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Reasons for farmer suicides in India :-

- Financial distress.
- Crop failures.
- Unorganized farming practices.
- Overwhelming debts to banks and money lenders. Incapable economic condition of farmers leads them to borrow loans. Though local moneylenders are usually portrayed as the main culprits, legal data shows that 80% of farmers killed themselves in 2015 because of bankruptcy or debts after taking loans from banks and registered micro-finance institutions.
- The average size of land holdings in rural India has halved over the past twenty years. Many poor farmers are left with less than one hectare land.
- Though debt is the main cause of farmer suicides, there are reasons like social disrepute, health problems, addictions, high expenses for marriages, disputes with others etc. All these causes are inturn linked to financial distress.
- In a report submitted by Radhakrishnan, it has been stated that in rural India many of the farmer loans are for marriages. It is a social obligation to spend well on weddings, which sometimes includes dowry.
- Sowing water intensive crops, and depending heavily on rainfalls.
- Increase in the compensation given to immediate kin, is also one of the causes for farmer suicides.

What Indian government is doing:-

- In the union budget 2017-18, Indian government aimed at doubling farmers' income in the next five years by 2022.
- 'Soil Health Cards' scheme is one of the best programs for farmers. Through this scheme, farmers will get a well-monitored report of the soil in their land, so that best crop for the soil can be selected.
- Indian government is providing crop insurance under 'Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima

Yojana' (PMFBY) program.

- 'Agriculture Produce and Market Committee (APMC) act' was implemented to develop efficient marketing system for agricultural produce.
- 'Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee (MNREGA) Act' was introduced to ensure jobs to the rural population during non-farming seasons, so that migration of agrarian community to cities in search of jobs can be curbed.
- Maharashtra reported the maximum number of farmer suicides in 2016. It has launched a water conservation scheme named 'Jalyukt Shivar Abhiyan' to make Maharashtra a drought-free state by 2019.
- Maharashtra state government aimed to become zero farmers suicide state in year 2017 and 2018. It launched 'Baliraj Chetana Abhiyan' which is replacing more than 100 schemes for the upliftment of farmers through a holistic approach of socio-economic development model.
- In 2019's interim budget, Indian government announced 'PM-Kisan samman nidhi yojana' to give Rs.6000 per annum to poor farmers, who own less than 2-hectares of land.

What more needs to be done:-

- Larger land holdings can be one of the solution to prevent the farmer suicides in India. Size of land holdings can be increased by promoting practices of land pooling and through collective farming.
- The present 'minimum support price' for agricultural produce is not even sufficient to repay the loans. MSP needs to be increased.
- The reasons for farmers suicides vary from state to state. For example, in some states lack of rainfall is causing crop failures. For that, crops that need less water should be promoted. States should identify their problem areas, and needed to work on that. This will be helpful to farmers more than the nation-wide programs.
- Easier access to credit loans.
- Reducing input costs and encouraging organic farming practices.
- Conducting awareness programs on crop insurance schemes.
- Implementing advanced technologies in agriculture leads to increase in productivity.

Situation in other countries:-

- Farming profession is considered as high stress profession not just in India but also in some other countries like Sri Lanka, USA, Canada, England and Australia.
- Large land holdings and introduction of advanced farming technologies have succeeded in improving the farmer's life in developed countries.

Conclusion:-

Though there are many schemes for improving the lives of farmers in India, the programs are not being implemented effectively. Implementing advanced technologies and encouraging organic farming practices and the effective implementation of schemes can together solve the problem of farmer suicides.

Your Turn...

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