

# DEPLORABLE CONDITIONS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN PUNJAB: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF MALWA REGION

Navjot Kamboj

## ABSTRACT

There are many reasons for the agricultural labourers facing adverse circumstances especially as they cannot grasp the schemes and policies being floated for their benefit by the Central and State governments. Many a times they become the gullible target of middle men who are interested in serving their own ends. The farmers are at the edge of attaining the benefit of sustainable development but are tricked out of it by several others who exploit them and rob them of the rightful fruit of their labour. This leads them to adverse circumstances where they have to take on debt and later when they are unable to repay, they have to accept even humiliating circumstances, defeat and ultimately even adopting suicide. Economic stability is mostly produced by agriculture, particularly in developing nations like India. All sectors of the Indian economy have steadily changed as a result of the slow development rate of the global economy during 2008-09. A person's socio-economic status is determined by a number of characteristics, such as their income, education level, amount of land owned, food consumption habits, calorie intake per person, occupation, and other fundamental services and infrastructure. A key factor in obtaining and using knowledge about contemporary agricultural technologies is farmers' education. The majority of agricultural labourers are middle-aged and have active social media profiles, despite the fact that the majority of them have only completed primary school and that a sizeable portion are illiterate. The farmers own smartphones. These little farmers could greatly improve their lot if they followed agricultural associations and other sources of news and information about agriculture. Nevertheless, they are unable to access the knowledge in the right direction to make the best use of it. About 80–85% of small and marginal farmers in Punjab own between one and two acres of land. They are hardly able to make ends meet, even if they take on land on contract.

**KEYWORDS:** Agriculture, Agricultural labourer, Socio-Economic, Education, Income, suicide, Poverty, Punjab, Unemployment, Farmers.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The status of Punjab's agricultural labour force has been covered by national and international media in recent years. Farmers' debt, which they incurred for a variety of home and agricultural needs, is a major contributor to their woes. For the majority of the world's poor, who reside in rural regions and are mostly employed in agriculture, the sector can assist lower poverty, increase earnings, and enhance food security. Economic stability is mostly produced by agriculture, particularly in developing nations like India. In Punjab, 66% of the population lived in villages and 70% of the workforce did so as per the 2011 census (Government of India, 2011). With respect to the workforce and population share, Punjab's economy is still primarily rural in this setting. As a matter of fact, Punjab's agricultural development underwent a partial dynamism of expansion in the long-term dynamics of the agrarian economy, as described by Kaldor and Kuznets (1967; 1965). Between 1961 and 1991, the workforce decreased somewhat, while Punjab's share of Net State Domestic Production (NSDP) fell significantly. NSDP's agricultural and livestock shares fell from 52.00 percent in 1960–61 to 44.10 percent in 1990–91 (at current prices). In comparison, the share of Punjab's workforce that is employed in agriculture decreased from 55.89 percent in 1961 to 55.26 percent in 1991 (Singh, 2009).

Despite agriculture and related industries' relatively smaller contribution to India's GDP—15.7 percent (Ministry of Finance, 2019). Fifty-five percent of its people were employed in agriculture (Government of India, 2011). Initial impressions suggest that the country's agricultural work force is not receiving a fair share of the resources. In Punjab, agriculture and related sectors account for 28.13 percent of the state GDP, employing 39.40 percent of the labour force. Agriculture's push factor is the reason behind workers' transition from farm to non-farm

employment. However, a dramatic shift in the rural labour from the agricultural to non-farm industries is not consistent with the job growth assumption (Ghuman, 2005).

**Table-1.1: Share of Agriculture and Allied Activities in GDP of India (in percentage terms)**

Year	1950-51	1970-71	1990-91	2000-01	2010-11	2013-14	2014-15	2017-18
Share of agriculture and allied activities in GDP of India (in percentage terms)	56.5	45.9	34.0	24.7	18.9	18.6	17.6	15.8

