

Food Security of U.P. Small Farmers Threatened

Agriculture in India, and specifically in Uttar Pradesh, holds the place of pride in terms of generating both income and employment for people. Agriculture is the base of Indian economy. Forty seven percent of the total area of the country is cultivable. More than seventy percent (70%) population is living in villages, more than eighty percent (80%) is engaged in agriculture and allied activities and contributing 41.5% to the total state revenue. The state of Uttar Pradesh constitutes 12% of the country's area and 16.17% of the population. Uttar Pradesh is predominantly a land of poor peasant surviving on marginal and uneconomical holding of less than 3 hectare. The bottom 70% of the rural household constituting mostly marginal and sub marginal cultivators, own less than 20% of the total land under cultivation. According to 37th round of national sample survey, the bottom 50% of rural household in U.P. operates only on 12.7% of the total available land. Uttar Pradesh is the fourth largest state of the country after Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. The total area of the state is 2.36 Lac. sq.km. which is 7.3% of the total area of the country. Uttar Pradesh is contributing 21.55% to the total national production of food grains, vegetables, fruits and milk production and 40% to the total production of potato and sugarcane. Small marginal farmers are the backbone of the agriculture sector of the state- the poor and marginal farmers constituting close to three quarters of the farming population. 116.05 Lac hectare land in the state is affected with erosion, alkalization and other problems. Alkalization and ravine affected land is increasing every year and around 65,000 hectare land is being transferred every year for non-agriculture use while the production of oilseeds and potato was decreased by 50% and 20% respectively during 1998-2000, the consumption of chemical fertilizers increased by 2.85 Lac MT. During the same period irrigation from canals was reduced to 25.5% from 6.9% and that of the tube wells to 5.9% from 7.6%. The power supply for agriculture sector which was 37.4% in 1994-95 was reduced to 35.4% in 1997-98. Small marginal farmers of the country are facing certain types of problems. These farmers are not getting minimum support prices of their produce. The consolidation of land normally has benefited the big farmers and influentials. The control of International companies over seeds is increasing. As per the agreement of WTO quantitative restrictions are removed and imports of agriculture products are open, consequently external agriculture products are available at cheaper prices in the market and the interest of small domestic producers is being crushed in the name of liberalization and globalization. The most unfortunate dimension of the problems of small marginal farmers is that in spite of being major portion of the population they are neglected in national and state level policy and programs. The political parties are normally opportunists and the farmers organizations are engaged only with the issues of big farmers. The farmers of eastern U.P. were adversely affected with flood, the farmers of central region were struggling with scarcity of water. The negligence by state was common to all the areas. Independent People's Commission was constituted with eight members in January 2001 for understanding and documenting the problems of small and marginal farmers and land less agricultural labors. The members of the commission are:

1. Justice V. K. Mehrotra - Retired Chief Justice of Allahabad and H.P. High Courts.
2. Mr. Anupam Mishra - Gandhian Environmentalist & Philosopher

- 3 Dr. Utsha Patnayak - Economist, JNU, New Delhi
- 4 Mr. Prabhash Joshi - Renowned Journalist
5. Mr. Devendra Sharma - Renowned Ecologist and Agriculture Expert
- 6 Dr. Kamal Bhattacharya - Agronomist
- 7 Dr. Shiraz A. Wajih - Environmentalist
8. Mr. Biju Negi - Leader of Beej Bachao Andolan

In July 2001 the first meeting of the commission was organised in Delhi and the commission finalized its work plan.

The commission planned to organize 7 public hearings at different places on the basis of geographic conditions of different regions. Simultaneously some NGOs collected and compiled case studies on the problems in different regions and analyzed the available secondary data to support the work of the commission.

As per the plan of the public hearings were organized during 14th to 27th September 2001 at following 7 places-

S.No.	Region	Place	Coverage
1.	Trans-Saryu Eastern Region	Gorakhpur	Gorakhpur, Maharajganj, Deoria, Basti, Sidharth Nagar, Sant Kabeer Nagar
2.	Saryu-Ganga Plains	Mau	Mau, Ballia, Azamgarh, Ghazipur
3.	Eastern U.P.	Varanasi	Varanasi, Chandouly, Jaunpur, Mirzapur
4.	Sone Valley	Tilbudwa	Sonebhadra
5.	Central Region	Raibareilly	Raibareilly Allahabad, Sultanpur, Pratapgarh
6.	Bundelkhand	Orai	Jalaun, Jhansi, Lalitpur, Hamirpur, Fatehpur, Banda, Chitrakoot
7.	Western U.P.	Saharanpur	Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, Baghpat, Gaziabad, Bijnor

On the basis of public hearings, case studies and data analysis the commission prepared a report containing the problems, analysis and suggestions.

