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## Roots causes of the farmers distress in the Osamanabad district of Maharashtra

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### Abstract

Distress in farmers had been a major contributor for suicide of the farmers as well as reduction in the Agricultural growth as par with the demands of the farmer's particularly small and marginal farmers. The present study on root causes for farmer's distress was conducted in the Osamanabad district of Marathwada region of Maharashtra with the sample size of 80. The major causes of the farmers distress were failure of crops due to insect pest and diseases, increased indebtedness and marriageable age of daughters or sisters. The major suggestions a comprehensive crop insurance scheme to protect farmers, assured irrigation facilities and uninterrupted power supply. There should be immediate intervention of government organizations, NGOs and other voluntary organization to serve the producers of our food from distress by supportive policies to address their needs on priority basis with appropriate plans. Importance to create awareness among farming community about the factors that influence the distress of them.

**Keywords:** Roots causes, farmers distress

### Introduction

The growth of agriculture and allied sectors is still a critical factor in the overall performance of the Indian economy. The farmers, major contributors of this sector had been facing many unforeseen circumstances whether it may be due to globalisation, improved cost of cultivation, indebtedness, lack of remunerative prices, climate change and many location specific issues. All these factors contribute to distress of farmers in rain-fed areas in general and Marathwada region in particular. The issue of farmers' 'distress' is a vexed one. 'Distress' is the result of a complex interplay of a myriad issues and risks. The most striking impact of such levels of distress on Indian farmers is the increasing number of farmer suicides. Between 1995 and 2012, a total of 2,84,673 farmers committed suicide in India (Banik 2018) [2]. The farmer suicide rate including labourer according to NCRB was 4,291 in 2015 and 3,661 in 2016 and overall suicide rate also declined with slight change 12,602 in 2015 to 11,370 in 2016 in India (Mukherjee, 2018) [5]. The 45.2% and 27.4% of farmers committed suicide were small and marginal farmers respectively. In Maharashtra alone, 4,291 farm suicides took place where Marathwada region had been hotspot for these (Anonymous, 2015) [1]. There was a long running debate that one group viewed slow pace of agricultural liberalization responsible, and has advocated an increased role for markets where as the other group blames the withdrawal of state support of agriculture and the integration of agriculture into global markets, and advocates an increased role for the state (Vakulabharanam and Motiram, 2011) [8]. The rural distress had been more than evident in reported incidents of farmers suicides and hunger deaths (Nair, 2011) [7]. Farming community was pushed to final edge their worry, concern, should be properly addressed in the interest of farming community in particular and agriculture in general (Hanumanthappa, 2010) [3]. The role of agricultural research and development was critical in managing agrarian crisis (Kumar Mittal, 2009) [4]. In this context, the study was framed to know the causes of farming distress and suggestions to overcome farming distress.

### Methodology

The study was undertaken in Osmanabad district of Marathwada region in Maharashtra. The Marathwada region constitutes eight districts. The major crops grown in this region includes Cotton, Bajra and Maize. Ex-post facto research design was followed, using structured interview schedule. Primary source of data was taken from farmers and the secondary data, incorporated from journals, thesis and internet. The statistical tools used in the study were frequency and percentage. Osmanabad district was selected randomly and two Taluks purposively where suicide cases of farmers in the years 2015-17 was high. Among the two Taluks eight villages were purposively selected and 10 distress farmers from each village which constitutes 80 distress farmers for the study.

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## Results & Discussions

In this the causes of farmers distress categorised into farming related, indebtedness related and social causes of the distress of farmer. From the Table 1 it was observed that, failure of crops due to insect pest and diseases was the major (87.50%) cause found in the farming related causes followed by failure of crops due to drought or lack of irrigation (81.25%), failure of crops due to unseasonal rains (62.50), failure of crops due to seed germination (50.00%) and failure of dug open well or

tube well (12.50%) were the causes of farmer distress in Osamanabad. This trend of results was due to the dry land nature of agriculture where farmers face the vagaries of monsoon, droughts along with lack of irrigation facilities which leads to more distress condition among farmers. Further, the labour problem increases the production cost which affects the financial position of farmers, lack of understanding of the time of control of the pests and diseases and spurious chemicals.

**Table 1:** Distribution of the respondents according to their farming related causes of farming distress. N=80

Sr. No.	Agriculture causes	Frequency	Percentage
1	Failure of crops due to drought / lack of irrigation	65	81.25
2	Failure of crops due to hailstorm	00	00.00
3	Failure of crops due to insect / disease	70	87.50
4	Failure of crops due to seed germination	40	50.00
5	Failure of crops due to unseasonal rains	50	62.50
6	Failure of dug open well or tube well	10	12.50

The table 2 depicts the indebtedness related causes of farmer's distress. The majority 93.75 per cent of the farmers were of opinion that increased indebtedness was the major cause of farmer distress followed by recovery pressure from money lender (50.00%), complicated procedure to get loan

(43.75 %), torturing by money lenders for repayment of loan (37.50%), auction of assets or livestock or other household stocks (18.75%) and humiliation at public place by money lender (12.50%).