Source: CSO and Economic Survey 2014-15

The public extension system in India cannot conceivably reach millions of farmers with enough skilled personnel to meet their complicated needs in the current agricultural landscape. The demands of farmers are far more varied, and the expertise needed to meet those needs is outside the scope of work for extension workers at the local level. By using agroforestry, Chouhan (2017) examined the socioeconomic standing of farmers. Interviews with agroforestry farming members were used to gather the data. The impact of gender on agricultural cropping work and the nutritional status of people living in rural areas was revealed by Komatsu et al. (2019). This study has only looked at one farming season. In order to more effectively solve localised issues, farmers must be educated in order to both receive and apply information on contemporary agricultural technologies. As such, guaranteeing that everyone has access to high-quality education is essential to India's economic and social growth, especially for the impoverished and rural populace (Gille, 2010). India's farmers and research and extension systems are becoming closer thanks to the quick speed at which information and communication technologies are developing.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the research study conducted among the farmers and agricultural labour of Punjab.

1. To study the condition of the farmers and agricultural labour of Punjab
2. To determine the reasons for the dissatisfaction and disappointment of the farmers and the agricultural labour of Punjab
3. To analyse the factors responsible for the agricultural labourers falling in to debt and contemplate the extreme step of suicide

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A sample of 300 agricultural labour homes was drawn using a multi-stage random sampling design to choose the districts, blocks, villages, and agricultural labour households. Data on socioeconomic factors such as the age distribution, debt distribution, family structure, and educational attainment of farm labourers were gathered using a well-organised program. A thorough interviewing process was employed to gather insights from influential individuals such as the Sarpanch, educators, and health professionals. Additional methods of gathering data included researcher observations and focus group discussions (FGDs).

## 4. STATUS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

One group that is diverse is agricultural labour. Individuals can be classified as either "hired" or "self-employed." A range of contract labourers, including casual labourers and attached labourers, are included in the latter category, while the former comprises employees who work on their own family farms. In addition to naukars, siri, kamma, and other seasonal farm workers, attached labourers also include permanent agricultural workers. Paying frequency, length of contract, nature and degree of attachment, and employer-labour interactions all warrant special consideration in this industry. The term of the agreement could be one day, one month, one year, or more. Payment could be made on an hourly, daily, or other basis using a piece rate, hourly wage, or product share, among other methods. Daily labourers, who make up the largest type of hired labour under the broad definition, are synonymous with casual labourers. Workers who work on a daily contract are usually compensated at the conclusion of the working day. However, agricultural labourers, commonly referred to as naukars or siris, are individuals whose employment contracts typically span one year or longer and who are paid in equal instalments throughout the year. In addition to daily perks like meals, payment terms can be set in cash, kind, or both. An annual allowance may also include things like festival attire and train tickets (for trips back to one's hometown). The greatest portion of the rural population works in agriculture, and they make a substantial contribution. Even with their contribution to the Indian economy, they continue to be the most disadvantaged in terms of both social and economic spheres, making them the poorer element of the rural society. It produces underemployment and unemployment, and one of its regular features is low annual income. A significant portion of agricultural labourers live below the poverty line and work in unfavourable conditions (Hunumanthappa, K. 2014). Agriculture labour

is an important segment of the rural population; they are mostly landless, marginal and small farmers and usually belongs to the Secluded Castes, Secluded Tribes and Other Backward Classes. After the passing of more than 70 years of independence there is no big change happened in their economic life. Due to their insufficient income, they are living in poor conditions and be indebted of banks and land lords after doing a number of hours of work in a day. Their morning holds no promise for the evening and they can never sleep without tensions as they have no stocks left (Hunumanthappa, K. 2014).

**Table 2: State Wise Agricultural Labour in India -2011**

State/Uts	Agricultural labour (main and marginal <sup>1</sup> )	Male agricultural labour (main and marginal)	Female agricultural labour (main and marginal)
Jammu & Kashmir	547705	414344	133361
Himachal Pradesh	175038	103060	71978
Punjab	1588455	1239445	349010
Chandigarh	1687	1375	312
Uttarakhand	403301	286540	116761
Haryana	1528133	1041241	486892
Delhi	39475	31352	8132
Rajasthan	4939664	2132669	2806995
Uttar Pradesh	19939223	13803442	6135781
Bihar	18345649	12570717	5774932
Sikkim	25986	12883	13103
Arunachal Pradesh	36171	18377	17794
Nagaland	62962	31857	31105
Manipur	114918	46032	68886
Mizoram	41787	22488	19299
Tripura	353618	214106	139512
Meghalaya	198364	106342	92022
Assam	1845346	1129210	7161136
West Bengal	10188842	7452814	2736028
Jharkhand	4436052	2341700	2094352
Odisha	6739993	3481836	3258157
Chhattisgarh	5091882	2344549	2747333
Madhya Pradesh	12192267	6310657	5881610
Gujrat	6839415	3649591	318924
Daman & Diu	772	362	410
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	17799	5453	12346
Maharashtra	13486140	6774538	6711602
Andhra Pradesh	16967754	8130022	8837732
Karnataka	7155963	3283279	3872684
Goa	26760	14816	11944
Lakshadweep	0	0	0
Kerala	1322850	857995	464855
Tamil Nadu	9606547	4842707	4763840
Puducherry	68391	42794	25597
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	4781	3744	1037
India	144333690	82742337	61591353

