

What are the plights Indian farmers face in different states of India?

FarmX aims to raise awareness about the plights that farmers face today.

Cultural Perspectives



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INTRODUCTION

This report aims to investigate the gravest issues that farmers in FarmX's immediate community face and farmers in different states in India. This report is primarily based on interviews and secondary sources. This report is a bid to amplify the voices of farmers in different states of India and cognise what farmers themselves think about the plights they face.



A member of FarmX interviewing a local farmer in a market in Mumbai

METHODOLOGY

FarmX interviewed 14 local farmers who have farms near Pune, India and regularly come to sell their produce in Mumbai, India. We recorded all the interviews and used a survey while interviewing them to quantify our findings. We choose farmers at random in the Worli weekly Farmers Market in Mumbai. Lastly, we made sure none of our respondents were influenced or forced by anyone to give a particular answer.

Moreover, we used secondary sources like the world bank, Times of India, Hindustan Times and National Geographic to name a few.



RESULTS: Questions and Analysis

We interviewed 14 farmers from Maharashtra and 12 questions were asked to each. We analysed our results and scrutinized every response and we made inferences based upon them.

Questions:

1. What problems do you routinely face on your farm?

Our respondents claimed that the problems that they faced were environmental issues such as no rain sometimes, at times no rain at all or an unexpected natural disaster. Others think that farming is physically demanding since they have to spend practically all day under the sun performing menial activities. Since many farms are located in remote areas farmers claim that they don't have a steady and constant electricity supply. Some of the respondents believed that they have a hard time transporting their goods.

2. Do you use any kind of technology on your farm and what kind of technology do you use??

In Maharashtra, 62.5% of the respondents said that they use some sort of technology on their farm however, most of these farmers also added that the technology used on their farm isn't very modern and their respective farms still lack the desired technology. They emphasized that by using more modern and better technology they would be able to increase crop yield and reduce losses.

These lead to a lower crop yield which leads to less income hence economic instability. Ultimately a plunge in productivity was also witnessed. This plunge ultimately demands longer working hours and deteriorating mental health.

3. Do you have an irrigation system installed on your farm?

More than 50% of the farmers did not have a proper irrigation system which speaks a lot about how farmers are not updated on newer technologies and hence, these farmers are not able to maximise their crop yields. Due to no irrigation systems present, farmers have rather encountered a loss since a lot of their crops have been destroyed. One of the reasons for such destruction can solely be attributed to the fact that a lot of rainwater has been accumulated in land.

4. In your opinion why do you think 28 farmers suicide each day?

When we asked Maharashtra farmers this, they responded by saying, it is the result of farmer illiteracy.

It is vital to understand that farmers face issues like no education and other major social issues. They need help from experts and officials to make the most out of their business. Farmer illiteracy leads to the exploitation of farmers in terms of profits as Indian farmers only receive 10-23% of the sold price. This directly impacts their standard of living and deteriorated mental health ultimately leading to suicides at the extreme. Nationally, in 2019 10,281 farmers died by suicide.

5. Do you get any information from the government regarding which crops are beneficial to produce, or any general agricultural information from the government?

More than 87.5% of the interviewed farmers believed that the government gave them additional information from the government. This may be the only source of information for such farmers as they have not been educated and are forced to make decisions based on little knowledge. Farmers need this information to grow crops which would give them the best yield and also cater to the demands of the market. Moreover, the correct crop will also aid them to combat irregular climate as some crops can sustain harsh weather changes.

6. In all your years as a farmer, are you satisfied with what the government has done for you?

75% of the farmers believe that they have been satisfied with what the government has done for them. Over the years we have heard the media constantly repeat the fact that the government doesn't do much for the farmers. The Maharashtra government has brought in new laws to protect which include booking traders who sell to farmers at a lower rate than the MSP. Moreover, the area where the farmers we interviewed were from was managed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP); this may have played a role in influencing what the farmers said.

