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Causes of Low Productivity in Agriculture Sector in India

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Abstract: We know the fact very well that agriculture sector has been the backbone of the Indian economy and it will continue to remain so for a long time. It has to support 17 per cent of world population from 2.3 per cent of world geographical area and 4.2 per cent of world's water resources. In India between 1965-66 and 2010-11, total food grain production was increased by over 230 per cent. During this period, rice production increased from 30.59 MT to 95.32 MT – a straight line growth of over 211 per cent; wheat production performed substantially better, increasing from 10.40 MT to 85.93 MT – a growth of 726 per cent; while coarse cereals registered growths of 103 per cent in same period. However, recently some periodical changes in agriculture production have been observed. That is why agriculture has been converting itself into business sector in many parts of the country. The Government of India has also taken some effective steps to increase the production of agriculture. It is estimated that the income of the farmers in India would raise to double in the next decade. The present research paper highlights some causes of low productivity in agriculture sector in India.

Keywords: Agriculture, Low Productivity, GDP Growth, Infrastructure, Irrigation.

Introduction: Most of the scholars agree with the fact that India is striving to find ways and means to keep its burgeoning population adequately fed. On the one hand it is facing the problem of declining productivity and on the other, challenges posed by liberalization. Agricultural production has two components food grains and non-food grains. The former contributes approximately two-thirds of total agricultural production. As far as food grains output in concerned, the total production increased from 50.8 million tons in 1950-51 to 264.77 million tons in 2014-15. Now, the central challenge of Indian agriculture is low productivity,

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evident in modest average yields, especially in cereals and pulses. First, consider the main food grains – wheat and rice. These two cereals are grown on the most fertile and irrigated areas in the country. And they use a large part of the resources that the government channels to agriculture, whether water, fertilizer, power, credit or procurement under the MSP program. Even then, average yields of wheat and rice in India are much below that of China's – 46 per cent below in the case of rice and 39 per cent in the case of wheat and the situation of productivity of all the cereals are on par with rice and wheat.

Causes of Low Productivity: It is a well-known fact that productivity levels in Indian agriculture in very low as compared to the productivity levels of other countries, in terms of global rank, the productivity levels of India in major agricultural crops is very disappointing. There are many reasons for low productivity in agriculture in India. The causes of low productivity are as under:

- **Over Pressure of Population on Land:**We know that the real problem of Indian agriculture seems to be that there are too many people who depend on agriculture.The natural increase in population—from about 35 crore in 1947 to 113 crore in 2007— over 3 times could not be absorbed in industries.Moreover, dependence on agriculture increased due to the decline of handicrafts.Over-crowding and the consequent pressure of population on land have led to subdivision and fragmentation of holdings, decline in the area of land per capita, disguised unemployment and almost zero marginal productivity of labour. The area of cultivated land per hectare between 1901 and 1991 declined from 0.43 hectare to 0.22 hectare.
- **Lack of Awareness:** It is noteworthy that the Indian farmers, generally speaking, are illiterate, ignorant, superstitious, and conservative and bound by old customs and institutions such as the caste system, and the joint family system. Superstition and belief in fate are the curse which keep the farmers totally satisfied with their primitive system of cultivation.They are just happy if they manage to get two square meals a day. They have non-experimental outlook and are hardly motivated by considerations of economic progress.

