79 per cent in nonsuicide control households. Marriage being The sole purpose accounts for 18 per cent of the total outstanding Debt in suicide case households (reduces to 13 per cent if we exclude the extreme case of Rs 2.5 lakh outstanding debt from A commercial bank); it is 10 per cent of the total outstanding Debt among non- suicide control households.

The total outstanding debt from suicide cases is 3.7 times more Than the total outstanding debt from non- suicide controls. Compared to non- suicide controls, the suicide cases have a greater Proportion of outstanding debt that is more than one year (74 per cent and 65 per cent respectively) and for 2004, the most Recent year, a greater proportion of outstanding debt is from Informal sources (72 per cent for suicide cases and 38 per cent For non- suicide controls). Gross value addition is relatively higher for fruits and vegetables and sugar cane, but these crops are not grown in the Selected districts.

Traditionally, cotton has been the cash crop For farmers of the districts. Over the years, profitability from Cotton has declined. Some of the reasons are: high subsidies by The US leading to price distortions, low import tariffs in India, and failure of the MCPS in Maharashtra. The withdrawal of The state is evident

from declining public investment in agriculture, poor government agricultural extension service, and a diminishing role of formal institutions in rural financial market among Others. The farmer now depends on the input dealer for advice Leading to supplier-induced demand and on informal sources of Credit with a greater interest burden. To add to this, 2004 was A rain deficient year that affected yield in at least some pockets Of the selected districts, but the overall macro supply scenario Being good, market prices were low.

The farmer was exposed To yield and price shocks simultaneously. In short, the systemic Risk factors indicate a larger socio- economic and agrarian crisis.

In the micro- level analysis, the inter- related and coexisting Socio- economic risk factors identified are indebtedness, deterior- Ration of economic status, conflict with other members in the Family, crop failure, a decline in social position, burden of Daughter's/sister's marriage, suicide in a nearby village, addictions, Change in behaviour of the deceased, dispute with neighbours/others, Health problems, a recent death in the family, history of suicide In the family and other family members being ill.

Comparing Suicide cases and non- suicide controls, one observes that on an Average the former have a higher outstanding debt, a relatively Lower owner ownership of assets (particularly, bullocks which Is a productive and liquid asset) and access to basic amenities, A larger family size (particularly, female members), and a lower Value of produce. These indicate that the idiosyncratic factors Do not occur in isolation –they are exacerbated because of the Larger socio- economic and agrarian crisis. The policy implication from the above discussion calls for an Emphasis on the larger agrarian crisis. Availability of affordable Credit requires revitalisation of the rural credit market.

Risk Management should address yield, price, credit, income or weather . Related uncertainties among others. Improving water availability Will facilitate diversification of the cropping pattern, but this Should go hand in hand with policies that increase non- farm Employment. Improving agricultural extension

that addresses Deskillling because of technological changes and also facilitates .Appropriate technical know- how for alternative forms of cultivation such as organic farming will be of help. There is a strong Case for regulating private credit and input markets. Public health Interventions would require improving access to treatment of Poisoning cases and psychosocial care. This should be complemented with policies that reduce the access to organo-phosphorous Poisons. Besides, support from public institutions, there is need For a greater involvement from civil society .

States with Highest Farmer Suicides:- Maharashtra reported the highest number of Farmer suicides (4,248), and this state has Contributed to 38% of all deaths by suicide of Those involved in agriculture. This dangerous Situation forced the Maharashtra government To set up a dedicated office to deal with farmer's Distress.6 The second- highest number of ccases Were reported from Karnataka (2,392), Followed by Andhra Pradesh (917), Tamil Nadu (728), and Madhya Pradesh (641). Incidentally, Uttar Pradesh saw the highest increase in Number of suicides among all states –a 42.13% Rise when compared with 2021. The second- Highest increawa was in Chhattisgarh (31.65%).

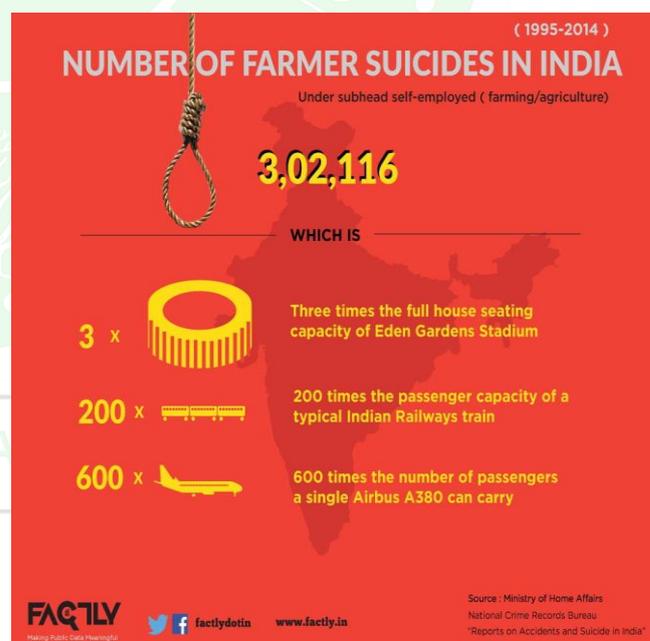
Andhra Pradesh, while recording the third- Highest number of cases, actually reported a Decrease of 16% from its 2021figure. Similarly, Kerala showed a decline of 30%. Certain states And Union territories like West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Uttarakhand, Goa, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Chandigarh, Delhi, Lakshadweep, and Puducherry reported zero suicides of Farmers/cultivators as well as agricultural Laborers. .

