

Land Reforms in India: Volume 12

# Agrarian Crisis and Farmer Suicides



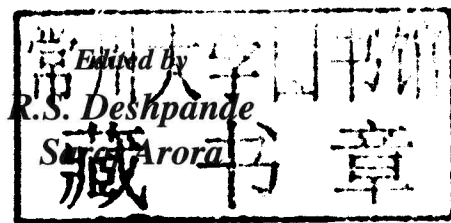
Edited by

R.S. Deshpande  
Saroj Arora



# AGRARIAN CRISIS AND FARMER SUICIDES

Land Reforms in India  
Volume 12



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**AGRARIAN CRISIS AND  
FARMER SUICIDES**

**Land Reforms in India  
Volume 12**

## LAND REFORMS IN INDIA

This is the twelfth volume in a series of studies conducted under the aegis of the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Mussoorie. These studies are an outcome of a research programme entrusted to the LBSNAA by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. The primary aim of this series is to assess the current status of land reforms in India.

The collection of basic data was entrusted to successive batches of probationers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). The field of study component was divided into four major sections covering respectively the implementation of land ceiling laws, the status of tenant-cultivators, the progress in allotment of government lands to the poor and landless and the position concerning tribal lands and forest rights. In the process the probationers collected village-level primary data by interviewing landowners, tenants, allottees of surplus lands and tribals, and supplemented this data by consulting land records and other official documents.

This material was processed by the LBSNAA's project core group on land reforms comprising scholars from diverse disciplines. The findings were analysed, refined and integrated into comprehensive all-India and state-level reports which form the bulk of the volumes in the series. In addition, the LBSNAA conducted state-level workshops bringing together administrators, academics, activists and legal experts to explore the various dimensions of land reforms in India.

The series will comprise about 14 volumes in all.

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*To*  
*the Farmers of India*  
*who toil to feed the nation*

## *Foreword*

The agricultural sector in India has been going through a painful phase since the last few years. Two-thirds of India's population derives sustenance from agriculture, which is dominated by small and marginal farmers. The sector thus reflects the lives of the bottom 60 percent of the country. The last couple of decades have witnessed rapid changes in the agriculture sector on account of globalisation and liberalisation. Agriculture is becoming more demand-driven with a shift from staple crops to cash crops accompanied by a shift towards global integration of agricultural markets.

These changes are pushing the sector into a competitive mode without preparing it to face the concomitant and inevitable vulnerabilities. Agricultural scientists are suggesting that the optima of the present technological revolution are fast approaching and that there is need to prepare for the second Green Revolution. Yields are stagnating and prices are no longer attractive enough to the farmers. The factor markets (credit, labour and inputs) are also not supportive.

Indian farmers confronted with severe distressful circumstances found themselves unable to cope up with changes in the economic environment. The outbreak of farmers' suicides during the last decade indicated this upheaval within agriculture. Various empirical studies were conducted and committees were set up to examine this growing crisis, particularly in certain states termed as 'hot spot' regions. Immediate relief packages remained the primary concern whereas preventive measures mostly took the back seat. Governments, both at the centre and in the affected states, have now put together policy interventions to effectively deal with the problem. These counter measures have finally begun to show success.

The situation was grim and raised several serious questions such as: whether the Indian farmers are well equipped to respond to the fast changing environment of the globalised world? Whether they are

competitive enough to face the global challenges? Whether the country has a clear road map for agriculture and whether we have created the required institutions, information channels, technology and resources to effectively meet the challenges? Whether the role of other stakeholders such as non-government organisations, informal associations and financial institutions have been defined clearly?

With this backdrop, the Centre for Rural Studies, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie organised a National Level Workshop on 'Agrarian Crisis and Farmers' Suicides' between 23 and 24 November 2007. The aim of the workshop was to examine the causes of the growing agrarian crisis and recommend policy counter measures.

I am thankful to Dr R.S. Deshpande, Director, Institute of Social and Economic Change, Bangalore for editing this volume. I also appreciate the painstaking efforts of the contributors of the papers for their valuable and scholarly contribution. I must congratulate Mr Ashish Vachhani, IAS, Deputy Director and Co-ordinator of the Centre for Rural Studies for taking keen interest in bringing out this volume. I acknowledge the work of Dr Saroj Arora, Senior Research Officer, Centre for Rural Studies for the dedication and hard work she has put into this project. I would also like to acknowledge the contribution and co-operation of the secretarial staff of the Centre for Rural Studies. This volume not only provides extensive analyses of the varied situations across the Indian states, but also offers policy options to avert and mitigate the crisis.