Uttar Pradesh is one of the largest States of the country and is full of geographic diversity and diversity in geographic conditions are mainly responsible for different environmental conditions in different regions. Whereas at some places water is in excess at other some places water is scare. At some places the soil is black cotton and fertile, while at others the soil is dry and hard. Every region has its own specificity and potentiality. The State is full of diversity but the problems of farmers are almost the same in the entire state. People might have different difficulties because of diversity in geographic conditions but the problems emerging in different regions are almost the same. Further, problems of small marginal farmers related to utilization of resources, availability of

fertilizers and seeds or marketing of their produces are almost of the same magnitude in the entire state, access to information, services and market besides land relations. Certain physical constraints and wide spread failures and ignorance of natural resource management also contribute to the problem of low productivity. The main problems are non-availability of health and education services, employment opportunities, or availability of developmental schemes in rural areas of the entire State. Although the status of government programs to improve upon this are in all parts of State, but the ill will and mismanagement in the implementation is quite obvious. This was very clearly indicated by the small and land less farmers, social workers, intellectuals and others during the public hearings of the Commission.

Region Based Analysis

Considering the geographic diversities and for practical purposes, the State was divided in seven regions for public hearings. These were Trans-Saryu Eastern Region, Far East, Ganga-Vindhya Central Plain, Sonbhadra, Bundelkhand and Western U.P. Most of the problems of the small marginal farmers emerged during the public hearings were almost the same but some regional specific problems were also there.

Trans Saryu Eastern Region

The two specific problems of the region affecting the life of people are related to flood and sugarcane production.

The entire region is highly flood affected and every year one or the other area faces the calamity of the flood. There is a network of rivers in the region in the north-east of Ganga where Ghagra and Gandak flow. Rapti and other rivers also traverse in region. The entire region is plain with minimum slope (only 5 meters in around an area of 200 km). The soil of the area is soft and soil erosion by the rivers silt accumulation during rains; and shifting of path by reverse is common. Therefore this region is prone to floods. The recurrence of floods has enormously affected the economy of the region due to increasing losses year after year. The floods that were once known as vital have now an annual calamity.

Lives in the flood-affected areas are quite troublesome and have a long term effect on the small farmers. Small marginal farmers are getting only a single crop in a year in the flood affected areas as the floods distort the crops in the field. Because of green revolution the traditional crops and breeds of paddy which were not only capable to endure the flood but were able to grow in it have almost disappeared. The floods specially after seventies have started leaving layers of sand year after year because of the embankments constructed over the rivers on the fields of flood affected area. The flood which at one time was a sign of prosperity as it used to leave fertile soil has now become a curse today. Water logging in flood affected areas has emerged as one of the most severe problems as it continues for months after the flood has receded resulting increase of the non-cultivable land. Twenty nine villages of the Brahmpur block have become sandy after the severe flood of 1998 (which left 3

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9 feet thick layers of sand) making the fields uncultivable.

The farmers of flood affected areas are getting only a single crop in a year which means they are hardly employed for six months and unemployed for the rest six months. The adverse conditions for agriculture are generating disinterest among the farmers towards farming. The reducing opportunities in rural areas are enforcing them for migration in search of employment. Whereas it was seasonal in the past but has become a permanent feature now. Since, there is no major industrial area in the eastern region and agriculture is the main source of employment, large number of people have migrated to big cities or other states. Non-availability or less availability of potential workforce in villages has increased the burden on the remaining people and causing farming more difficult.

The other major problems of small farmers in Eastern region is related to production of sugarcane. Being the extensive availability of natural water sugarcane has been a normal cash crop of farmers. From a long time but the sugar industry of the region has now become sick due to mass corruption, mismanagement and politicization, at least 12 sugar mills of the region have closed down during the last one decade and 10 of them were in public sector. The remaining mills are unable to consume the available quantity of sugarcane in the region as they are quite old and nothing has been done to setup improve their crushing capacity. Even the conditions of private sugar mills is not better and they are also unable to consume the total sugarcane production in the area.

At one end, the demand of sugarcane has been reduced, at the other selling and payments of dues has made the problem so difficult that sugarcane producers are compelled to burn the unconsumed sugarcane. The ultimate sufferers are farmers specially the small and marginal farmers. Pratappur sugar mill is working since more than 100 years but millions of rupees are pending as dues to farmers. Pipraich block was producing maximum sugarcane in the eastern region which was mainly consumed in the Sardarpur sugar mill, Rupees 216.6 millions of the farmers is still due to the mills. In fact there might be hardly any sugarcane producing area of the region that is not facing severe problem of payment of dues. The farmers have to agitate again and again for their dues. Government and administration tried to crush these agitations, and many a times the agitating farmers have to face violent actions and firing by the police.

Although 70 to 80% of the sugarcane producing farmers are unhappy but still they have not other alternatives. Some of the big sugarcane producers have started working as middleman; they purchase sugarcane from small producers at the minimum support price and supply it to sugar mills on their own name. Other than this thousand of the outsiders have installed kolhu-crushers in the area and purchasing sugarcane on a very low price (Rs. 60 to 70 per quintal) leaving small farmers with no option but to sell it to them.

Eastern U. P.

Small marginal farmers of the area are worse affected by problems of flood and sugarcane production. Large areas of the region were distressed during this year because of breakage of at least four embankments.

