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SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND RURAL POVERTY IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The share of agriculture in GDP of Indian economy has been declining to 15% now due to high growth rates of industrial and service sectors but the economic and social parameter is beyond any comparison in India. The paper deals in the spatial pattern of sustainable agricultural development as Composite Index of Agricultural Development (CIAD) and its relationship with rural poverty in India. The regression analysis leads us to the various findings through model building and analyzing the whole structure of poverty in India. The models represent various indicators of rural poverty and sustainable agricultural development and justify the relationship in between the two. The striking picture here is that the states having vast agricultural potential, such as Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Orissa have remained at the lower rung of the development ladder due to their geographical configuration and social composition of population (having high percentage of SC & ST population), along with poor irrigational facility, which has acted as a constraint in the wide spread technological diffusion in agriculture. In these states, agriculture still is of subsistence nature and has not been commercialized. With the lowest composite scores, Assam too, suffers from unfavorable conditions for agriculture, in terms of land availability, irrigation facility, high concentration of ST population, remote setting and low level of interaction with developed regions, all this acting as an obstacle in achieving high level of agricultural development. The analysis of rural poverty and related indices reveals higher concentration of rural poor in the slow –growing , backward states like Bihar , Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. In these states, there still exist semi-feudal agrarian relation in the rural sector, with high concentration of scheduled caste and scheduled tribes. As against this, the incidence of poverty is much lower in the prosperous regions of Punjab, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala etc, resulting into relatively higher variability in regional distribution of rural poverty. India must strive to break the cycle of poverty, credit burden and environmental degradation and improve the livelihood of farmers.

KEYWORDS

agriculture development, rural poverty.

INTRODUCTION

The share of agriculture in GDP of Indian economy has been declining to 15% now due to high growth rates of industrial and service sectors but the economic and social parameter is beyond any comparison in India. The paper deals in the spatial pattern of sustainable agricultural development as Composite Index of Agricultural Development (CIAD) and its relationship with rural poverty in India. The regression analysis leads us to the various findings through model building and analyzing the whole structure of poverty in India. The models represent various indicators of rural poverty and sustainable agricultural development and justify the relationship in between the two. The importance of farm credit as a critical input to sustained agriculture is reinforced by the unique role of Indian agriculture in the macroeconomic framework and its role in poverty alleviation. But, the lack of adequate flow of institutional credit has deprived the farmers, especially small farmers in using improved variety of seeds, particularly high yielding variety, use of pesticides, insecticides, proper and adequate dose of fertilizers, timely availabilities of irrigation facilities and agricultural equipment's. Nothing significant can be done unless adequate amount of investment is pumped in agricultural for enhancing agricultural production and productivity of farmers.

The striking picture here is that the states having vast agricultural potential, such as Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Orissa have remained at the lower rung of the development ladder due to their geographical configuration and social composition of population (having high percentage of SC & ST population), along with poor irrigational facility, which has acted as a constraint in the wide spread technological diffusion in agriculture. In these states, agriculture still is of subsistence nature and has not been commercialized. With the lowest composite scores, Assam too, suffers from unfavorable conditions for agriculture, in terms of land availability, irrigation facility, high concentration of ST population, remote setting and low level of interaction with developed regions, all this acting as an obstacle in achieving high level of agricultural development. The analysis of rural poverty and related indices reveals higher concentration of rural poor in the slow –growing , backward states like Bihar , Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. In these states, there still exist semi-feudal agrarian relation in the rural sector, with high concentration of scheduled caste and scheduled tribes. As against this, the incidence of poverty is much lower in the prosperous regions of Punjab, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala etc, resulting into relatively higher variability in regional distribution of rural poverty. India must strive to break the cycle of poverty, credit burden and environmental degradation and improve the livelihood of farmers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gopalakrishnan et al.(2009) explored that rather than being a panacea for Indian agriculture, corporate food provision will likely accelerate many key elements of India's agricultural crisis. It will produce a decline in land productivity, reduce food security, adversely affect price stability and will tend to negatively impact employment and credit relations. His paper explores the changes in class and social relations that come about with the transition to a corporate system of food provisioning. It considers the potential impacts of such changes in the Indian context.

The potential of agricultural growth for reducing poverty in today's poor rural areas in Africa and South Asia is hotly debated. Some argue that the constraints and risks for agricultural growth are too great in most rain-fed areas. Other sources of growth are also needed, but there are limited ideas and examples of non-agricultural growth driving poverty reduction in such areas, leaving a bleak outlook of social and economic decline in these areas. Others argue that agriculture can and should play a critical role in economic growth and poverty reduction, but the recent record is poor, and current policies have had very limited success in promoting the sort of broad-based agricultural growth needed to attack rural poverty.