7. Have you ever lost any of your produce to environmental issues?

It is important to note that 75% of the surveyed farmers have lost some of their produce because of environmental issues. Farmers did not have equipment to keep crops safe from environmental issues and also weren't able to successfully combat them at some time. It also explicitly suggests that they aren't well educated and taught by the government to face such issues considering the large number of farmers who faced issues and ended up losing crops. Due consideration needs to be given to the fact that as we all have experienced is that the environment is an extremely volatile variable and no one can be prepared enough to counter it.

8. Do you want your children to be farmers?

57% of the farmers don't want their children to be farmers in the future. Through the primary research, farmers gave insight on their plights and hardships thus not wanting their children to go through that and chose a more lucrative business. 36% of the farmers were confused, they didn't decide anything, they mostly wanted their children to do what they were interested in. 7% of the farmers said they wanted their children to be farmers and continue in their shoes.

9. Do your children want to be farmers?

Our interview showed 78% of the farmers' children didn't want to be farmers. They were more interested in getting educated and pursuing a more stable and advanced career. This decision may have been influenced by the hardships their parents face which is highlighted in this report.

Often in India, it is considered hereditary to continue the profession of your family hence this elucidates the progressive thinking of farmers in Maharashtra.

10. In general, what is the greatest issue you face as a farmer?

When FarmX questioned Maharashtra farmers about what issue they find most grave. The majority of those interviewed pointed to electricity issues. They pointed out that due to instability in their electricity connection they are unable to make use of their equipment hence they cannot carry out farming activities. This results in lesser output which eventually causes economic issues. Furthermore, they elucidated how environmental issues such as excess or less rain hurt their produce. Some of them also spoke about volatility in the prices of agricultural

prices, this uncertainty results in large fluctuations in their incomes.

11. Lastly, do you think you have ever been substantially helped by the government, NGO'S or any company in regards to your major issues?

75% of the farmers said they do not receive help from NGOs and other such firms. Thus, showing how most NGOs merely speak about aiding and educating farmers to increase efficiency but barely a few do it in Maharashtra.

Comparing Opinions with other Indian States

We explored different cultural perspectives by scrutinizing every issue from the viewpoint of different states including, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. These are some of the largest farming states in India. We used secondary sources to compare our findings.

Economic Issues

Through our survey, we discovered that a large proportion of Maharashtrian farmers utilised technological equipment this, in turn, may have increased their efficiency which resulted in economic benefits for them. As a result, none of them mentioned economic issues as their gravest plight. However, in other parts of India due to climatic conditions and various other reasons economic plights are concerning. For instance, in Andhra Pradesh the average farmer earns Rs. 6,290 (\$85) per month.

Whereas, in Punjab which is the richest farming state the average farming household earns Rs.18,059 (270\$). These divergences in income, thus economic conditions are paramount since incomes determine one's ability to purchase healthcare, education and other things which eventually affect living standards. Additionally, it is important to consider the differences in costs of living in different states since many farmers in poorer states cannot afford necessities which results in them having to take on debt, this debt eventually creates a financial burden for them. This financial stress can lead to something as severe as suicide.

Political and Governmental issues

In India a large proportion of the agricultural policy is determined by state governments, as a result there are large divergences in the regulations and incentives farmers get. Based on our survey Maharashtrian farmers are happy with the government since 75% of those interviewed stated they were happy with the state governments agricultural policy. This is explained by the fact that 87.5% of farmers told us that they received suggestions and information from farmers. This is instrumental in improving the living standards of farmers since the correct policies and incentives can do wonders for them economically. These divergences are evident when looking at the differing responses of state governments to the contentious farm bill. For instance, the Maharashtrian government and politicians condemned the bill and stated that they will not implement it whereas it has been welcomed with open arms in Uttar Pradesh. As a result, farmers in different parts of Indian will face different regulations on contract farming. Therefore, they will have different trade opportunities which can result in different incomes and living standards.

