

Original Research Article

Social and Economic Consequences of Farmer Suicides in Karnataka: Impacts on Rural Communities and Beyond

Mr. Jagadisha, T^{1*}¹Assistant Professor, Department of P.G Studies and Research in Economics, Mangalore University, Mangalagangothri-574199, Karnataka, India**Article History**

Received: 18.06.2024

Accepted: 24.07.2024

Published: 28.08.2024

Journal homepage:<https://www.easpublisher.com>**Quick Response Code**

Abstract: In this research paper, an attempt has been made to overview the present scenario of farmer suicides in Karnataka, India, is given in the abstract, along with a focus on the disastrous social and economic effects of this phenomenon. In fact, there were 3,515 farmers committed suicide between 2013 and 2018, with small and marginal farmers who owned less than 5 acres of land being the bulk of these deaths. The main causes of these suicides were debt, crop failure, and limited access to institutional funding. Farmers who commit suicide have far-reaching effects on society in addition to the agricultural community. Declining agricultural output, rural-to-urban population mobility, and the breakdown of social structures are all problems facing rural communities. Reduced agricultural output, a loss of revenue for farming households, and an increase in the demand on government resources for relief operations are of the economic effects. The social consequences include a rise in domestic violence, mental health issues, and alcoholism in rural areas. The summary highlights how farmer suicides have an impact on metropolitan people who rely on agricultural goods for their sustenance, in addition to remote rural communities. The Karnataka government has launched programs including loan waivers, crop insurance policies, and irrigation projects to prevent farmer suicides. To address the root reasons of farmer suicides, further work must be done. This work should focus on supporting sustainable farming practices, increasing institutional funding availability, and offering mental health services to farming communities.

Keywords: Farmer Suicides, Disastrous, Agricultural Output, Domestic Violence, Social, Irrigation, Economic and Communities etc.

Copyright © 2024 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

I. INTRODUCTION

Karnataka's farmer suicide rate has had a major impact on rural communities and beyond in terms of social and economic ramifications. A survey found that 11,290 people who worked in the farming industry in India in 2022, of them 5,207 were farmers and 6,083 were agricultural laborers committed suicide themselves. The majority of farmers who committed suicide in Karnataka were small and marginal farmers, holding less than two hectares of land, according to the socioeconomic profile of these farmers. Numerous factors contribute to these suicides, including as agricultural failure, debt, and restricted access to institutional financing. These suicides have had a significant negative effect on rural communities, resulting in a fall in agricultural output, a movement of rural residents to cities, and the disintegration of social institutions. Reduced agricultural productivity, income

loss for farming families, and increased demand on government resources as a result of relief efforts are some of the negative economic effects of farmer suicides. In agricultural communities, the social repercussions include an increase in drunkenness, mental health problems, and domestic violence. The ramifications of farmer suicides extend beyond isolated rural areas and affect the wider community, including urban residents who depend on agricultural products for their subsistence.

In order to combat farmer suicides, the Karnataka government has put in place a number of initiatives, such as irrigation projects, crop insurance plans, and debt waivers. To address the underlying reasons of farmer suicides, additional work must be done. Some of these efforts include encouraging sustainable agricultural methods, expanding institutional

financing availability, and offering mental health care to farming communities.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to explore the socio-economic consequences of farmer suicides on victim households after the incidence in particular and its impact on rural communities and beyond in general. The specific objectives of the study are as follows;

1. To understand the present scenario of farmer suicides in Karnataka
2. To determine the main causes of farmer suicides, insufficient institutional support, and assess government solutions.
3. To examine the major social and economic consequences of farmer suicides on victim households in the state.
4. To examine how farmer suicides affect rural Karnataka communities', social structures, mental health, and economies.

III. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The research methodology for examining the social and economic consequences of farmer suicides in Karnataka involved a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. Primary data was gathered through structured interview schedule and surveys conducted on 300 affected households in Mandya district, which is one of the well irrigated, agriculturally prosperous districts and also known for hotspot of farmer suicides in Southern part of Karnataka in recent years to gain insights into the personal and community-level impacts of suicides. Additionally, focus group discussions were held with local farmers, community leaders, and agricultural experts to contextualize the socio-economic challenges faced by these communities. The necessary Secondary data were gathered from government reports, such as the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and the Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, as well as academic studies and reports from non-governmental organizations. The comprehensive approach ensured a robust understanding of the multifaceted impacts of farmer suicides, facilitating the identification of both immediate and long-term socio-economic consequences,

and informing policy recommendations aimed at mitigating this critical issue.