Source: Agricultural Statistics a Glance 2016 & Registrar General of India

Table -3 shows the types of agricultural labour prominent in Punjab. There is the seasonal labour that is common during the major agricultural activities of sowing and harvesting and other agriculture allied activities. There comprised 28.51 percent males and 35.13 percent females. The full time agricultural and allied labour were 51.33 percent male and 64.86 percent females.

<sup>1</sup>Main worker: Those workers who had worked for the major part of the period 6 month or more these are main workers. Marginal workers: Those workers who had worked for the major part of the period less than 6 month these are marginal workers.

**Table-3: Type of Agricultural Labour in Punjab** (Number of respondents 300)

Sr. No	Employment	Male (N-263)		Female (N-37)	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1.	Seasonal agricultural labour	75	28.51	13	35.13
2.	Full-time agricultural labour	53	20.15	0	00
3.	Agricultural and allied labour	135	51.33	24	64.86

Lack of adequate education is the main reason that many of the agricultural labour are unable to avail themselves of the opportunity to benefit from the available schemes and programmes the Central and State government. This is also possibly the reason that the labour tends to succumb to the plans of cunning middlemen who exploit them for their vested interest.

**Table-4: The Educational Level of the Head of the Family** (Number of respondents 300)

Sr. No	Qualification	Male (N-263)		Female (N-37)	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1.	Illiterate	101	38.40	24	64.86
2.	Up to Primary	91	34.60	13	35.13
3.	Up to Elementary VIII	45	17.11	0	0.00
4.	Up to Matric	19	7.22	0	0.00
5.	Higher Secondary	7	2.66	0	0.00

Agricultural labourers in particular, who live in deplorable conditions and endure social, political, and economic discrimination, are among the many people whose livelihoods are derived from agriculture (Singh & Singh, 2015). Peasants have become deeply indebted due to their diminishing income and wasteful spending on social and religious rituals (Gaur, 2014).

The spending habits of agricultural labourers, who were maximising their expenditures on food and clothing, have demonstrated a very poor level of life (Chitodkar 1999). Most agricultural labourers and farmers were unable to cover their consumption costs with their earnings. In order to maintain their minimal standard of living, farm labourers are forced by this disparity to employ a significant amount of debt (Singh et al., 2017).

Their socio-economic conditions have been steadily declining and have now reached a concerning level, even though they have a notable number of workers and agricultural labourers in their population. According to Singh et al. (2021), a significant number of individuals who have experienced severe economic troubles are living in misery, which leads to a high number of them ending their lives. Examining the socioeconomic circumstances of Punjab's agricultural labour force in light of the aforementioned concerns, a study was carried out.

**Table 5: Caste-wise distribution of Sample** (Number of respondents 300)

Sr. No.	Category	Number	Percentage
1.	General	12	4.00
2.	Scheduled Caste	269	89.66
3	OBC	19	6.33
4.	Total	300	100.00

The accompanying Table shows that the Scheduled Castes make up the majority of agricultural laborers—nearly 90%—in this regard. In certain areas, caste-specific jobs were assigned to agricultural labourers; however, the agrarian crisis has impacted the agrarian community so severely that even members of higher castes, such as the Jats, are now employed as agricultural labourers. The majority of them fall into the group of small and medium-sized farms. Owing to various facets of the continuous agricultural crisis, as well as the forces of transformation fuelled by urbanisation, shifting land uses, and infrastructure advancement, these individuals lost their land and were forced to relocate to different areas and pursue different careers.