Deoria-Padarauna was once known as "Mini Jawa" because of sugarcane production. The availability of natural soil and water in the region is such that the sugarcane crop is possible even without irrigation facilities. There were 14 sugar mills but now only 6 or 7 are functional. Farmers are not getting their payments at time and now millions of rupees are pending as dues. Some farmers were dead and many injured in police firing when they agitated to recover their dues.

Adverse impact on chilly farming in Ballia districts seems to be a good example of improvident policies and planning of government for agriculture development. Chilly was one of the main cash crops for the farmers till 5 to 6 years back with very good production rate of 5 to 6 quintals per bigha. The area was known for chilly farming in the State. The water logging because of excess water release from Dohrighat Canal Project affected the chilly farming very adversely. Now the situation is so adverse that the chilly cultivation has disappeared from the area and even the local residents are buying chilly from outside for domestic consumption.

Similarly, Ghazipur was famous for potato production and large number of farmers were engaged in potato farming including small farmers. There were 7 cold storages in Mahmudabad tehsil and they were sufficient for potato producers. But now the storage of the potato in the area has become a big problem for the local small farmers. Before three-four years the local farmers could not get place for potato storage because of nexus between the big businessmen and owners of the cold storages. The small farmers were forced to sell potato on minimal prices or their potatoes to rot on the roads. Farmers were agitated against the injustice but nothing happened and as a result potato production has decreased in the area.

Ganga "Vindhya Plains

The small farmers of these eastern districts are facing some very peculiar problems. As in Naugarh, where three Dams have been constructed but it is suffering from acute water crisis and problem of weed in wheat named (Gehu Ka Mama). More than 40 breeds of local plants have disappeared during the last twenty years. The cultivation of cereals and oil seeds is declining several tree species are also disappearing. Ground water table is increasing due to water logging and this is resulting in alkalization of land making new plantation impossible.

Tribes of the region are facing more severe problems because of anomalies in land distribution as they cannot do farming. These tribes are facing troubles for related problems. They are struggling with dispute between forest and revenue department and at socio-economic level they are grilled between naxalites and police. At one end naxalites are pressing them for money and other support and at the other police harasses them for supporting naxalites.

The tribes have to pay heavily for this controversy as in the incident of May 16, 2001. One public organization "Majdoor-Kisan Morcha" called a meeting of officials of forest corporation and local

people for discussing the wages of Tendu-leaf collection.

Coincidentally one day before this meeting, naxalite organisation MCC organized a meeting at another place in a forest village 16-17 km

away from Navagahr on the same issue and the police had to open fire in that meeting but incidentally no one was injured. Next day in Nauagarh meeting two forest workers, who had participated in the meeting were killed. Nobody had clues about the killers but the police brutally beaten and harassed the villagers including children and elders and arrested 6 villagers on the basis of MCC leaflets found in the village. Even six-months after the Public Hearing the arrested persons were in jail. Such incidents are common and the local residents have to bear the crunch.

Sonebhadra

The main problem of Sonebhadra region is related to tribes and their land ownership. Indigenous communities of the region are being displaced frequently in the name of development since independence. They are struggling for rehabilitation and satisfactory land entitlement and possession. Land disputes between the forest and revenue departments are frequent. Lack of basic facilities for farmers and severe scarcity of water are other problems in the rural areas.

Bundelkhand

Sixty percent of the population of the region is living below the poverty lines. Demographically the area is dominated by schedule castes so more problems are there. Majorities of the small farmers are struggling with problems related to land-lease. The land that was to be distributed among the small farmers is possessed by the so called influentials. In fact the entire Bundelkhand is under control of feudalists. According to one study 17% of such people are having 72% of the total land. In Chitrakoot during one raid 53000 land lease records were seized on which local feudals were farming. In another tradition called 'janna-pratha' a big and influential farmers leave

their animals in the area for grazing. The animals enter the fields of small farmers and often destroy the crops but no one can raise voice against them. One such area badly affected is in the Konch block. Water scarcity is also one among the other main problems of the region. The combined effect of all these difficulties is that the small farmers are normally getting only a single crop in a year and for the rest of the time the farms remain unused.

In spite of availability of the rivers, lack of irrigation facilities is another major problem of this region. In district Banda although, canals of Kane River are there but the main dam is in M.P. so the water in canal is not available as per need and facility of the local farmers.

Bundelkhand region is also highly affected with soil erosion by the rivers. Bamboo and Acacia seeds were dispersed by aeroplane in the erosion affected areas of this region under the mass plantation program in the year 1975. Consequently dense forest has come up on the fertile land of almost 80 villages. The local herbs and useful

plants have disappeared and terror of Boar and Neelgaay has increased. All this has resulted in dispute between revenue and forest departments.

Some years back a soya bean extraction plant was put up in Orai until then farmers of this area were not cultivating soya bean. The factory owner assured and allured the local farmers for its purchase. The farmers at least agreed and started cultivating soya bean in place of traditional crops. In the third year the prices of soya bean were reduced and after a couple of years the factory was closed down and the farmers were left with no alternative but to suffer the loss.

Central Plain

Scarcity of water is the major problem in this region. Water cannot reach the tail ends because of the poor maintenance of canals. Ground water table is receding due to excessive use of tube-wells. Land reclamation programs in the region are hardly benefiting the small farmers.

