

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA
Dr. Madhavi Ajit Khot
Assistant Professor,
K.B. College of Arts and Commerce for Women, Thane (E)
Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health crisis that is already having devastating impacts on the world economy – both directly and through necessary measures to contain the spread of the disease. These impacts are also being felt by the food and agriculture sector. The COVID-19 pandemic likewise raises the caution on the earnest need to change the world's food frameworks. Around the world, food frameworks stay a driver of environmental change and the planet's unfurling natural emergency. This emergency can fill in as a defining moment to rebalance and change our food frameworks, making them more comprehensive, manageable and versatile. As per the International Labor Organization (ILO), the ascent in joblessness as a result of Covid-19 could be up to 25 million around the world.



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Objectives:

1. To study the impact of Covid 19 on agriculture sector
2. To find out challenges in the agriculture sector

Methodology:

The data is collected from secondary sources i.e magazines ,reports, relevant websites and records of government agencies.

Introduction:

India had imposed one of the strictest and longest lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic; this has affected the livelihoods of millions of people. Movement restrictions and closure of businesses have adversely affected income. In rural areas, where the economy is largely informal and cash dependent, the lockdown has also resulted in liquidity constraints. There has been wide reporting of unemployment-induced income shocks, increased expenditure on hygiene products and on other health-related services because of the pandemic, and increased prices of essentials due to supply-side disruptions . All the sectors, with the exception of agriculture, recorded negative growth in the first quarter of 2020. Even though the agriculture sector has performed well and there has been no shortfall in either production or availability, food security at the household level may be negatively affected by reduced incomes, temporary unavailability of food items due to supply chain issues, and increased food prices. Even now, we are facing the indirect effects of the covid-19 on the agricultural systems in the whole world .The disease COVID-19 is spreading continuously and causing hard times to the humanity and has postured serious problems for the effective and sustainable working of agricultural and food markets around the world. Agriculture which is the most important sectors related to food security human development .Quarantine procedures takenare rigorously affecting labour availability

for major agricultural practices which include from sowing the crops to picking fruit. There is a need to understand and estimate the immediate consequences of Covid 19 on the universal linkage of agricultural and food systems and should be able to track unexpected risks.

Impact on Agriculture Activities:

Agriculture and supply chain activities are impacted by COVID-19. The lockdown period coincided with the peak of rabi, when crops such as wheat, chickpea, barley, field pea, oat, and others were ready to harvest or nearly ready to harvest, and the field harvests were sold in mandis for various earning manoeuvres by elected government organisations, but the lockdown resulted in peak harvest time with no procurement. Early evidence suggested that labour migration and unavailability during the peak time disrupted some harvesting events in northwest India, namely for cereals and legumes. The harvesting procedures were not substantially disrupted by the lockdown, since the majority of farmers harvested their crops without incident. Around 10% of farmers did not harvest their crops in the previous months.

Percentage change (%) in the prices of necessary food stuffs in the postlockdown over the pre-lockdown period

| Centre | Prices | Wheat | Wheat flour | Gram dal | Tur dal | Groundnut oil | Potato | Onion |
|---------|-----------|-------|-------------|----------|---------|---------------|--------|-------|
| Chennai | Wholesale | 5.0 | 0.0 | 10.8 | 15.1 | - | 29.6 | -0.2 |
| Chennai | Retail | 6.1 | 0.0 | 10.3 | 8.8 | 4.8 | 30.0 | 10.0 |
| Delhi | Wholesale | 0.0 | 2.9 | 0.7 | 8.6 | 0.0 | 10.4 | -27.0 |
| Delhi | Retail | 0.0 | 6.5 | 13.2 | 2.4 | 5.6 | 14.1 | -0.4 |
| Kolkata | Wholesale | - | 5.7 | 11.0 | 2.1 | 0.7 | 36.9 | 0.0 |
| Kolkata | Retail | - | 9.6 | 9.2 | 2.3 | 0.8 | 30.8 | 0.0 |
| Mumbai | Wholesale | -4.0 | 0.0 | 16.7 | 13.7 | 1.7 | 10.5 | -13.4 |
| Mumbai | Retail | 0.0 | -2.4 | 18.3 | 12.9 | 4.3 | 20.3 | 13.2 |

Note: change in Post-Lockdown Week 3 (5-11 April, 2020) over Pre-Lockdown Week (15-21 March, 2020).

