

Indian agriculture - Indian economy – National income – per capita income – Agricultural income in GDP - Women in agriculture and empowerment

Indian Agriculture and Economy:

Indian Agriculture is one of the most significant contributors to the Indian economy. Agriculture is the only means of living for almost 60% of the employed class in India. The agriculture sector of India has occupied almost 43% of India's geographical area. Agriculture is still the only largest contributor to India's GDP (16%) even after a decline in the same in the agriculture share of India. Agriculture also plays a significant role in the growth of socio-economic sector in India.

In the earlier times, India was largely dependent upon food imports, but the successive story of the agriculture sector of Indian economy has made it self-sufficing in grain production. The country also has substantial reserves for the same. India depends heavily on the agriculture sector, especially on the food production unit after the 1960 crisis in food sector. Since then, India has put a lot of effort to be self-sufficient in the food production and this endeavour of India has led to the Green Revolution. The Green Revolution came into existence with the aim to improve the agriculture in India.

The services enhanced by the Green Revolution in the agriculture sector of Indian economy are as follows:

- Acquiring more area for cultivation purposes
- Expanding irrigation facilities
- Use of improved and advanced high-yielding variety of seeds
- Implementing better techniques that emerged from agriculture research
- Water management
- Plan protection activities through prudent use of fertilizers, pesticides.

All these measures taken by the Green Revolution led to an alarming rise in the wheat and rice production of India's agriculture. Considering the quantum leap witnessed by the wheat and rice production unit of India's agriculture, a National Pulse Development Programme that covered almost 13 states was set up in 1986 with the aim to introduce the improved technologies to the farmers. A Technology Mission on Oilseeds was introduced in 1986 right after the success of National Pulse Development Programme to boost the oilseeds sector in Indian economy. Pulses too came under this programme. A new seed policy was planned to provide entree to superior quality seeds and plant material for fruits, vegetables, oilseeds, pulses and flowers.

The Indian government also set up Ministry of Food Processing Industries to stimulate the agriculture sector of Indian economy and make it more lucrative. India's agriculture sector highly depends upon the monsoon season as heavy rainfall during the time leads to a rich harvest. But, the entire year's agriculture cannot possibly depend upon only one season. Taking into account this fact, a second Green Revolution is likely to be formed to overcome such restrictions. An increase in the growth rate and irrigation area, improved water management, improving the soil quality and diversifying into high value outputs, fruits, vegetables, herbs, flowers, medicinal plants and bio-diesel are also on the list of the services to be taken by the Green Revolution to improve the agriculture in India.

National income

National Income is important because of the following reasons,

- To see the economic development of the country.
- To assess the developmental objectives.
- To know the contribution of the various sectors to national income.

Internationally some countries are wealthy, some countries are not wealthy and some countries are in-between. Under such circumstances, it would be difficult to evaluate the performance of an economy. Performance of an economy is directly proportionate to the amount of goods and services produced in an economy. Measuring national income is also important to chalk out the future course of the economy. It also broadly indicates people's standard of living. Income can be measured by Gross National Product (GNP), Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross National Income (GNI), Net National Product (NNP) and Net National Income (NNI). The Indian economy is the 12th largest in USD exchange rate terms. India is the second fastest growing economy in the world. India's GDP has touched US\$1.25 trillion. The crossing of Indian GDP over a trillion dollar mark in 2007 puts India in the elite group of 12 countries with trillion dollar economy. The tremendous growth rate has coincided with better macroeconomic stability. India has made remarkable progress in information technology, high end services and knowledge process services.

Agricultural income in GDP

Agriculture sector contributed 32% in 1990-91, 20% during 2005-06 and around 16% now. Though the contribution of agriculture to the GDP income of India, it is great news that today the service sector is contributing more than half of the Indian GDP. It takes India one step closer to the developed economies of the world. Earlier it was agriculture which mainly contributed to the Indian GDP. The Indian government is still looking up to improve the GDP of the country and so

several steps have been taken to boost the economy. Policies of FDI, SEZs and NRI investment have been framed to give a push to the economy and hence the GDP.