Western U.P.

Western U.P. is the region of green revolution. But now adverse impacts of green revolution are clearly visible. Chemical fertilizers and Pesticides are being used extensively and their consumption has been increasing year after year. Because of this, now the agriculture expenses are going out of control for small farmers. The worse impact of this is that the soil is becoming poisonous and its fertility is decreasing. Further, types and quantity of insects are increasing which are affecting the productivity of the region. Green revolution farming has been more water consuming and this has resulted in rapid decline in ground water table.

Sugarcane is one of the main crops of the Western U.P. but here also non or irregular payment from sugar mills is a very big problem. The farmers from time to time have to agitate for it. Although one strong farmer's organisation is there but it also favors only big farmers and advocates on their issues, thus neglecting the concerns of small farmers.

Brickfields are increasing in this region because of the rapid urbanization. This has resulted in transfer of cultivable land to non-cultivable use and ultimately becoming a wasteland. The bad impact is that, the neighbouring agriculture lands are covered with black-ash which affects the yield of crops adversely. The grazing by animals is another big problem. The milk production is also declining in the area due to scanty of fodder.

Sector-wise Analysis

Land

Land is the most important factor for farmers and especially for small marginal farmers, but the land is also the root cause of their problems. The availability of land for small farmers is reducing because of one or the other reasons. One of the reasons is that they are being thrown out of their holdings.

The common problems among small and land less farmers are related to land lease and consolidation of their holdings. Government distributes land in the name of poor, dalit or sometime under some

development project, but normally such distributed lands are situated at distant places, where are useless and lack basic facilities. The farmers have to run place to place for the transfer of title and physical possession. Normally the allotted land is held by local influentials who have support of local administration.

This problem is existing in the entire State but it is more severe in tribal areas specially in Sonbhadra, Chandauli and some districts of Bundelkhand. The tribes of Sonbhadra are displaced from time to time at the name of development schemes which causes regular harassment to them. First time they were displaced in 1960 for construction of Rihand Dam, next time they were displaced for Obra Thermal Power Plant and so on. The indifferent behaviour of administration, corruption and dispute between revenue and forest departments could not let them settle at any place. The unplanned development schemes and lack of convergence between various government departments compelled around 40% of the total tribal population of the area to live as permanent displaced persons without any access to land or other natural resources. The dispute between revenue and forest departments adds new dimensions to the problem. Whereas the revenue department says that the land was under revenue department and displaced tribes could stay there but the forest department on the other hand claims that the land was of the forest department and they disallow sowing on the land. Sometime they even destroy the cultivated crop and file cases against poor resourceless tribals.

Non tribal communities are also having large number of complaints related to land lease. Many a times the government allots lease to the poor without disclosing real information to them, for example, in district Bijnor around 3000 land less labourers got allotment of land lease in 1977, but on 14 May, 1999 government cancelled all those allotments. In fact, all these allotments were made under huge pressure for completion of target of family planning. The local officials allotted the lease to the poor land less labourers for adopting family planning without disclosing the fact that these leases were for limited period and not for their ownership. The same happiness with thousands of the poor in Western U.P. and here also government issued notices to these allottees for the return of land leases. Some of them approached the High Court and got stay against the government order.

Consolidation of landholding was the second largest task adopted by the government for the management of agricultural land. Historically agriculture on small plots of land was practiced on local and practical reasons but the argument put up for consolidation was that the family holdings were so divided that farming on smaller plots for individual families became difficult and the input cost for agriculture was increasing because of farming on scattered small plots of land.

On such an argument consolidation of holdings was started in the entire State in 1970. At some places the work has already been completed, but in majority of the places the process is still going on. In fact the process of consolidation has resulted in more troubles for small marginal farmers, the cultivable land owned by

them was merged with the holdings of others and their plots were shifted to other distant areas. Normally small farmers got their plots at places where there was no proper approach roads to reach their land, nor there was proper drainage and irrigation facilities. As a result there was hardly any small farmer who was satisfied or happy with the land consolidation in the State. In certain places small farmers are advocating to close down the department. In places, like Sonbhadra and Chanduali naxalite movement has cropped up because of problems related to land and land ownership in tribal areas. Because of the anti farmers land policies of the State majority of the small marginal and land less farmers are struggling for their existence and survival.

Water

Water is the next most important resource after land for the small-marginal farmers. Most of them depend for irrigation on rain water. For them facilities of canals and tube wells are good for nothing because of mismanagement and red tapism. The fact is, that in most of the areas irrigation facilities are not available. In Central and Bundelkhand regions irrigation facilities from canals and tube wells are scanty. In other parts where the irrigation canals are available sufficient water does not reach the cultivable lands, because of their poor management and maintenance. In places, like, Naugarh near Varanasi in spite of the construction of three dams, water is not available. In some parts of Bundelkhand due to the origin of being canals in Madhya Pradesh sufficient water is not available, because the local people or administration have no control over the release of water. In Central part of the State there are certain places where farmers have never seen water in canals during the last 5-7 years. In areas of lower Ganga and Sharda canals water is so scarce for irrigation that the farmers have shifted to gram and Peason pea (arhar) farming instead of wheat.