IV. OVERVIEW OF FARMER SUICIDES IN KARNATAKA

The phenomenon of suicides amongst farmers in Karnataka has been a recurrent theme in the agricultural sector since 1998. Until the year 2000, farmer suicides were largely concentrated in the drought-prone districts in north Karnataka (Gulbarga and Bidar districts). After 2000 onwards, the phenomenon has been spread to relatively more advanced and prosperous agricultural belts such as Mandya, Mysore, Hassan, Tumkur, Shivamogga, Davanagere, Koppal and even Chikkamagalur, Kodagu and it also covered ground water region (Belgaum), assured rain fall region (Haveri). However, in the coastal belt, less number of farmer suicides reported.

Farmer suicides in Karnataka have been a persistent issue, with 692 farmers taking their own lives between April 2023 and January 2024. The districts such as Haveri, Belagavi, Mandya, Mysore, Chikkamagaluru, Hassan, and Kalaburgi have reported the highest suicide rates, highlighting rural distress amidst drought conditions. During 2015-16 to 2019-2020, 6,209 farmers committed suicide, averaging 1,242 per year in the state. Crop failure and Debt were the primary reasons for these suicides, with 74% of farmers taking loans from private moneylenders at exorbitant interest rates. The average debt per farmer was around ₹2.5 lakh, with many struggling to repay loans due to consecutive crop failures and declining agricultural income. Notably, 85% of the farmers who committed suicide were small and marginal farmers, owning less than 5 acres of land, highlighting their vulnerability to agricultural distress. The Karnataka government has implemented measures to address the issue, including the "Raitha Siri" scheme, which provides financial assistance to farmers, and the "Krishi Bhagya" scheme, which aims to improve irrigation facilities. Additionally, the government has launched initiatives such as the Relief Package 2006, Maharashtra Money Lending (Regulation) Act 2008, Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme 2008, and Pradhan Mantri Fasal Beema Yojna (Crop Insurance for Farmers). However, more needs to be done to effectively tackle this complex problem.



Figure-1: Farmers Suicide in Karnataka

V. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF FARMERS SUICIDE IN KARNATAKA

The phenomenon of farmer suicides in Karnataka has far-reaching social and economic consequences that affect not only the farming community but also the broader society. The state of Karnataka has witnessed a significant number of farmer suicides in recent years, with official data revealing that over 3,500 farmers have taken their lives between 2013 and 2018. This crisis has devastating impacts on rural communities, the agricultural sector, and the state's economy as a whole.

Majority of the farmers, who committed suicide, were from the small landholders. After death of family head by suicide in younger age, whole family was disturbed and faced so many consequences. Social consequences of farmer suicide incidence on victim households after committing suicide are shown in the

Table 1. As far as the effect on households after committing suicide by the victims is concern it is found that 9 percent of their children to leave the school and go for wage earnings for sharing consumption expenditure of the family. It is noteworthy that, in 14.3 percent cases, after death of husband, widow spouse of victim had left the victim's home and went to live with support of her parents' house.

Impediments of marriages of family members was reported in 11.7 percent cases, while 13.7 percent of victim families were sent their children to live with their close relatives either for education or for earnings. Conflict was created among the spouse of the victims and other older family members after receiving the compensation from government authority. This was reported by just 3.3 percent of the victim families and it is negligible.

Table-1: Social Consequences of Farmer Suicides on Victim Households after Committing Suicide

Sl. No	Impact	Yes		No	
		Victim Households	%	Victim Households	%
A	Related to Family Disturbance				
1	Children of the victims had left the school and went for wage earnings	27	9.0	273	91.0
2	Left the victims house (particularly victims' wife)	43	14.3	257	85.7
3	Impediments and postponement of family members marriages	35	11.7	265	88.3
4	Children were sent to live with relatives	41	13.7	259	86.3
5	Conflict created/developed in the family after compensation received	10	3.3	290	96.7

(Source: Primary Data)

Economic Consequences of Farmers' Suicides in Karnataka

Suicide is shocking and the effects of suicide on family members and loved ones of the person who has died by suicide can be severe and far-reaching. Out of the 300 respondent families of victim farmers, nearly 83 percent of the victim families reported that no prime earner in the family after the suicide incident (Table 2). Around 11 percent of the victim families stopped the farm activities and leased out their land to others. Over half (57.3 percent) the victim households recognized that their family income was lowered after death of family head and 11 percent families expressed loss of interest in farm works.

The debt trap and its vicious circle can be understood from the fact that as high as 60 percent victim families are reported to have taken additional loan to face the situation. More than 60 percent families were struggling for manage livelihood and decreasing economic level. Similar results were observed by

Manjunatha and Ramappa (2017) in their all India study on farmer suicide and they found that the impact was reported by 34 percent of the households who mentioned that there was no one in their family to earn income. The land of such families was seized by the private money lenders as a result of which discontinuation of agriculture was another impact as seen in the case of 21 percent of the total sample households.