Wholesale: Wholesale price.

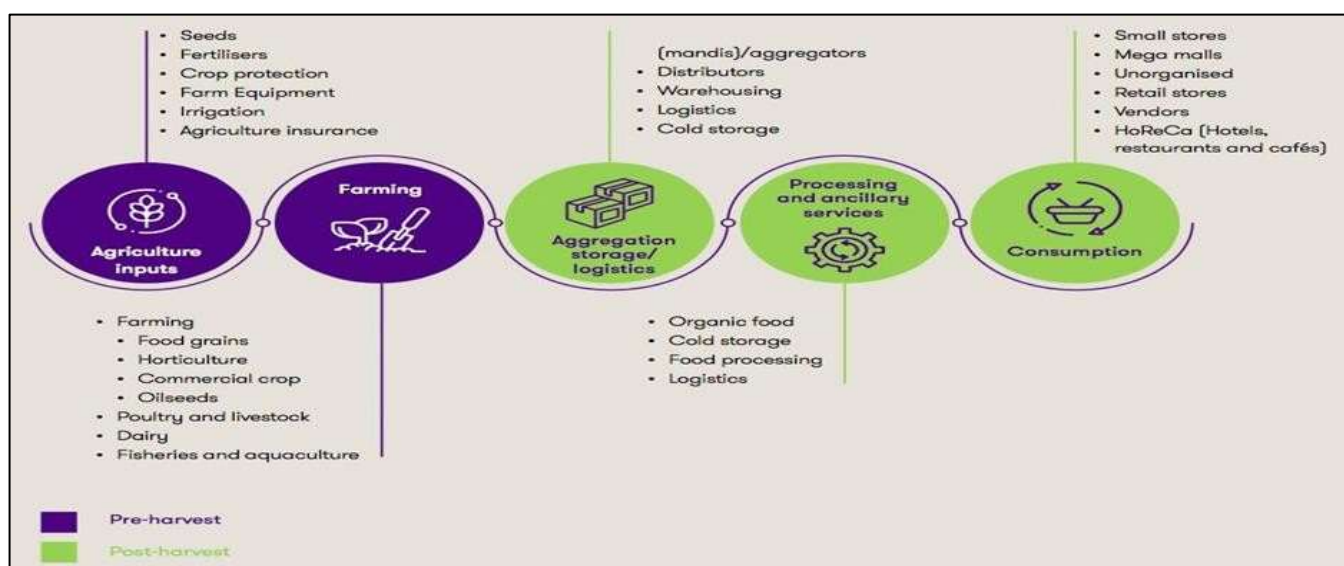
Due to the lockdown, one more problem is arises is the marketing/selling of farm products. The Government has taken certain measures to overcome this problem, but there is no sufficient buyer in the market and there are facing transport unavailability. The lack of transport services along with cautious blocking highways encouraging the migration of harvest labour and agri-machineries disrupted the supply chain. Up to an extent it is due to unavailability of customers and mainly because of market insecurity and propagandas. In the metros, the market prices of grain crops and edible oil increased by 10% (moderate) and for legumes, by 10-20%. There was 30% or more increment in price have been observed in potato specifically in Chennai, Kolkata and Delhi. Some price fluctuations also occurred in other vegetables. The increment in price is occurred due to the disturbance of supply chains and largely, the price fluctuation is a result of the off-season for some vegetables i.e. tomato.

Challenges faced due to Covid-19 in Agriculture:

The COVID-19 virus is responsible for a universal health hazard and even now it is having shocking effects on the global economy by directly and indirectly by taking essential measures to control the spread of the virus. The lockdown results lack of farming labours as lots of are afraid to leave their families and villages to go to work. Due

to the inaccessibility of the input materials for eg. Hoes and tractor for field preparation, seeds, fertilisers, labours, pesticides etc, responsible for late sowing and harvesting of crops, this is the very first shortcoming observed because of this pandemic. However, this is prime time for agricultural sectors to sell their products which is used in agricultural operations. The e-commerce brands in agriculture also affected due to the fail of conveyance of these products and they faces loss in monetary returns.