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- **Poor Infrastructure:**Today Indian agriculture has suffered because of the inadequacy of such non-farm services as provision of irrigation, seed, finance, marketing, etc. Irrigation facilities in India are inadequate. Even after 60 years of planning, gross irrigated area as percentage of cropped area stands at 40.3 p.c. in 2003-04. This means 60 p.c. of the cropped area are rain-dependent.If the current trends in irrigation expansion by less than 1 million hectare per annum persist, we are afraid that more than half of the cultivated land would remain un-irrigated even by 2012. Indian farmers are yet to learn intensively the use of improved seed-fertilisers.Agricultural credit arrangements are inadequate. Institutional sources of credit are mostly directed to the rich farmers. Problems get multiplied once the question of marketing of agricultural produce becomes dominant. Marketing facilities are extremely inadequate.
- **Small Size of Land Holding:**It is well-known fact that the average size of holding in India is very low, less than 2 hectares or 5 acres. Not only agricultural holdings are small but they are fragmented too. So no scientific cultivation with improved implements, seeds, etc., is possible.
- **Fluctuations in Land Tenure:**Today it is a big problem and main cause of low productivity in Agriculture sector in India. Actually,a potent force behind low agricultural productivity has been the absence of proper incentives. The cultivator does not often own the land; he has no security of tenancy; and he may be turned out of his land at any time the landowner desires. So the landless worker has little, if any, desire to increase productivity.It is true that through various land reform measures semi-feudal agrarian structure had been broken to provide a greater fillip to agricultural productivity. The land reform measures are yet to break the semi-feudal rural structure.Landlordism in a different garb still prevails; eviction of tenants from land is still continuing. Rack-renting is not uncommon; ceiling laws have been violated. Thus, land reform measures not only failed to ensure social justice but also productivity of land could not be raised.
- **Poor Investment:**Most of the scholars and economists agree with the fact that low productivity in Indian agriculture may be attributed to low volume of governmental investment compared to the industrial sector. In the First Plan (1951-1956), investment

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in the agricultural sector stood at 31 p.c. It declined gradually to 19 p.c. by the Ninth Plan Period (1997- 2002).Further, the possibility of resource mobilisation in the agricultural sector is rather bleak. Income generation in the form of land revenue and income tax is rather low. On the contrary, agricultural sector is largely subsidized. All these result in low volume of investment in the agricultural sector. In recent years, investment has declined to 1.3 p.c. of GDP. This is attributed to stagnation in public investment in the reform years.

- **Traditional Techniques of Production:**It is a main cause of low productivity in India because the Indian farmers have been using old and inefficient methods and techniques of production generation after generation. Increase in production is possible only if proper and adequate manures are used. But, in India, the use of both farmyard manure and chemical fertilisers is mostly inadequate compared to our needs.The importance of good quality seeds to increase agricultural productivity hardly requires any emphasis. But, Indian farmers have been using seeds of very poor quality for decades.With the launching of the New Agricultural Strategy in the mid-60s, the agricultural sector has witnessed a remarkable increase in production and productivity during the last three decades. Still then, it is inadequate compared to the country's needs.For instance, modern agricultural technology has had little spread effect among Indian farmers due to a variety of reasons. And, because of slower diffusion of knowledge of improved technology, its applicability is limited and, therefore, productivity differs from region to region. Some regions exhibit higher productivity compared to other states where new agricultural technology is used selectively.
- **Poor Irrigation Facilities:**Indian crops basically depend on monsoon. Therefore, one of the proximate causes of the weaknesses of Indian agriculture has been that most of the farmers throughout the country have to depend upon rainfall and very few of them can enjoy the facilities of artificial irrigation. It is the inadequate spread of irrigation facilities that acts as the main barrier for the adoption of HYV seeds.It is to be noted here that irrigated area in India generally tends to be used for rice and wheat cultivation while the

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other crops are grown mostly in rain-fed and un-irrigated condition. This demands spreading of irrigation facilities to all crops.

Conclusion: Now, we can point out that agriculture sector in India is facing many problems and one of them is low productivity which directly affects farmers' income. Therefore, most of the economists and scholars give some suggestions to increase the income of farmers by increasing the production of various crops sown in different seasons. They suggest that the first step towards ending the agricultural crisis and for supporting all segments of the economy is that all economic agents work for common good. For example, sugarcane growers must get a fair price for their produce and the industry must get its cane at a competitive price. The issue cannot be resolved through support price or export subsidies. Such policies may help in extraordinary times but cannot resolve the underlying and deep-rooted issue of low productivity which depends much on farmers' earnings, savings and investment in modernizing agriculture.The private sector is still shy from investing in building rural physical and social infrastructure to provide an impetus to agricultural growth, leaving no option for farmers to fend for themselves in an adverse environment.

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