Silting in canals is another a big problem. No serious efforts have been made for de-silting and cleaning of canal systems. Without cleaning of major canals water for irrigation is almost impossible. During the public hearings farmers of Raibareilly said that in the current year they would not get water from the canals even for first irrigation for sowing wheat.

Lack of maintenance of canal results in leakage and seepage of water from it. Whereas, at one end it is wastage of large quantity of water, at the other hand the water can not reach where it is needed. Further, the problem of water logging and silting can be seen very often due to leakage of water, which burns the fertile and cultivable lands into unfertile sodic land. The problem is more apparent in areas which are close to canals. The farmers of these areas can not have two crops in a year. Keeping livestock has become more difficult in such water logged areas.

Parallel irrigation system has been developed in some areas, as an alternative to canal irrigation, but it is not easy for small farmers to use tube wells for irrigation. Majority of the government tube wells are non-functional. At some places, while transformers are burnt or there is non-availability of electricity. As a matter of

fact electricity supply in rural areas is very erratic. Even when there is electric supply the big farmers are the beneficiaries as they get water from the government tube wells on priority basis. Alternatively, the big farmers install their own tube wells as well but irregular supply of electricity also is a big problem for them. Small farmers are unable to install their own tube wells because of cost factor. Getting water from other private tube wells is quite expensive as the charges for getting water are 20-50 rupees for per hour irrigation.

The worst impact of tube well irrigation is on the ground water table. Excessive use of ground water results in the decline ground water table and this may be a severe problem in future because of non availability of ground water. Two critical factors are affecting ground water simultaneously, are the excessive use of ground water in absence of availability of canal water and the other is huge consumption of water for agriculture after the advent of green revolution. The problem of rapidly declining ground water exists in the entire State except the flood affected areas. This problem is more severe in Western U.P. which is known as the centre of green revolution.

Seeds-Fertilizers

Availability of quality seeds and fertilizers is the next most important factor for the farmers. In old days farmers used to prepare their own seeds and mutual exchange of seeds was quite common. But in green revolution use of the hybrid seeds has been promoted and majority of the farmers are now dependent on external sources like government seed stores or market.

Similarly use of chemical fertilizers has been promoted for high agriculture production and now the consumption of fertilizers has been enormously increased.

Farmers raised serious concern and problems regarding availability of the quality seeds and fertilizers during the public hearings. Almost at all the places small farmers complained about availability of seeds and fertilizers in time and seeds available in the local markets were either uncertified or of poor quality. Secondly, the cost of seeds and fertilizers was increasing rapidly. The prices of seeds have increased by 20% only in the year 2001. Similarly prices of fertilizers were also increasing with increase in consumption. This has resulted the increase in the input cost of agriculture. Farmers of the Western region felt that due to excess use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides the fertile land of the area is now gradually turning into a wasteland.

Sugarcane Farming

Sugarcane is one among the main cash crops of the state and large number of small farmers are engaged in sugarcane farming in Eastern and Western regions. As per the data of sugarcane department, 4.13 Lac are small-marginal farmers out of 5.16 Lac sugarcane farmers of seven districts of Eastern U.P. But now as the sugarcane production and total cultivable area is decreasing the small-marginal sugarcane farmers are struggling for their survival.

In fact the sugar industry has become sick in the state, and out of 26 sugar mills of eastern region 11 have closed down. More than 80% of the sugarcane producers are small marginal farmers and their economy is based on the sugarcane production, but the distorting nature of the industry has affected them very badly.

Payment of dues to farmers has also become a very serious problem and the farmers have to struggle and agitate to their dues.

Discrimination in the purchase policy and price is also adversely affecting the small marginal farmers.

Support Price and Procurement

The payment related problem is not only restricted to sugarcane procurement, but is more serious on the government procurement/purchase centers. The entire procurement system is griddled with irregularities and corruption. The support prices decided by the government are of no use for small farmers rather they are for benefit of big farmers.

Majority of these centers are in the grip of middlemen who purchase on much lower prices from small farmers who have to bear the loss. The government procures food grains as per their fixed targets and most of these purchases are made from big farmers, relatives of public representatives and influentials. The small farmers are normally ignored.

Subsidy

Subsidy for the farmers is a big issue of debate in the country and on the current scenario of liberalization and globalization their have been discussion for so many times to reduce or phase out the subsidy. Considering the fact that subsidy for the farmers is an universal fact. Most of the developed countries are providing subsidy for farm sector, but our Indian government is being pressurized for the reduction of subsidy.

The price of 1 MT wheat is around 200\$ while in the international market it is around 153\$. Countries like USA, Canada, Japan, EU are giving subsidy to farm producers around 20%, 20%, 69% and 42% respectively. Japan, USA and Europe are providing subsidy of 33,000.00 and 30,000.00 \$ per farmer. The farmers of developed countries are getting subsidy of around 3620 million \$.