**Table 6: Agriculture workers as percentage to total workers in districts of Punjab -2011**

District	Agriculture workers	Percentage of agriculture workers to total workers	Total workers	Total area according to village papers: (data land in thousand Hectare)
Gurdaspur	194816	32.83	540254	351
Pathankot	53780	24.79	216884	94
Amritsar	246216	26.82	917856	264
Tarn Taran	197069	51.76	380702	241
Kapurthala	97639	34.36	284165	167
Jalandhar	152359	19.67	774472	266
Nawanshehar (S.S.B.Nagar)	65234	31.92	204329	127
Hoshiarpur	164134	32.83	499822	339
Rupnagar	67160	28.74	233676	139
S.A.S. Nagar	62658	17.60	355995	121
Ludhiana	239383	18.63	1284822	368
Firozpur	190918	51.75	368878	239
Fazilka	228738	58.98	387817	287
Faridkot	107288	48.42	221555	147
Shri Mukatsar Sahib	197579	58.92	335326	264
Moga	174019	48.45	359172	223
Bathinda	269917	49.07	549986	337
Mansa	196330	59.76	328512	214
Sangrur	248990	43.77	568758	361
Barnala	100800	48.15	209331	141
Patiala	202305	30.64	660267	322
Fatehgarh Sahib	65634	30.56	21783	115
Total	3522966	35.59	9897362	5,033

Source: Economic and Statistical Organisation, Punjab (page no. 136) and Director Land records Punjab 2011. Page no. 13

### 5. DEBT POSITION OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR HOUSEHOLDS

There are many reasons behind the indebtedness of the agricultural labourers. For instance, rise of their population and decline of village industry, growth of capitalist farming and low level of their income. Thus, they are seeking loan from non-institutional agencies continuously. There is growing indebtedness among the agricultural labourers (Dhar, 2006). Unfortunately, India's rural population face heavy indebtedness particularly agricultural labour and over the years it has reached dangerous levels in a developing country like India (Agrawal 2005). The proportion of indebtedness among Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes of agricultural labour were 24.9 percent, 22 percent, 22.7 percent respectively. In 1999-2000 it was reported that there was a decline in indebtedness at all India level from 35.5 percent in 1993-1994 to 25.10 percent. The States like Gujarat, Kerala, Punjab, J&K, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep recorded raising trend over the above reported period. Whereas in 2004-2005 the level of indebtedness increases sharply to 47.3 percent. It was same in the case of households belonging to the weaker section of society. It has increased from 25.30 per cent to 48.04 per cent in case of the SC households, from 22.60 per cent to 46.67 per cent in the case of OBC households and from 22.90 per cent to 39.39 per cent in case of ST households over the same period (Hunumanthappa, K .2014). In India there have been suicides among farmers in the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra. There is no doubt that the Green Revolution has increased the income of farmers in 1970s belonging to poor and ultra-poor population sections (Shergill & Singh 1995). Recent studies have shown that gains from the green revolution not been sustained and therefore the farm sector has been in crisis (Sidhu 2002; Singh and Singh 2002; Singh. S, 2000; Iyer and Manik 2000; Chand 1999). Despite, the rapid advancement through green revolution in agriculture sector impacts the economy of the country for some years, but this development is not sustainable both in terms of agricultural sector and also in terms of the benefits for the agricultural labourers. The population belongs to the agriculture sector as a workforce faces many problems like indebtedness, poverty, lack of social security etc.

## 6. CONDITION OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR IN PUNJAB

Punjab accounts for 1.65 percent of country geographical area and 2.4 percent of population (Bhalla et al., 1990). According to statistical abstract of Punjab 2002, 39.36 percent of states workforce is engaged in agriculture and allied activities. Due to the agrarian crisis, the farmers are in acute distress as they continue to be dependent on agriculture in the absence of alternatives source of livelihood (Singh, 2009, p.23). Most agricultural labour is seasonal and about 67 percent of agriculture labourers get 10-20 days' work in month (Bharti, 2011, p.37). Generally, agricultural workers have a short period of intensive employment, for instance, at harvest time or sowing season. Various problem facing the agriculture workers range from low wage, uncertain working hours, absence of social security, lack of housing facilities, lack of skill, low status, less bargaining powers, bonded labour and indebtedness (Vetriaivel & Manigandan, 2013; Parasad, 2006).