Social issues

While analysing the results of our survey it was evident that Maharashtrian farmers face various social issues which result in lowering living standards. We asked the farmers about their gravest problems and learnt about their lack of access to electricity, water and various other things. As a result, 57% of the respondents said they did not want their children to be since they want their children to have a better life than their own. Additionally, 78% of their children did not want to work as farmers because they believed other careers held the path to a better life for them. However, there are massive divergences in living standards hence social issues and development in various parts of India. For instance, in the state of Karnataka, the average farmer only had 6 hours of electricity access each day whereas farmers in Uttarakhand and Odisha enjoyed round the clock energy access. This is paramount since electricity access is important for everything ranging from using agricultural technology which determines productivity thus income to using electricity to power lights and household appliances. These social issues can eventually result in suicides hence we see that states with better electricity access hence fewer social issues like Uttarakhand reported no farmer suicide cases in 2018 whereas Maharashtra where the farmers said electricity was one of the gravest

concerns as per our survey reported 17,972 of 13.4% of all farmer suicide cases in 2018.

Environmental issues

In Punjab, 80% of Punjab's total land is under cultivation and about 75 per cent of its total population is involved in farming. In 2019 farmers faced unreliable water supply. Succha Singh, a rural farmer in Punjab said, "Floodwater from Sutlej destroys our crops and further pushes us in the debt trap." This led to a protest for a minimum support price (MSP) in January 2019.

In January 2020, hailstorm and unseasonal rainfall damaged crops in Haryana's Rohtak area. The change in temperature and precipitation has led to crop losses and harmed the interests of farmers.

Moreover, environmental changes also affected the physical health of farmers for instance in rural villages, Punukula, Andhra Pradesh. About 900 farmers suffered from a number of debilitating issues ranging from acute poisoning to death at the extreme. This led to families facing healthcare costs, crop failure, loss of income, and debt. However, the watershed program by the government was initiated to promote new varieties of crops and improved farm practices.

However, research done by FarmX shows that 75% of Maharashtra farmers lost some produce due to environmental changes. We can synthesise a trend showing that most states in India faced crop loss due to environmental changes.

Technological issues

The most advanced farming state in India is Uttar Pradesh with the highest crop yield in India. Farmers believe that this high yield can be solely attributed to the fact that their farmers have the best technology. Uttar Pradesh also beat Maharashtra this year in terms of productivity per hectare. However, farmers using modern technology have complained that the farming is now heavily machine-based, and the input cost has increased consistently over the years, while returns have not kept pace.

In terms of irrigation, Punjab has been said to have 98 per cent assured irrigation which means that nearly every crop field gets an assured supply of water. The productivity of crops like rice and wheat is the highest in the world. This shows that this state has the

highest sales of such essential crops. On the other hand, this state has become the place with the highest number of suicide cases. No political leader, policymaker or expert is willing to explain the correlation between the two.

According to research done by FarmX, we have found that in terms of technology in the farming sector some of these states such as Uttar Pradesh, Punjab as mentioned above seem to be far ahead. Of the farmers interviewed there didn't seem to be even one of them that used modern new technology that would aid them in maximising their yields or profits.

Farmer Illiteracy

In Maharashtra, farmer literacy is given plenty of importance. Most farmers have received or learned about farming and suitable crops by the government. That, in turn, improves their efficiency and ability to handle crises thus reducing damage. In recent times, peoples' thoughts have changed. According to our findings, most of the farmers are not compelling their children to continue what they have started and are giving liberty to children to pursue what they feel is the right career path for them. On the contrary, according to secondary sources the farmer literacy rate in Andhra Pradesh is 60.4% farmers survive on loans and most of the time can't repay them. They have little knowledge about crops and where to grow them and what is best for the land, the government gives very little support making them less efficient and profitable.

CONCLUSION

After interacting and interviewing 14 farmers and conducting secondary research over a number of states. We can safely conclude that the plights of farmers are grave yet diverging in various Indian states. These divergences are caused due to cultural factors like religion and geographical locations. This report exemplified how different environments, economic conditions, political situations, social wellbeing and

technological access in different parts of India result in different issues.

SURVEY

The survey is linked:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kolFaV9iEaHhqtH0YQsILn-ji0Q-SlIS/view?usp=sharing>

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