I am sure that this volume, coming out under the land reforms series will prove useful to readers interested in Indian agriculture.

February 2010

**Padamvir Singh, IAS**  
Director  
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Mussoorie



## *Acknowledgements*

This book is an attempt to reach at the policy matrix through a cross-section of analyses involving the problem of farmers' distress culminating in suicides. This is attempted in the changing context of globalisation. The basic principle of globalisation is international integration and it envisages larger privatisation of the economy including the agricultural sector. The entire process is expected to have a differential impact on different nations and sectors. It is sometimes perceived as an imposition of the capitalist development paradigm on less developed nations which got manifested in various forms of protests. In the Indian context, we find that a steep decline in the contribution of agriculture to the gross domestic product (GDP) is curiously accompanied by a large share of rural populations still dependent on agriculture. Most of them are marginal, small farmers and agricultural labourers. The agrarian distress, therefore, not only impacts the livelihood system of a large share but finally brings down the growth of the economy.

This volume under the land reforms series deals with the analyses of the problems of farmers' suicides across the states. This book is a collaborative effort of many individuals and institutions who have contributed and cooperated at various stages in its completion. First of all, we would like to express our gratitude to the Ministry of Rural Development, Department of Land Resources, Government of India for providing financial assistance for conducting the workshop. Without their help this publication would not have been possible. We would also like to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to Mr Padamvir Singh, IAS, Director, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie who has always been very supportive and encouraging in our endeavour in bringing out this volume. We also express our sincere thanks to Mr Yatendra Kumar, IAS, former Deputy Director and Co-ordinator, Centre for Rural Studies

and Mr Ashok Kumar, IAS, former Deputy Director and Alternate Co-ordinator, Centre for Rural Studies, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie for the support extended by them. Without their active help and facilitation the work could not have been successfully completed.

The contributors of this volume have cooperated beyond the call of their share and withstood our prodding. They deserve our grateful appreciation and a big word of thanks. In addition, we express our gratitude to Professor M. Rajivlochan, Department of History, Punjab University and Dr K.G. Iyer, former professor, Punjab University, Chandigarh, Mr Alok Kumar, IAS, Deputy Director (Sr), LBS National Academy of Administration, Mussorie and Mr L.C. Singhi, IAS, Commissioner and Secretary, Government of Assam and former professor, Centre for Rural Studies, LSB National Academy of Administration, Mussorie for the advice, help and suggestions received from them from time to time. Our friend Mrs Rina Singh deserves special thanks for extending moral support.

Our grateful thanks are also due to our colleagues Dr H.C. Behera and Dr Varunendra Vikram Singh for their help during the workshop. They had put in a great deal of hard work in quickly preparing the rapporteur reports. We also wish to place on record, our sincere thanks to all the staff of the Centre for Rural Studies, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie for providing secretarial assistance, particularly Mr Adesh Kumar, who never hesitated to work even during holidays. We are indeed thankful to all of them.

**R.S. Deshpande**  
**Saroj Arora**

## ***A Note From the Co-ordinator***

India has transited from being primarily an agrarian economy to one that is led by rapid growth in the services sector. However, the primary sector continues to remain the mainstay for the bulk of the population in rural areas. The concomitant shift in the occupational composition of the primary sector is yet to happen despite the declining share of agriculture in the country's GDP. This explains the crisis confronting those engaged in the primary sector. It also highlights the need for an effective response from the government towards improving the quality of livelihood of those engaged in this sector.

The Centre for Rural Studies, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie, held a workshop between 23 and 24 November 2007 to deliberate on the agrarian crisis and the issue of farmers' suicides. This workshop was attended by distinguished academics, experts and administrators. This book titled 'Agrarian Crisis and Farmer Suicides' summarises the views expressed in the workshop.

I wish to place on record our sincere thanks to the Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, for providing support to conduct the workshop. Our special thanks are due to Mr Padamvir Singh, IAS, Director of the Academy for his guidance in conducting the workshop and publication of the manuscript. We are thankful to Dr R.S. Deshpande, Director, Institute of Social and Economic Change, Bangalore, for editing this volume. This book would not have been possible without the participants and contributors at the workshop. To them, we owe special thanks.

**Ashish Vachhani, IAS**

Deputy Director and Co-ordinator

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