Further, around three percent (10 families) of the total victim families had to sell off their land for fulfill their urgent needs. The small and marginal farmers, who have lost their sole breadwinners, are disproportionately impacted and exceptionally vulnerable. Not only do they suffer the most severe consequences, but their ability to recover from the disturbance is very low. This horrible circumstance often forces the poor to sell off productive assets, making it extremely challenging to escape from the cycle of poverty as they struggle to regain stability in life.

Table-2: Economic Consequences of Farmer Suicides on Victim Households after Committing Suicide

Sl. No	Impact of Suicides	Yes		No	
		Victim Households	%	Victim Households	%
1	Agricultural activities stopped / leased out the land	32	10.7	268	89.3
2	No principal earner in the family.	248	82.7	52	17.3
3	Lowered the income of family.	172	57.3	128	42.7
4	Loss of interest in any work	151	50.3	149	49.7
5	Land sold	10	3.3	290	96.7
6	Additional loan taken	180	60.0	120	40.0
7	Struggling to manage livelihood	181	60.3	119	39.7

(Source: Primary Data)

VI. CONTRIBUTING FACTORS FOR FARMERS SUICIDES

The phenomenon of farmer suicides in Karnataka is a multifaceted issue driven by a complex interplay of economic, social, and environmental factors. Understanding these contributing factors is crucial for developing effective interventions to mitigate this tragic trend.

I. Economic Factors

1. Debt and Financial Instability: Farmers in Karnataka often rely on loans for purchasing seeds, fertilizers, and other agricultural inputs. High-interest rates from informal moneylenders and the inability to repay these loans due to crop failure lead to a cycle of debt. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data indicates that debt is a significant cause of farmer suicides in the region.

2. Crop Failure: Crop failure due to unpredictable weather patterns, such as droughts or floods, severely impacts farmers' income. Karnataka, being largely rain-dependent, is particularly vulnerable to such climatic variations. The lack of effective irrigation facilities exacerbates this issue, making crop yields highly uncertain.

3. Market Risks: The volatility of agricultural markets adds another layer of economic risk. Fluctuating prices for crops mean that farmers cannot always sell their produce at profitable rates. Additionally, the lack of access to proper storage facilities forces farmers to sell their produce at lower prices, leading to inadequate returns on their investments.

II. Social Factors

1. Family Pressure and Social Expectations: Farmers often face immense pressure from their families to succeed and provide for them. In rural areas, land is not just a source of income but also a matter of social prestige. Failure in agriculture can lead to a loss of social status, which can be devastating for farmers and their families.

2. Lack of Education and Awareness: Many farmers lack the education necessary to adopt modern farming techniques or to understand and navigate agricultural policies and financial management. This lack of awareness prevents them

from accessing various government schemes and subsidies designed to help them.

III. Environmental Factors

1. Climate Change: Climate change has introduced more extreme weather conditions, making farming increasingly difficult. Karnataka has experienced severe droughts and irregular monsoon patterns, which disrupt traditional farming schedules and reduce crop yields.

2. Soil Degradation: Overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides has led to soil degradation, reducing agricultural productivity over time. Poor soil health means that farmers must spend more on inputs to maintain yields, further straining their financial resources.

IV. Psychological Factors

1. Mental Health Issues: The constant stress of financial instability, crop failure, and social pressures can lead to severe mental health issues among farmers. Depression and anxiety are common, and the lack of mental health support in rural areas exacerbates these problems.

2. Isolation and Lack of Support Networks: Many farmers work in isolation and lack access to social support networks. This isolation can intensify feelings of hopelessness and despair, making it difficult for them to seek help or share their burdens.

V. Structural and Policy Factors

1. Inadequate Policy Implementation: While there are several government schemes aimed at supporting farmers, their implementation often falls short. Bureaucratic hurdles, corruption, and lack of proper dissemination of information mean that many farmers do not benefit from these initiatives.

2. Lack of Access to Credit: Formal financial institutions are often inaccessible to small and marginal farmers due to stringent collateral requirements. This pushes them towards informal lenders who charge exorbitant interest rates, trapping them in a cycle of debt.

VII. IMPACTS ON RURAL COMMUNITIES AND BEYOND

The impacts of farmer suicides in Karnataka extend beyond the individual farmers and their families,

affecting the rural communities and the economy as a whole. The consequences of these suicides are far-reaching and devastating, with significant social and economic implications.

(A) Social Impacts:

- 1. Rural Distress:** The high incidence of farmer suicides in Karnataka has led to acute rural distress, with 692 farmers taking their own lives between April 2023 and January 2024 (Revenue Department Data).
- 2. Family Distress:** The suicide of a farmer leads to immense emotional trauma for the families left behind, with 75% of families reporting feeling helpless and hopeless (National Crime Records Bureau, 2018).
- 3. Orphaned Children:** Many children are left without a parent, with 1,200 children orphaned due to farmer suicides in Karnataka between 2013 and 2018 (Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, 2019).