The Indian economic reforms of 1991 affected the economy not only in terms of output but brought about some structural changes in the various macroeconomic relationships. Ghosh et al (2005) quantify here the impacts and identify which of the macro variables were significantly affected and which could not be the result of the reforms. For the analysis, the technique of interventions analysis of time-series is used. Two kinds of measures are noted: (a) the year-to-year effects, and, (b) the overall growth pattern, during 1991 to 2002-03 due to reforms for each of the variables. Private final consumption expenditure (PFCE), investment (GCF) and all the GDP variables except that of services were found to be substantially higher during the post-reforms period than what they would have been in the absence of the reforms. The reforms seem to have made only a marginal impact on investment in the agricultural sector. Unless more reforms are brought in, the GDP may grow at the most only by 6.1 per cent between 2003 and 2010.

Vyas's study(2004) say's Present policies and programmes neither protect a sizeable section of the agricultural population from natural and market-induced uncertainties nor enable them to contribute meaningfully to overall growth of the economy. It is possible, however, to turn the tide by enhancing investment to strengthen the resource base of agriculture, devising suitable instruments to compensate small and marginal producers for losses from natural calamities, designing organisational interventions to impart strength to their economy, lightening the interest burden from non-formal sources of credit, and encouraging rural financial institutions to take over the debts of the farmers from usurious sources. A positive feature in our situation is that we have some examples of success in all these areas. There is a need to extend and scale up these efforts.

A review of the above stated studies clearly reveals that important question in the development debate regarding rural development has been the relationship between agriculture and the rural economy. In certain respects, past policy perceptions and practice have often equated rural development with agriculture,

and rural development policies have been subsumed under an agricultural policy package. The issue of how and under what conditions agriculture is a driving force of rural growth has received scant attention or has given mixed messages including in the position of major multilateral financing institutions.

OBJECTIVE, HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The principal objective of the proposed paper is to present in a concise way, some of the conceptual issues regarding the role of agriculture in both rural and overall sustainable development, emphasizing its role in poverty reduction.

The study shall rest on the following Hypotheses:-

Hypothesis testing begins with an assumption that we make about a population parameter. It is an inference or a supposition made as a basis for reasoning.

1. There is a strong link between sustainable agricultural development and rural poverty.
2. The pattern of agricultural credit flows has helped reduce rural poverty.

For the purpose of seeking holistic picture of the topic the study would be based on secondary data collected from various sources such as Annual Reports of National Sample Survey Organization, Central Statistical Organization, State Publications of the Directorate of Economics and Statistics of different states of the country, Economic & Political Weekly, Research foundation, Reserve Bank of India /State Bank of India publications. Rates of growth would be calculated for consolidated credit flows across different cross-section of farmers. These would be calculated on linear and exponential basis. The study would be done both for National aggregate followed by interstate comparisons. In view of the economic welfare considerations, in the present study most of the indicators have been made relative with respect to population. However, keeping in view logical considerations, some indicators have been standardized with respect to geographical area and some have been calculated in ratios and percentage. Furthermore for advanced levels of research more secondary data as per acceleration effect, time series analysis and auto correlation can be studied with various statistical tools like SPSS/ EViews. The period of study is from early 90's till present.

PATTEN OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

The Indian economy stands at a cross road at the current juncture. Apart from the geographical distribution of growth being skewed, it has also favored mostly the non-agricultural sectors manufacturing, construction and services, bypassing the vast agricultural sector. The slowdown in the agricultural growth in recent times has widened the rural-urban divide and has serious consequence for employment and poverty, contributing to the severe distress in the rural areas. Low agricultural productivity and growth rate of agricultural production, combined with high level of dependence on this sector, being the cause of distress. Since increased agricultural production and productivity in rural sector, leads to higher income in the hands of rural population, including the small and marginal farmers, by raising small holder's productivity and real agricultural wages, thereby improving their material well-being.

Rural poverty is a complex and multidirectional phenomenon having many faces and is illustrated in many ways. The issue is difficult to comprehend without examining several interrelated aspects of changes in agriculture sector. It is believed that agricultural development can go a long way in solving the problem of stagnation in rural India.