**Table-7: Total Debt on the Family** (Number of respondents 300)

Sr. No.	Debt on the Family	Number	Percentage
1.	Yes	257	85.66
2.	No	43	14.34

According to Table 7, almost 85.66% of households in the State reported having debt, whilst only 14.34 % said they had no debt at all. The average debt for each sampled agricultural labour home and each indebted agricultural labour household was Rs. 76016.90 and Rs. 85411.03, respectively.

An typical Punjabi marginal farmer borrowed approximately Rs 3.43 lakh annually. Less than 20% (about Rs. 61,000) of this total was borrowed by a marginal farmer in Maharashtra, and less than one-fourth (about Rs. 84,000) in Uttar Pradesh.

**Table-8: Sources of the Debt** (Number of respondents 257)

Sr. No.	Source	Number	Percentage
1.	Landlord and moneylenders	115	44.74
2.	Public Bank	21	8.17
3.	Co-operative societies	00	0.00
4.	Relatives/ Friends	121	47.08

The avenues open to the farmer for accessing loans are fairly limited. Table-8 shows the sources of debt available to the Punjab farmers, namely, landlords and money lenders or arthiyas(45 percent) while very few (8 percent) borrow from Banks (both private and public sector). Some even go to their relatives and friends for monetary help. When they are unable to repay the debt within reasonable time they are constrained to take more loan to repay of some prior debts and the vicious circle goes on.

**Table 9: Purpose for which the debt was incurred** (Number of respondents 257)

Sr. No.	Purpose	Number	Percentage
1.	For household needs	89	34.63
2.	For Education	18	7.00
3.	For Family Function(Marriage and other)	91	35.40
4.	Medical treatment	59	22.95

There has been a steady drop in the need for agricultural labourers due to technological advancements (Singh, 2009, p.35). In 2005, Punjab possessed 4.07 lakh tractors, which was more than double the necessary amount, along with 3.48 lakh cultivators and 14,000 combines, as reported by the department of agriculture. In 1980, Punjab had 25,000 threshers, which were utilised to separate grain from stalks following manual harvesting. The figure reached 3.05 lakh by the year 1995. Monthly employment for 67% of agricultural labourers ranges from 10 to 20 days. This is why, on average, agricultural labourers earn much less per month than their non-farming counterparts (Bharti, V. 2011, p.36). Seventy percent of Punjab's agricultural workers are in debt, and many take out even more loans at exorbitant interest rates to cover their existing debts. Working as maids for wealthy farmers' homes makes women more vulnerable to exploitation.

## 7. TENDENCY OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS TO COMMIT SUICIDE

The suicide rate among agricultural labourers is elevated in two districts of Punjab: Bathinda and Sangrur. Indebtedness is the primary cause of their fatalities. In 2008, the crime records bureau reported that at least 16,196 cultivators committed suicide in India. Punjab has not been overlooked in the tragic statistics of suicides among

agricultural labourers. In a study of the two most severely affected districts, Bathinda and Sangrur, it was discovered that a total of 2890 farmers and agricultural labourers from these districts committed suicide between 2000 and 2008. Of these, 87 percent were small farmers and agricultural labourers, and 65 percent of the suicides were attributed to indebtedness. Agricultural labourers accounted for 39.2 percent of the total (Hindustan Times, April 27, 2009).

One life is lost and the surviving family is left to endure a lifetime of hardship as a result of farmer suicides. Although a farmer's widow is able to remain in the village due to the fact that she has a small plot of land to raise her children on, the widow of a labourer has no land, assets, or the ability to repay the loan without adequate collateral. Additionally, widows frequently commit suicide subsequent to their spouses' deaths. Over 50 women in the Sangrur and Bathinda districts committed suicide as a result of debt during the first decade of the 21st century.

The plight of agricultural labourers in Punjab was also exacerbated by health issues. The agricultural labourers are experiencing significant health issues and are the victims of numerous chronic diseases, including hepatitis C and cancer. The treatment of these maladies is causing significantly more difficulty for income-strapped individuals (Hindustan Times, August 26, 2018).