In fact, whereas the developed countries are increasing subsidy for the farm sector, in India is its being reduced. The condition for export of Indian agriculture produce is not conducive in international market. As import of agriculture produces in India is almost free, The increasing agricultural import is adversely affecting the domestic farm sector.

The existing structure of subsidy in India is mostly favouring the big farmers and needs of small-marginal farmers are being ignored. The other critical area is recovery of loans from the farmers without considering their problems.

Credit card and Insurance

Considering the problems related to payment of dues to the farmers, in recent years credit card facilities have been extended to them, but the interest rates on these small loan facilities are very high in comparison to other sectors. The farmers are getting loan at 17%

annual rate of interest which turns to around 21% because of compound rate of interest. On the other hand credit available to State sector employees at 4 to 4.5%, public representatives at 2%; and industry sector around 8%. This discrimination in the rate of interest generates a feeling that the government is playing its role like a private moneylenders 'Mahajan'.

Recently Agriculture Insurance Scheme has been introduced to provide security cover to the farmers in case of disasters. There are two types of agriculture insurance policies one common compulsory coverage and the other voluntary coverage. Any farmer getting crop loan or loan for seeds and fertilizers from bank or cooperative society, is covered under compulsory coverage. In case of voluntary coverage the farmers can get insurance by paying premium independently. But in any calamity affected region compensation is only payable if losses occurred are to the tune of 80% in any affected block.

Corruption

Corruption seems to be the most prevailing factor in all land related issues. At every step the farmers have to face indifferent behavior of respective authorities dues to corrupt practices.

Farmers shared their concerns and raised several issues of corruption during the public hearings. Corruption is involved in milk purchase by cooperatives; bank loans, credit card; getting no dues certificate, compensation in case of losses or death. Even after giving bribe the poor farmers are cheated at some places in the name of providing loan, as they are facing recovery orders for the payment of loan, which they never received.

Agriculture Policy and International Scenario

In general our agriculture policy framework is more market oriented and less farmer oriented. In spite of the fact that the country is self-sufficient in food grains production, the people are dying of starvation. Irrespective of the fact that agriculture is the base of Indian economy the state policy framework considers this sector at secondary level in comparison to industry sector.

Promotion of privatization in the era of globalization may put small marginal and land less farmers in more difficult situations. At one end the cost of agriculture inputs is increasing, the subsidies are decreasing, and the low cost international agriculture produces are available in the market because of removal of quantitative restrictions. As a result of this Indian farmers, specially the small farmers, are unable to realize the cost of their produce.

As per the new policy framework promotion of diversified agriculture is one among the key components but the diversified agriculture is normally not beneficial for small farmers as these type of produces are already available in the market at much lower prices and farming of these products seems to be non-viable for the farmers. It may also destroy the traditional livelihood support system in the rural areas and make farmers more dependent on the market forces.

Privatization of water bodies, water resources and promotion of corporate agriculture may reduce the accessibility of scare resources from the small marginal and land less farmers and create threat for

their survival and existence.

The changing situations in agriculture sector indicate that the situations are not good so far the livelihood of small farmers, women and agricultural labour are concerned.

Some other concerns emerged from the situational analysis are:

Bio diversity

Bio diversity especially agricultural diversity is very important for small farmers. It is like capital for people dependent on small land holdings in context of their livelihood and fulfilling daily needs.

Reduction in diversity makes farmers more dependent on market outside the village and also affects adversely the other agricultural resources like livestock. These diversities have declined rapidly during the last few decades. Agricultural produces and crops are limited according to the need of cash and market. The farmers with minimum purchasing power were able to live and survive with agriculture diversities, but now the question is where to go?

In

what ways they can opt to overcome starvation, migration, and malnutrition? Where to get employment opportunities after migrating to urban areas?

Increasing Cost

Cost of agriculture has increased many a times during the last few decades and is still increasing, but the total agriculture production has now become stagnant. The difference of cost and price is decreasing and for small farmers farming is now gradually becoming non-viable. Organized farming with close contact to market may be viable for big landholders but for small and land less farmers this seems to be more and more difficult.

Sustainability

The traditional system of agriculture has almost been distorted due to use of chemicals; changing forms of seeds, pressure and competition for increasing agricultural production. Small farmers were able to meet out their agricultural requirements from home, land and animals and these were able to fulfil each other's requirements.

The mutual process of land and land related systems were able to control the external costs and maintain the ecological system of the land. The changes that have occurred in the recent years have adversely affected the sustainability of the farm produces.

Agricultural Women/labours

Normally at every stage of farming from sowing to reaping and storage, women are contributing equally or even more than men in every region of the State.

Although, workload on women has increased due to changes in farm sector, but their access to resources has decreased. In spite of women's larger role (than men) in farm sector they are being marginalized in agriculture development programs.

Similar is the story of agricultural labours. Irrespective of the size of the holding use of mechanical instruments in agriculture has increased in the entire State. Tractor, Thrasher, Harvester have now become an integral part of farming. In the unorganized agriculture

sector minimum wages for labours are a distant dream. Getting an employment for the entire year has become extremely difficult because of reduction in agricultural diversity. The demand for agricultural labour is limited to a very short duration. Migration to urban areas and starvation for months has become a destiny for them. The situation is worse in Eastern region where the land holdings are small and number of land less labour is more.