Agriculture per capita income

The per capita income of the agriculture sector declines to 1/3 of the national per capita income during the recent years. The per capita income of the agriculture population is estimated around Rs. 10,865 in 2010, which is around 32% of the national per capita income at Rs. 33,802/-. Per capita income of the agriculture population was around half (1/2) at Rs. 5,505 of the national per capita income at Rs. 11,433/- during 1980 however, it came down to around 42% at Rs. 6,652/- of the national per capita income at Rs. 16,020/- during 2000.

Income Distribution in Agriculture sector

Year/ Period	Agriculture Share in GDP	Population Dependent on Agriculture	Agriculture Per Capita (in Rs.)
1980	39	70	4745 (56%)
1990	31	65	5505 (48%)
2000	25	59	6652 (42%)
2010	16	58	10865 (32%)

Women in Agriculture and empowerment

Women in India now participate in all activities such as education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and technology, etc. Indira Gandhi, who served as Prime Minister of India for an aggregate period of fifteen years is the world's longest serving woman Prime Minister.

The Constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women equality (Article 14), no discrimination by the State [Article 15(1)], equality of opportunity (Article 16) and equal pay for equal work [Article 39(d)]. In addition, it allows special provisions to be made by the State in favour of women and children [Article 15(3)], renounces practices derogatory to the dignity of women [Article 51(a) (e)], and also allows for provisions to be made by the State for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief. (Article 42).

The feminist activism in India picked up momentum during later 1970s. Since alcoholism is often associated with violence against women in India, many women groups launched anti-liquor campaigns in Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and other states. Many Indian Muslim women have questioned the fundamental leaders' interpretation of women's rights under the Shariat law and have criticized the triple talaq system.

In 1990s, grants from foreign donor agencies enabled the formation of new women-oriented NGOs. Self-help groups and NGOs such as Self Employed Women's Association

(SEWA) have played a major role in women's rights in India. Many women have emerged as leaders of local movements. For example, Medha Patkar of the Narmada Bachao Andolan.

The Government of India declared 2001 as the Year of Women's Empowerment (*Swashakti*). The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women came was passed in 2001.

In 2006, the case of a Muslim rape victim called Imrana was highlighted in the media. Imrana was raped by her father-in-law. The pronouncement of some Muslim clerics that Imrana should marry her father-in-law led to widespread protests and finally Imrana's father-in-law was given a prison term of 10 years, The verdict was welcomed by many women's groups and the All India Muslim Personal Law Board.

In 2010 March 9, one day after International Women's day, Rajyasabha passed Women's Reservation Bill, ensuring 33% reservation to women in Parliament and state legislative bodies.

Women empowerment would become more relevant if women are educated, better informed and can take rational decisions. It is also necessary to sensitize the other sex towards women. It is important to usher in changes in societal attitudes and perceptions with regard to the role of women in different spheres of life. Adjustments have to be made in traditional gender specific performance of tasks. A woman needs to be physically healthy so that she is able to take challenges of equality. But it is sadly lacking in a majority of women especially in the rural areas. They have unequal access to basic health resources.

Most of the women work in agricultural sector either as workers, in household farms or as waged workers. Yet it is precisely livelihood in agriculture that has tended to become more volatile and insecure in recent years and women cultivators have therefore been negatively affected. The government's policies for alleviating poverty have failed to produce any desirable results, as women do not receive appropriate wages for their labour. There is also significant amount of unpaid or non-marketed labor within the household. The increase in gender disparity in wages in the urban areas is also quite marked as it results from the employment of women in different and lower paying activities. They are exploited at various levels. They should be provided with proper wages and work at par with men so that their status can be elevated in society.

There is no doubt about the fact that development of women has always been the central focus of planning since Independence. Empowerment is a major step in this direction but it has to be seen in a relational context. A clear vision is needed to remove the obstacles to the path of women's emancipation both from the government and women themselves. Efforts should be directed towards all round development of each and every section of Indian women by giving them their due share.