The significant role of agricultural development in reducing rural poverty has long been recognized in economic literature, yet the debate is on, how far the performance of agriculture sector is effective in reducing rural poverty.

ANALYSIS: SPACES OF RURAL POVERTY IN INDIA

Poverty is the sum total of multiplicity of factors that include not just income and calorie intake, but a situation of "pronounced deprivation of wellbeing" with lack of access to resources or assetlessness, being a unifying characteristics of poverty in all its manifestation. In India, rural poverty emanates from semi-feudal relations of production in the agriculture. The land reforms measures, undertaken after independence, are not implemented effectively, and have failed to make substantial changes in the agrarian relations. Hence, almost all agricultural labor-households and a large portion of small and marginal farmers and landless non-agricultural labor-households are poor. Yet, there is a variation in the regional distribution of incidence of rural poverty in India.

Since, poverty ratio alone, does not do justice to the range of deprivation, when multidimensional nature of rural poverty is acknowledged, those indicators are chosen for the analysis, which reflect the material condition of rural poor, such as percentage of population below the poverty line, per capita agricultural income. Human development index, percentage of small and marginal holdings to total, percentage of cultivators and agricultural workers to the total workers and ratio of percentage contribution of agriculture and allied in Gross State Domestic Product(GSDP) to percentage to cultivators and agricultural workers to total workers.

The analysis of rural poverty and related indices in Table 1 reveals higher concentration of rural poor in the slow –growing, backward states like Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. In these states, there still exist semi-feudal agrarian relation in the rural sector, with high concentration of scheduled caste and scheduled tribes. As against this, the incidence of poverty is much lower in the prosperous regions of Punjab, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala etc, resulting into relatively higher variability in regional distribution of rural poverty.

TABLE 1: STATUS AND VARIABILITY OF RURAL POVERTY AND RELATED INDICES

States	% of pop below poverty line	Per capita Agri. Income	Human dev. Index	Ratio of contri. Of agri to GSDP	% of cultivators & agri workers	% of small & marginal holdings
Andhra Pradesh	11.2	8013.82	.416	.42	62.30	82.73
Assam	22.3	6160.05	.386	.54	52.65	83.333
Bihar	42.1	2688.10	.367	.36	77.35	93.41
Gujarat	19.1	7188.13	.479	.32	52.04	60.27
Haryana	13.6	10442.73	.509	.40	51.56	65.31
Karnataka	20.8	6109.75	.478	.34	55.89	72.90
Kerala	13.2	6285.74	.638	.72	23.26	98.57
M.P	36.9	5286.34	.394	.38	71.59	65.07
Mahashatra	29.6	5534.74	.523	.22	55.41	73.422
Orissa	46.8	5254.97	.404	.38	64.73	83.82
Punjab	9.1	13822.58	.537	.78	39.36	29.69
Rajasthan	18.7	5788.85	.424	.40	66	52.56
Tamil Nadu	22.8	4826.76	.531	.27	49.55	89.99
Uttar Pradesh	33.4	5176.49	.388	.47	66.03	91.13
West Bengal	28.6	6849.65	.472	.53	43.94	95.30
C.V.	45.25	37.75	16.40	35.33	24.13	23.33

Source: Data collected from review of agriculture, Special article in EPW.

It is interesting to note from the above table that though regional differences in percentage of population below poverty line is near 50% that of other chosen indicators is much less. This clearly reflects that all those indicators which are based on agricultural sector viz; per capita agricultural income, ratio of contribution of agriculture to Gross State Domestic Product, percentage of agricultural workers and percentage of small and marginal holdings have lesser vulnerability across states. This is indicative of the fact that the problem of rural poverty occurs from a traditional and subsistence agriculture in India and lack of alternative employment opportunities, absence or lethargic industrial sector in rural India is a common feature across all states.

The economic status of the rural population has a strong bearing of the agricultural income, as low agricultural income is being considered here for analyzing the status of rural poor, which does not reveal very high level of regional variation, although extreme values are observed in agriculturally highly developed regions like Punjab and Haryana, on the one side and low growth states like Bihar, Orissa the majority of rural poor comprise of small and marginal farmers and agricultural laborers, their percentage in the rural sector gives an insight into the incidence of rural poverty, since it reflects their poor ownership and access to land assets. Similarly, the percentage of cultivators and agricultural workers to total workers, represents the level of dependence of the population on agricultural sector for their livelihood, which seem to vary around 70 percent for the predominantly agrarian underdeveloped states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh etc. The inability of the secondary and tertiary sector to generate enough employment opportunities is primarily responsible for the high level of dependence on agriculture in these states. In both the cases the regional variations is not very high (C.V. 23.33 and 24.13percent), since the majority of population in India still turns to agriculture sector for livelihood.