Another impact of COVID-19 is disturbance in supply of agricultural commodities in the rural areas. Some of the transporters received permission from the government to transport foodstuffs, vegetables, fruits, groceries and cereals, and facilitated home deliveries via truck, and some conveyers fails to grant permission. This formalities took extended time for the transport of harvest to reach the market for sell. Instead of these, restaurants are restricted to remain unopened, reduces the demand of food stuffs from the farmers resulting many farmers of different states facing substantial losses in earnings. The major and drastic effect of this pandemic is on food provision manufacturing industry, Leaders noticed, most of the hired employers lost their job still date. During the lockdown period most of the agricultural activities got disturbed and restricted due to labour shortage, transportation, lack of storage etc affects the employment in agriculture sector But government provide assistance to farmers to compensate their losses in allied activities. When government announced nationwide lockdown in March, the automatic reaction was a huge departure of migrant labour return to their homes, as labours encouraged to wait out the lockdown while at home. The drastic effect have been noticed in exports of products during complete lockdown. The another effect was seen on the MSME & SME's. These are mainly small and marginal manufacturing units, companies/brokers, and factories in which most of the employers seeks their jobs. The price of agricultural commodities have shrunken because of collapse of market with restricted transport facilities and shutting of state boundaries. Post lockdown, their business is in danger and facing a drastic loss in income. The companies have no option, finally they started to hiring out their employees. Now People started to lose employment without having any idea of when the condition is being normal.



Covid-19 impact on agricultural value chain: Short to medium term

Food Security in India During COVID-19:

Food is a basic necessity, the level of food demand should be affected less by the crisis than the demand for other goods and services. However, there has been a major shift in the structure of demand, with a collapse in demand from restaurants, hotels and catering, the closure of open markets, and a surge in demand from supermarkets. There are signs that businesses along the food chain are already adapting to shifts in demand, for example by switching production lines and increasing their capacity to manage larger inventories; moving to on-line platforms and direct delivery to households; and hiring temporary staff. In all but the poorest countries, the biggest challenges for the sector come from the measures needed to contain COVID-19; the necessary adjustments within the sector to comply with those measures (which may increase costs); and the need to find alternative markets for products affected as people change their consumption habits in response to COVID-19.

- As the COVID outbreak started, the Government of India announced food safety schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) for NFSA beneficiaries and Atma Nirbhar Bharat Package (ANB) for Migrants/Stranded Migrants easing the hardships faced by the poor/vulnerable beneficiary due to economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 outbreak.
- This compendium aims to highlight joint efforts of The Government of India and UNWFP India in ensuring food security during the COVID-19 crisis in India by swift and efficient response through India's Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), ensuring inter and intra State Portability of Ration Cards in TPDS through One Nation One Ration Card Scheme, reducing transportation cost through Supply Chain Optimisation, conducting social audit and awareness generation, bringing PDS operations on to a single window through a central dashboard and introducing rice fortification.
- Lockdown from COVID-19 has also interfered with food production as many farmers delayed planting crops out of fear of breaking curfew. Meanwhile, wealthier families relocating from cities to villages during lockdown have driven up the price of food in rural areas and day laborers without salaries are feeling the most acute strain. The recent measures to make PDS more flexible, including the One Nation One Card initiative, as well as government partnerships with NGOs through networks such as Empowered Group.

Conclusion:

The COVID-19 pandemic is a health and human crisis threatening the food security and nutrition of millions of people around the world. Hundreds of millions of people were already suffering from hunger and malnutrition before the virus hit and, unless immediate action is taken, we could see a global food emergency. In the longer term, the combined effects of COVID-19 itself, as well as corresponding mitigation measures and the emerging global recession could, without large-scale coordinated action, disrupt the functioning of food systems. Such disruption can result in consequences for health and nutrition of a severity and scale unseen for more than half a century. Investments in agriculture are the best weapons against hunger and poverty.

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