Research/dissemination System

Normally the researches, carried out in Agricultural Universities, and private research institutions, are production oriented. These researches are focused more on increasing the productivity without considering the specific regional requirements and year long livelihood opportunities for farmers.

Agriculture information dissemination is primarily in control of government communication system. Small farmers are mostly dependent on other farmers and shopkeepers for the required informations.

Communication is normally addressed to big farmers and the small farmers and women are not involved in the mechanism of information dissemination. This might be because the big farmers are able to use the cost based demonstration in their farms.

There is a need to change the information dissemination system as per need of the small farmers so that they can find-out solutions of their problems. Farmers are experimenting in their fields since thousands of years and their experiments are the base of agriculture development. Recognition and promotion of these experiments is necessary for sustainability and development of agriculture.

The small-marginal and land less farmers of U.P. are facing almost similar problems, like; availability of seeds and fertilizers on time, quality of seeds and fertilizers is always questionable, and their prices are rising rapidly and regularly. Consumption of high-breed seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, which increased multifold during the last few decades and has generated negative impact on land and climatic conditions. Even use of these is not beneficial for agriculture itself as new species of insects and weeds are growing rapidly.

Other than these the farmers are facing problems in selling their produce. Almost at all places cheating, corruption and conspiracies created by the nexus of big farmers, businessmen and politicians, are quite common. Small farmers have general complaints in purchase of their crops at below the minimum support price at government purchase centers or they are compelled to sale their crops on bare minimum prices in open market or to the local factories where there is delay in payment. All these difficulties are generating disinterest among the farmers towards agriculture.

Suggestions

The Public Commission made several suggestions for various segments of government and civil society organizations for improving the conditions of small marginal and land less farmers.

„« Commission suggested that the agriculture and related policies should be made as per the local needs and conditions, and the entire framework of agriculture policies should be farmer

centered.

„« People's participation should be ensured in formulating policies and programs. The process of liberalization and privatization should be checked and the entry of National, International corporate players in the agriculture sector should not be at the cost of small farmers.

„« The commission also suggested that the laws and regulations related to land are old and most of them seems to be irrelevant in the present context as their shortcomings result in mis-utilization at larger level. Therefore, the land laws should be reviewed with mass participation of people's representatives, non-government organizations and small farmers.

„« There is need to safeguard ensure the rights and security of small marginal and land less farmers in land related laws. The transformation of cultivable land to non-cultivable land has to stop and use of agriculture land of small farmers by corporate houses for agriculture should be stopped.

During the public hearings quite a number of problems, related to land distribution programs among the poor, dalit and land less farmers, were raised by the participants.

„« The commission suggested that distribution of land should be practical and the land less poor should be given cultivable land and the local authorities should ensure the availability of legal documents to every benefiting farmer. Further, it should be their responsibility to provide actual physical possession to allottees.

„« The differences and disputes between revenue and forest departments related to land should be resolved through special legal procedure. Considering the fact that thousands of cases are pending before courts, the commission suggested for constituting and operating Lok Adalats at every district for resolving land related issues.

„« For any development project people should not be displaced unless proper arrangements for their rehabilitation has been made. Land sealing process was started for better land planning during 60's

and 70's but the entire process is worst affected because of mismanagement and corruption. The process has very adverse effects on small farmers as their conditions are distorting. Several questions were also raised against land sealing were asked on its relevance.

„« The commission suggested that at all those places, where sealing was yet to start or where it was continuing should be stopped immediately and it be done only in presence of local public representatives and farmers with their consent.

„« No money in the form of development charges should be taken from the small farmers while allotting them new pieces of land. The authorities should take care of old remains of roots and drains while marking new chaks.

Water is the next most important resource after land for the farmers. Most of our agriculture is dependent on rain water. U.P. is full of geographic diversities and, therefore, availability of water varies from place to place. Irrigation facilities developed by the

government are not sufficient and are not working properly. Insufficient and improper irrigation arrangements are adversely affecting the small marginal farmers. The commission suggested that

„« Traditional water resources should be innovated. Maintenance of old canals and public tube wells should be given priority in place of constructing new canals.

„« Electricity supply for irrigation from tube wells should be ensured on regular basis.

„« Recovery of irrigation charges and other water charges should be stopped immediately from those places, where the water is not available in canals or government tube wells are not functioning.

„« Since water requirement has increased after the green revolution there is a need to develop and promote dry land farming.

„« Poor agriculture management also affects the small marginal farmers adversely, This factor is responsible for the deteriorating conditions of farmers to a major extent. In the post green revolution era the traditional crops and seeds are disappearing, so it is imperative to promote the use of traditional seeds suitable for local conditions.

„« Standardization of all types of seeds available for farmers is also important. Use of chemical fertilizers has resulted in the increase of cost in agriculture input and has also deteriorated the quality of soil. Therefore, integrated pest management and use of organic fertilizers should be promoted at a larger level.

In major part of U.P. sugarcane is one of the major crops specially in Eastern and Western part of the State. This is a main cash crop but as the sugar industry in the State is becoming sick very rapidly, proper attention should be given on its modernization and renovation.