Despite the fact that agricultural labourers make a substantial contribution to the overall production of the agricultural sector, they were unable to secure a portion of the agricultural prosperity.

In the Malwa region of Punjab, a number of politically orientated organisations and labour unions are advocating for agricultural labour. Mazdoor Mukti Morcha, Khet Mazdoor Union, ZameenPraptiSanghrash Committee (ZPSC), and KrantiKariPenduzMazdoor Union (KPMU) are among them (Bharti, 2011, pp.38,40; Rueindia, 2017, p.66).

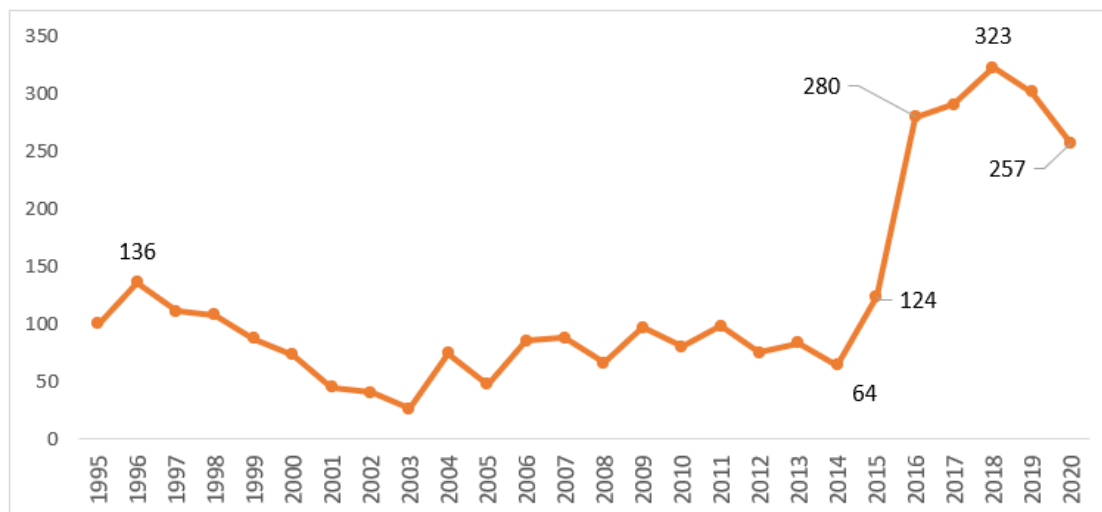
Punjab farmers borrow heavily. Across landholding size categories, Punjab farmers have been reported to be taking the highest amount of loans. The purposes enumerated for taking debt have been largely personal. Most usually the farmer incurs debt for holding the marriage of a daughter or son as they are riddled by the age-old social nemesis of dowry and making a show of wealth to keep their izzat or honour intact before their marital relationships. Medical needs are another drain on the farmers' economic status. They incur debt to seek cures. In certain parts of Punjab like the large numbers of the population that are afflicted by cancers [Mansa, Barnala to Bathinda due to contaminated waters] and have to seek cures in the neighbouring State of Rajasthan. A very small part of the debt incurred is for education where the farmers attempt to send their wards abroad in their desire for a better life for their offspring.

## **8. AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS SUICIDES IN PUNJAB: CAUSES OF URGENT CONCERN**

The issue of farmer deaths is once again under the spotlight. Media sources say that 14 Punjab farmers killed themselves in April 2022 alone. According to Ugrahan, the largest farmers' group in Punjab, 55 farmers and farm workers have killed themselves since April 1, 2022. These farmers have clearly been hit hard by the rising costs of things like land rent, diesel, and fertilisers, as well as their failure to make sufficient crop yields for two straight crop seasons. During the kharif season of 2021, the pink bollworm pest hurt cotton, and during the rabi season of 2021–2022, high temperatures in March 2022 negatively affected wheat.

Recently, there have been more farmer deaths in Punjab compared to 2015. Three hundred and twenty-three suicides were reported in 2018, up from about seventy each year from 2000 to 2014. According to data from at least 2014, Punjab did not have a high rate of farmer deaths in the country. National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data on suicides shows that 10,677 farmers (who owned or leased land) and farm workers killed themselves in the United States in 2020. These people came from Punjab; 257 of them, or 2.4%, were members. Ten percent of the 2,616 suicides that happened in Punjab that year were these deaths. Figure 1 shows this situation.