Shows the state- wise Distribution of suicides by farmers and farm Laborers. Concluding Remarks Maharashtra's age- adjusted suicide mortality rate for males has Stabilised in the range of 2021from 2001onwards and that for Females has been declining after 1999. The SMR for farmers have Increased by nearly four times from 15 in 1995 to 57 in 2004. It is the highest in Amravati division where SMR for male farmers Was 116 during 2001- 04, which was more than eight times the Age-adjusted SMR for males in India in 2001.

In Vidarbha, particularly in Amravati division and in the Selected districts, the cropping pattern indicates

a shift in are From cereals (particularly jowar) and cotton towards soyabean And to a lesser extent pulses. There is a shift, but with the absence Of viable alternatives, Cotton continues to be a major cash crop Accounting for 33 per cent of area in Wardha, 21per cent of The area in Washim and 46 per cent of the area in Yavatmal in Triennium ending (TE) 2002- 03. Cotton and soyabean are the two Important cash crops of the region.In 2004- 05, the year relevant for our primary survey, pproduction of cotton was a record high worldwide as also in India.

Maharashtra's production at 52 lakh bales showed a 68 per cent Increase over the previous year's 31 lakh bales. This is largely Because of a record yield of 297 kg/hectare in the state. Regardless Of this, Maharashtra's productivity at 64 per cent of the national Average continues to be among the lowest. This growth would Have bypassed Amravati division where the monsoon in May- October 2004 was largely deficient. In the selected districts, Rainfall fell short of the normal by 22 per cent in Wardha, 31Per cent in Washim and 51per cent in Yavatmal. The cotton Farmer in this region faced both price as well as yield sshock Simultaneously.On cotton prices, there are a number of other relevant factors.



Conclusion: Addressing the Invisible Crisis of Farmer Suicides

The tragedy of farmer suicides in India is not merely a statistical anomaly but a reflection of systemic neglect, bureaucratic invisibility, and agrarian

collapse. The stories of Archana Chinchore, Seema Jadhav, and Meena Dhere women left to shoulder crippling debts and shattered lives expose the human cost of policies that reduce farmers to numbers and exclude those without land titles. Tenant farmers, Dalits, and Adivasis, erased from official records due to flawed methodologies like the 7/12 document requirement, embody the silent majority of this crisis. Maharashtra's Marathwada and Vidarbha regions, ravaged by drought and unseasonal rains, epitomize the lethal intersection of climate vulnerability, debt traps, and political apathy.

The data, though stark, is a gross underestimate. Post-2014 categorizations that reclassify tenant suicides as "agricultural laborers" and historical omissions of marginalized groups distort reality. Yet, even fragmented statistics reveal patterns: 86% of suicides linked to indebtedness, 74% to economic collapse, and 40% to crop failure. Farmers are ensnared in a vicious cycle borrowing from predatory informal lenders to salvage harvests ruined by climate shocks, only to face social stigma and intergenerational poverty. The suicide of a farmer often triggers a domino effect: children drop out of school, families fracture, and surviving spouses inherit insurmountable debt.

Solutions demand dismantling systemic inequities. Revitalizing rural credit systems, ensuring fair crop pricing, and expanding irrigation infrastructure are urgent. Equally critical is addressing the psychological toll: strengthening mental health programs and community support networks. Political promises of loan waivers and MSP hikes ring hollow without transparency in relief distribution and accountability for climate-resilient policies. As veteran journalist P. Sainath notes, the agrarian crisis is a "political choice," perpetuated by prioritizing industrial profits over farmer welfare.

The path forward requires a paradigm shift: recognizing farmers as stakeholders, not statistics. Tenant rights, gender-inclusive policies, and climate adaptation strategies must anchor reforms. Civil society, alongside governments, must advocate for dignity, not just survival. Until then, the fields of Marathwada will remain both a lifeline and a graveyard a testament to a system that measures

progress in yields, not lives. The time for reckoning is now: to honor the unseen, amplify the unheard, and ensure that no farmer's death is rendered invisible by a flawed piece of paper or a political ledger.

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