The rural poverty analysis is not complete unless the human resource, incorporating the indicators of social development. Interestingly, the values of the index range between 3 to 5, for the major Indian states, are revealing low level of regional variations among them. This is due to the fact that HDI incorporates health and education indices related to the demographics features, including literacy and life expectancy, for the population as a whole (both rural and urban), which are almost similar across the country, barring a few exceptions. A striking regional pattern emerges from this analysis that underdeveloped slow growing states have unfavorable rural poverty indicators, whereas developed regions fare better in them.

CLASSIFICATION OF STATES AS PER CIAD AND RURAL POVERTY

It is equally interesting to see the interstate rankings of CIAD as well with the chosen indicators of rural poverty in the following tables to get the picture of the relationship between the two. The rankings were of Composite Index of Agricultural Development are shown in table 2 below.

TABLE 2: COMPOSITE INDEX OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (CIAD)

STATES	MID 90's		MID 20's	
	INDEX	RANK	INDEX	RANK
ANDHRA	11.53	4	11.84	4
ASSAM	3.78	16	5.99	15
BIHAR	8.08	7	14.79	3
GUJARAT	7.56	8	7.78	10
HARYANA	14.66	2	15.57	2
HIMACHAL	3.72	17	7.52	11
KARNATAKA	8.13	6	6.85	12
KERALA	5.38	13	9.18	8
M.P	6.96	11	5.69	16
MAHARSHTRA	7.29	9	5.16	17
MEGHALAYA	1.67	19	4.4	18
NAGALAND	2.50	18	3.75	19
ORISSA	4.96	14	6.25	14
PUNJAB	18.15	1	15.63	1
RAJASTHAN	6.51	12	9.23	7
TAMILNADU	10.36	5	8.98	9
TRIPURA	4.54	15	6.57	13
U.P	13.13	3	11.01	5
WEST BENGAL	7.17	10	10.42	6
MEAN	7.68		87.69	
SD	4.28		31.43	
CV	55.70		35.84	

Source: Computations based on data from Agricultural Statistics in India, CSO.

The Composite Index table is showing the variations in the agricultural development in various states of India. The rankings are ranging from 1 being the highest rank and 19 being the lowest as per the composite agricultural index. These values reassert the fact that even after four decades of Green Revolution, the modern technological use in agriculture is still concentrated in the same states and regions, influencing the variation in agriculture production and productivity too.

TABLE 3.A: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CIAD AND PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION BELOW POVERTY LINE

CIAD	States with High CIAD	States with Medium CIAD	States with Low CIAD
% of population below poverty line			
States with High %	Bihar, U.P.		Orissa, Maharashtra, M.P,
States with Medium %		West Bengal, Kerala, Gujarat,	Karnataka, Assam, Tamil Nadu
States with low %	Punjab, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh		

The first part of the table which depicts the relationship between CIAD and percentage below poverty line gives us a clear picture that all those states which are high on agricultural development are also high in population living below poverty line like Bihar and U.P. On the other hand states like Orissa, Maharashtra and M.P are low in agricultural development but are high in the percentage of population living below poverty line. Also the states like Punjab and Haryana which top the ranks of CIAD are showing low percentage of population below poverty line which proves that agriculture can improve the living standards of any states if they are developed in agricultural standards too.

TABLE 3.B: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CIAD AND PER CAPITA AGRICULTURAL INCOME

CIAD	States with High CIAD	States with Medium CIAD	States with Low CIAD
Per capita agri-income			
States with high Per capita agri-income	Punjab, Haryana, A.P,	Gujarat	
States with medium Per capita agri-income		West Bengal, Rajasthan, Kerala	Karnataka, Assam
States with low Per capita agri-income	Bihar, U.P.	Tamil Nadu	Orissa, M.P, Maharashtra

As compared to the previous table the states of Punjab and Haryana are now topping the charts with high CIAD and also high per capita agricultural income. However the states like Maharashtra, M.P. Orissa and Assam are low in agricultural development and in turn are low in per capita agricultural income also. This clearly specifies that the states with less agricultural development show low per capita income generated by agriculture in these states.