**Table 2:** Distribution of the respondents according to their indebtedness related causes of farming distress N=80

Sr. No.	Indebtedness related Causes	Frequency	Percentage
1	Increased indebtedness	75	93.75
2	Torching by money lender for repayment of loan	30	37.50
3	Recovery pressure from money lender	40	50.00
4	Humiliation at public place by money lender	10	12.50
5	Auction of assets / livestock / other household stocks	15	18.75
6	Complicated procedure to get loan	35	43.75

This might be due to the reduced prices of the produce at the time of harvest, insufficient storage facilities, need for family expenditure and unforeseen expenses makes the farmers to be in the trap of web of indebtedness which multiplies and very less chance to come out of this with the existing situation.

**Table 3:** Distribution of the respondents according to their social causes of farming distress N=80

Sr. No.	Social causes	Frequency	Percentage
1	Dowry	40	50.00
2	Divorce	35	43.75
3	Partition of lands	35	43.75
4	Drop in socio-economic status	25	31.25
5	Auction of assets / livestock / other household stocks	20	25.00
6	Marriageable age of daughters / sisters	66	82.50
7	Suicide of family member or any near pears	20	25.00
8	Dispute with the family member / neighbour or others	35	43.75
9	Addictions of victim	15	18.75
10	Chronic illness or handicapped persons in the family	10	12.50
11	Involved of victims in criminal case	05	06.25
12	Defeated in the civil cases	03	03.75

Form the table 3, majority (82.50%) of the farmers said marriageable age of daughters and sisters were the cause of their distress, followed dowry system (50%) divorce (43.75%), partition of lands (43.75%), dispute with the family member and neighbour or others (43.75%) and drop in socio economic status (31.25%) were the predominant social causes of distress in this region. This might be due to the fact that farmers hardly earns for family living and it is very rare for the small and marginal farmers of these region to meet the family responsibilities like marriage to their children and other activities. This type of environment discourages farmer to move forward in farming and lead to distress.

The table 4 revealed that, as per suggestion related to farming distress 81.25 per cent of the respondents a comprehensive crop insurance scheme to protect farmers not only from vagaries of nature but also from market fluctuations, provision of easy, timely and adequate credit at lower interest rate 80.00 per cent, assured irrigation facilities should be there 68.75 per cent, uninterrupted power supply should be there 67.50 per cent develop special agriculture zones (SAZs) for farming 62.50 per cent, provide timely market information 51.25 per cent, subsidies for agricultural inputs should be increased 50.00 per cent, there is need for fixing minimum support price for all the crops 46.25 per cent, extension personnel should visit their farm once in a week during crop season 40.00 per cent, effective extension methods (field days, result demonstration, method demonstration, etc.) should be conducted periodically 35.00 per cent.

**Table 4:** Suggestions to overcome farming distress given by the respondents N=80

Sr. No.	Statements	Frequency	Percentage
1	Develop special agriculture zones (SAZs) for farming	50	65.50
2	Subsidies for agricultural inputs should be Increased	40	50.00
3	Uninterrupted power supply should be there	54	67.50
4	Assured irrigation facilities should be there	55	68.75
5	Extension personnel should visit their farm once in a week during crop season	32	40.00
6	A comprehensive crop insurance scheme to protect farmers not only from vagaries of nature but also from market fluctuations	65	81.25
7	Effective extension methods (field days, result demonstration, method demonstration, etc.) should be conducted periodically	28	35.00
8	There is need for fixing minimum support price for all the crops	37	46.25
9	Provide timely market information	41	51.25
10	Provision of easy, timely and adequate credit at lower interest rate	64	80.00

The concentration of policy makers and organizations should take the major causes and their respective suggestions into account and operationalize the activities that reduce the farmers distress.

### Conclusion

The farmers of the Marathwada region particularly Osamanabad district faces severe distress for varied reasons. The major reasons were found out in this study were failure of crops due to insect pest and diseases in the farming related distress, increased indebtedness in indebtedness related causes and marriageable age of sisters/daughters which were in supporting to the NCRB reports of 2015 on farmers suicides. There should be immediate intervention of Government organizations, Non-Government Organisations and other Voluntary Organizations to serve the producers of our food from distress by supportive policies to address their needs on priority basis with appropriate plans. This holistic approach might bring many changes in the standard of living of the distress farmers. Apart from this location specific research with changing climate should be encouraged to address the distress. Even now, the major suggestion to overcome the distress was provision of easy, timely and adequate credit at lower interest rate. This shows that farmers perception on distress not going beyond the credit needs which can be enlightened by effective awareness of other factors that influence the distress and further, minimising them.

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