**Figure 1: Farmer and Agricultural Labourer Suicides in Punjab, 1995 to 2020**



Source: NCRB

Based on figures from the NCRB, it looks like most of the farmer suicides in Punjab were caused by landowners. But that doesn't mean that the number of farmworker deaths wasn't going up. It's not a surprise that the number of suicides was highest among small and poor farmers. Individuals who owned between 1 and 2 hectares of land were the most likely to commit suicide (Figure -1).

The NCRB's 2015 report, which is the most recent one that lists the causes of suicides, says that about 51% of farmer deaths in Punjab were caused by being in too much debt, mostly to institutions. The next most common reasons were illness (20%), family problems (9%), problems with farming like failed crops (7%), property disputes (6%), poverty (3%), drug or alcohol abuse (2%), and other reasons like marital problems and bad image (2%).

In our poll, Punjabi farmers said that losing crops, rising input costs, unstable income, falling output, problems with the market, and a lack of insurance, compensation, and infrastructure were more upsetting to them than being in debt.

## 9. RECENT FARM REFORMS AND AGRICULTURAL LABOR

People from all over India have been protesting since September 2020, when the union government passed three new farm acts: The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020; the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; and the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020. Farm labour unions were involved in the protests in Punjab, but this was not talked about or reported on in a lot of the news and articles. According to them, the idea that the new farm bills are only about farming is a lie. Workers, shop owners, arhtias, students, workers, and young boys and girls are also affected by this problem (Sinha, 2020). Many people are afraid that the three agri-laws will end the minimum support price (MSP), get rid of the mandis/APMCs (Agricultural Produce Market Committees), and let corporations and contract farmers take advantage of the agricultural sector. Particularly the people who work in agriculture are afraid that if the agri-laws hurt the farms, they will also hurt them.

Dalit workers on Punjab farms that don't own land are afraid that if landed farmers don't get guaranteed returns on their crops through the MSP, they will be at the hands of big businesses, and the workers will also suffer (Gupta, 2020). The necessary commodities (amendment) act, 2020 will make things worse for agricultural workers who have been living on barely enough to get by. Based on the 68th round of the NSSO sample survey, out of the 136 crore people who were surveyed, 90% spent less than Rs.1200 a month on food. This means that the average monthly income will rise to Rs.1790 once farm laws are put in place. Costs will go up for each family, reaching Rs.2600 per month and Rs.31000 per year. According to this plan, people will spend 8.76 lakh crores on food, which will go straight to the pockets of big businesses. The necessary commodities amendment act will also have an effect on the public distribution systems. People used to get food and other necessities at lower prices through the updated public distribution systems. Since focused goods distribution systems were put in place, only 67% of people who were eligible for those benefits are still getting them. With the new farm rules, corporations will be able to buy crops from farmers for less money. The farmers will then sell their goods to consumers for a



higher price. Because of the new farm rules, there will only be two or three big companies that buy crops and sell the goods. This will make the market work like a monopoly (Singh, 2021).

### 10. CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The present study looked at the social and economic situations of Punjabi farmworkers. Scheduled castes, which were already socially and economically backward, made up most of the families. Even though 97% of the families lived in their own homes, the average number of rooms was only 2. The families only had access to basic amenities. The more luxurious amenities were almost never present in their lives. How many people in households were earning and not making enough to meet their basic needs? About 33% of people in all of Punjab's zones were earning, while 67% were not earning. The situation is very bad because people who are making money have to take care of more than three times as many people who are not making money. This is one reason why they are both economically and socially backward. They are socially backward because economically backward families will find it hard to keep up with the rest of society.

Getting these poor people better should be the government's top concern. For agricultural labourers, there should be programs that promise jobs and forgive loans so that they can get out from under their debt and raise their standard of living. More study is needed because different farming areas have different problems that need to be fixed in different ways. The problems agricultural labourers are faced with are different in different areas, but the main issue of debt and not being able to pay it back stays the same. To make Punjab an area where farming can be successful in the long term, the ways to deal with these issues need to be studied in depth.

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