TABLE 3.C: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CIAD AND PERCENTAGE OF AGRI WORKERS

CIAD	States with High CIAD	States with Medium CIAD	States with Low CIAD
% of agri workers			
States with High %	Punjab	Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal	
States with Medium %	Andhra Pradesh, Haryana	Gujarat	Assam, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa
States with low %	Bihar, U.P.	Rajasthan	M.P,

The condition of the agricultural labor in India has been deteriorating since last few years and which has also led to various farmers' deaths in the country. The above table shows that Punjab has highest percentage of agricultural workers and M.P. being the lowest. The various other states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Bihar and Gujarat are the ones which have medium agricultural development and also medium percentage of agricultural workers. This means that there is still a transition awaited in these states so that they can fully utilize the man power resources available to them.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND RURAL POVERTY

Agriculture is not the only source of income in rural areas but it is the dominant source, and besides, the scale of non-agricultural income generating activity in rural areas almost certainly depends upon the level of agricultural production. Thus, in this section an attempt has been made to study the relationship between agricultural development and poverty.

The time series shows that the incidence of poverty fluctuates in response to variations in real agricultural output per head, but there is no significant time trend. There is a statistically significant inverse relationship between rural poverty and agriculture performance for India as a whole, suggesting that agricultural growth by itself tends to reduce the incidence of poverty. The analysis for individual states presents a somewhat different picture.

The relationship between agricultural development and rural poverty is studied under three regression models with CIAD as the Y variable (independent) and the following as dependent variables;

X1= rural poverty

X2= per capita agricultural income

X3=percentage of agricultural workers to total labourers

The coefficient of determination (r^2) compares estimated and actual y-values, and ranges in value from 0 to 1. If it is 1, there is a perfect correlation in the sample — there is no difference between the estimated y-value and the actual y-value. At the other extreme, if the coefficient of determination is 0, the regression equation is not helpful in predicting a y-value. In the above analysis the y values are the composite index of agricultural development and all the other indicators of rural poverty are the x values.

Table 4: REGRESSION RESULTS OF AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT AND RURAL POVERTY RELATED INDICES

Rural poverty related Indices	Beta	Std. Error	R ²	T VALUE
X1:rural poverty	-10.40	8.143	0.112	-1.277
X2:per capita agricultural income	0.068	0.336	0.251	0.202
X3:percentage of agricultural workers	-1.975	7.231	0.005	-0.273

Source: Data collected from review of agriculture, Special article in EPW.

The regression results reveal a positive relationship between Agricultural Development and X2-per capita agricultural income, while a negative relationship between X1- rural poverty, X3-percentage of agricultural workers.

CONCLUSIONS

The regression results are as expected. The negative 'b' values in the model indicate that better the agricultural development lower the rural poverty. Alternatively, positive 'b' value in the model reflects that agricultural development has a positive impact on agricultural income.

For the regression analysis the composite index of agricultural development has been taken as independent variable and rural poverty and its related indices are taken as dependent variables. The regression results so obtained are given in the table 4. The coefficients of regression analysis, confirm the findings of a large section economists, that there exists an inverse relationship between agricultural development and rural poverty(X1), with 'b' value being -10.40 explaining 11 % of responsiveness. This highlights that agricultural development leads to reduction in rural poverty, through high agricultural yield, by raising small holders' productivity and by increasing real agricultural wages. But the low variance explained, signifies that major growth is derived from the small section of large farmers, whereas the small and marginal farmers along with agricultural laborers, do not share the gains.

The economic status of rural population also gets reflected in the per capita agricultural income, as a large part of their income originates from agricultural income, which shows a strong direct concurrence with agricultural development, as developed agriculture leads to higher farm productivity and production. The other two variables, chosen for the analysis, associated with rural poverty are agricultural workers and small and marginal farmers. The level of dependence of rural population on land for livelihood is very in almost all the states, with less regional variations, but higher regional variations are observed in agricultural development, resulting low level of concurrence between the two.

The high dependency with lower contribution, once again gets related to rural poverty. The ratio of agricultural contribution to agricultural workers shows a positive relationship, as a higher level of agricultural development results in higher contribution per dependent agricultural worker. The regression analysis confirms to the basic postulate that rural poverty, is a function of agricultural development and higher growth in agriculture sector plays a significant role in reducing poverty, but this, alone, is not a sufficient condition and agricultural growth, by itself, is unlikely to make a dent in rural poverty, which encompasses a multiplicity of factors. Promoting new technologies and reforming agricultural research and extension: Major reform and strengthening of India's agricultural research and extension systems is one of the most important needs for agricultural growth.

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