4. Social Isolation: The stigma associated with farmer suicides can lead to social isolation, with 60% of families reporting reduced social interactions (National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, 2017).

(B) Economic Impacts:

- 1. Loss of Income:** The average annual income of a farmer in Karnataka is ₹1.5 lakh. With the suicide of a farmer, the family loses this income, leading to economic distress (National Sample Survey Office, 2019).
- 2. Debt Burden:** The average debt of a farmer in Karnataka is ₹2.5 lakh. With the suicide of a farmer, the family is left to bear this debt burden, leading to further economic distress (Reserve Bank of India, 2017).
- 3. Rural Economy:** Farmer suicides have a ripple effect on the rural economy, with 40% of rural households reporting reduced economic activity (National Council of Applied Economic Research, 2018).

Table-7.1: Impacts of Farmer Suicides on Rural Communities and Beyond

Impact	Data	Source
Rural Distress	692 farmers took their own lives between April 2023 and January 2024	Revenue Department Data
Family Distress	75% of families report feeling helpless and hopeless	National Crime Records Bureau, 2018
Orphaned Children	1,200 children orphaned between 2013 and 2018	Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, 2019
Social Isolation	60% of families report reduced social interactions	National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, 2017
Loss of Income	₹1.5 lakh average annual income of a farmer	National Sample Survey Office, 2019
Debt Burden	₹2.5 lakh average debt of a farmer	Reserve Bank of India, 2017
Rural Economy	40% of rural households report reduced economic activity	National Council of Applied Economic Research, 2018
Rural Distress	692 farmers took their own lives between April 2023 and January 2024	Revenue Department data
Family Distress	75% of families report feeling helpless and hopeless	National Crime Records Bureau, 2018

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the issue of farmer suicides in Karnataka is a complex and multifaceted problem with far-reaching social and economic consequences. The high incidence of farmer suicides has led to rural distress, family distress, orphaned children, and social isolation. The economic impacts include loss of income, debt burden, and reduced economic activity in rural areas. To combat this issue, the Karnataka government has implemented various initiatives, but more needs to be done to address the underlying causes of farmer suicides. Encouraging sustainable agricultural methods, expanding institutional financing availability, and providing mental health care to farming communities are some of the efforts that can be undertaken. It is essential to adopt a comprehensive approach that addresses the economic, social, and environmental factors contributing to farmer suicides. By doing so, we can work towards

reducing the incidence of farmer suicides and promoting the well-being of rural communities in Karnataka.

REFERENCES

- Sampathkumar, R. (2024). "Unlocking the potential of India's agricultural sector". *The Times of India*. ISSN 0971-8257. Retrieved 8 April 2024.
- Kumar, N. C. (2013). Farmer suicides in Karnataka during the globalization period. *International Journal of Agriculture and Food Science Technology*, 4(9), 887-892. Research India Publications.
- Nagthan, S., Poddar, R. S., Kunnal, L. B., & Basvaraja, H. (2011). A probe into socio-economic and psychological profile of farmers' suicide in Karnataka. *Karnataka Journal of Agricultural Sciences*, 24(2), 157-160.

- Vandana, S., & Kunwar, J. (2006). *Farmers Suicides in India*. R. foundation Sci., Tech. Ecology A-60, Hauz Khas, New Delhi.
- Guruswamy, M., Isaac, D., Subhakrishna, K., & Ranjani, R. (2008). *The crises in Indian Agriculture- A Critical Study*, Hope India Publications, Gurgaon, 122017.
- Rajani, B., Sreenivasa Rao, I., Sreenivasulu, M., & Suneetha Devi, K. B. (2018). *Farmer Suicides: Consequences and Coping Mechanism in the Deceased Families*. *International Journal of Current Microbiology and Applied Sciences*, 7(8), 1560-1565.
- Manjunatha, A. V., & Ramappa, K. B. (2017). *Farmer Suicide an All India Study*. Department of agriculture co-operation and Farmer Welfare, Government of India, New Delhi.
- Kale, N. M. (2008). *Socio-economic, psychological and situational causes of suicides of farmers in Vidarbha region*. Ph.D. Thesis (Unpub.), Dr. Panjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth, Akola.
- Sharma, R. K., & Mohanakumar, S. (2006). *Analysis of Farmers Suicides in Kerala*. *Economic and Political Weekly*, April. 5.
- Vaidyanathan, A. (2006). "Farmers' Suicides and the Agrarian Crisis", *Economic and Political Weekly* September, Pp, 4009.

Cite This Article: Jagadisha, T (2024). Social and Economic Consequences of Farmer Suicides in Karnataka: Impacts on Rural Communities and Beyond. *East African Scholars J Econ Bus Manag*, 7(8), 360-365.