„« Effluents from sugar industries are polluting lands and rivers too and installation of effluent treatment plants should be made compulsory.

„« Sugar industries are not paying dues of the farmers, timely so its payment should be ensured by enforcing adequate law.

„« There is a need for amendment and improvement in sugarcane purchase procedure so that the small farmers can sale their small produce without any difficulty and long wait.

„« Another important area is to remove the discrepancy in fixation of sugarcane price. There should be single price for the purchase of sugarcane.

„« Minimum support price for paddy, wheat etc. are fixed by the government, but for majority of the farmers these prices are non-benefiting therefore minimum support price should be fixed on the basis of production cost of that particular crop. The payment system to farmers of their produce at government purchase centers needs improvement, and it is desirable that timely payment to small farmers is ensured.

Government is regularly reducing and withdrawing subsidies and other facilities provided to the farmers under pressure of liberalized economic policies and globalization. This again is resulting in increasing the cost of input for agriculture and adversely affecting the farmers.

„« Considering the fact that whereas the developed countries are increasing subsidy to their farmers for competing in international market in India reduction in subsidy is resulting in increasing the production cost. Therefore, subsidy in agriculture sector should be continued without any reduction.

„« Credit facilities available for farmers should carry simple rate of interest in place of compound interest.

Geographically and demographically U.P. is a big State. Whereas, the Eastern region is affected with excess of water, the Central region is with water scarcity. Thus, the State is struggling with both disasters, flood and drought. Flood of eastern U.P. once considered, has now become a calamity during the last two decades. In fact man made mistakes are more responsible for this calamity.

„« District level disaster management plan should be made compulsory for the flood prone districts of eastern region and this should be based on ground realities.

„« Active participation of civil society organizations, intellectuals and affected communities should be ensured in planning and implementation of the plan as per ground realities.

„« Construction of dams, embankments and check dams on rivers are one of the most critical reasons for distention of flood in more villages. The rivers are becoming shallow and as a result rain water overflows that cross the dams and spreads in the villages. It does not retreat into the rivers even after rains, because of non-availability of proper drainage system.

„« On the basis of mass land survey proper drainage system should be made and any new construction of dam should be undertaken in consultation and consent with local affected population.

„« In every flood prone district there should be at least one public building at a distance of every 2 to 4 km to provide shelter for flood affected people and their livestock. There should also be facility for storage of food grains for use in the event of any calamity.

„« Water logging has become a severe problem and it continues for several months even after flood has receded. This affects sowing of the next crop adversely. Therefore, special arrangements for storage of seeds and fertilizers be made at every affected village. Excessive use of ground water especially in water scare or drought prone areas increases the problems of the farmers.

„« Information about ground water table is required for every district. The number of tube wells for the affected areas and per crop availability of maximum water from tube wells should be fixed. Community tube wells should be promoted and mass public awareness programs should be launched in these areas for optimum utilization of available water from water resources.

„« If the farmer opts for agriculture insurance voluntarily, to save the crops in case of any calamity, the assessment of loss should be made individually instead of assessment of losses on the basis of calamity evaluation at block or district level. Normally calamity relief or agriculture insurance payment are provided when the calamity losses assessed are to the tune of 80% in any block. This

practice is absolutely non-practical and improper. The commission feels that percentage of loss assessment should be more practical and the relief should be decided on the basis of losses in specific areas.

Irrespective of the fact that agriculture is the base of Indian economy and life and livelihood of more than 70% of the total population is based on agriculture and allied activities the status of farmers is not recognized as it should be.

„« The policy framework should be farmer oriented.

„« Women involved in agriculture should be recognized as farmers and the principle of equal wages for equal work should be enforced. Right to information should be enacted in the State.

The public commission realized the role of research institutions in the development of sustainable agriculture and suggested :

„« The research institutions should work to find out the solution for environmental degradation, which has emanated in and after green revolution. The focus of agriculture research should be viability of agriculture, specially for small marginal farmers.

„« The scientists should work to find out ways for controlling salinity of land because of water logging (and increase in water table). They should try to promote principles and practices of traditional farming, as most of them are still relevant and useful.

„« To make agriculture viable, especially for small marginal farmers there is a need to make efforts for reducing the cost of input and this requires accessibility and availability of resources close to the farmers.

„« There is a need to promote mixed farming, use of local and traditional seeds, organic farming and integrated waste management in place of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Traditional water resources should be resuscitated, installation of community tube wells be promoted; and the operation of these community tube wells done by farmers themselves.

„« The voluntary organizations, people organizations and social workers should work for information dissemination and awareness generation on above and other related subjects. They should facilitate required technical training for farmers and support them in proper marketing of farm produces. They should try to mobilize small and land less farmers to understand issues and problems of small farming and provide them forum or platform to raise their concerns and voices.

Farmers are known and identified because of their work. All of us have to try for the survival of small and marginal farmers and their small farming, as they work hard to feed the entire nation.

Information by U K Sinha of GEAG and advisor to Right to Food Campaign-U.P.