



## The Struggle of Farm Workers

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### ABSTRACT

Agriculture is vital in India, providing livelihoods for about 60% of the population and contributing 17% to GDP. The sector's diversity includes food crops (wheat, rice, pulses, fruits, veggies) and cash crops (cotton, peanuts). Sociological approaches help address issues faced by agricultural laborers, who struggle with low wages, seasonal work, lack of social security, and limited tech access. A multi-faceted approach is needed better conditions, education, tech access, and alternative opportunities. Data from 100 Farm Workers (random sampling) in Kakati block, Belagavi, Karnataka. 73% say agriculture's challenges are increasing.

### INTRODUCTION:

The growing global population demands huge changes in agriculture to meet rising food needs. Smallholder farmers (<2 hectares) are key to food security, contributing 28-31% of global production on 24% of agricultural land (World Economic Forum). Yet, they face challenges: limited tech access, low income, climate change, and shrinking arable land. Issues include feeding a growing population, supporting farmers, and protecting the environment. Agriculture in India Provides livelihoods for rural areas, Contributes significantly to GDP, and Needs sustainable practices for food security, employment, and eco-balance.



India's agri-revolution: Green, White, Yellow, Blue. The sector needs tech-driven practices, disease management, and support for marginal farmers. Agriculture, with its allied sectors, is unquestionably the largest livelihood provider in India, more so in the vast rural areas. It also contributes a significant figure to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Sustainable agriculture, in terms of food security, rural employment, and environmentally sustainable technologies such as soil conservation, sustainable natural resource management and biodiversity protection, are essential for holistic rural development. Indian agriculture and allied activities have witnessed a green revolution, a white revolution, a yellow revolution and a blue revolution. This section provides the information on agriculture produces; machineries, research etc. Detailed information on the government policies, schemes, agriculture loans, market prices, animal husbandry, fisheries, horticulture, loans & credit, sericulture etc. is also available.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The objective of the paper is to identify key challenges of farm workers' main struggles, explore opportunities, and suggest improvements. The study uses primary and secondary data from Kakati block, Belagavi taluk, Karnataka, India. Primary data comes from interviews with 100 Farm Workers in Kadoli, Handiganur, Kedanur, and Agasagi (random sampling). Secondary data's from the internet, magazines, journals, and newspapers.

### TERM CLARIFICATION:

- 1. Farmer:** A farmer is someone engaged in agriculture, elevating residing organisms for food or raw substances. The time normally applies to people who do a little aggregate of raising discipline vegetation, orchards, vineyards, fowl, or other farm animals.
- 2. Indian Farmers:** Indian farmers are people who develop crops as a career. diverse authorities estimate (Census, Agricultural Census, national pattern Survey tests, and Periodic labor force Surveys) provide a exceptional number of farmers in the Indian starting from 37 million to 118 million as consistent with the distinct definitions
- 3. Farm Workers:** are individuals who work on farms, plantations, or other agricultural settings, performing tasks such as.
  - Crop cultivation: Planting, harvesting, and tending to crops.
  - Livestock care: Feeding, breeding, and managing animals.
  - Farm maintenance: Repairing equipment, maintaining infrastructure.



## **FARM WORKERS:**

Farm worker duties involve planting, cultivating, and harvesting crops; feeding, watering, and caring for livestock; operating and maintaining farm machinery like tractors; maintaining farm buildings, fences, and irrigation systems; applying fertilizers/pesticides; and performing general farm upkeep, requiring physical strength, stamina, and adaptability for diverse, seasonal tasks.

### **Nature of Farm Workers:**

1. Seasonal or temporary employment: Work may be seasonal or contract-based.
2. Varied working conditions: Can include outdoor work in diverse weather conditions.
3. Food production: Contribute to the production of food and other agricultural products.
4. Rural economy: Support local economies and communities.
5. Livelihood: Provide income and sustenance for themselves and their families.
6. Physical labor: Often involves manual work in varying weather conditions
7. Variable income: Work can be seasonal or irregular
8. Skill diversity: May need skills in machinery operation, animal care, crop management
9. Resilience: Adapt to changing weather, market demands
10. Time-bound work: Often work long hours during peak seasons (planting/harvesting)

### **Main struggles of farmers**

Agricultural businesses face numerous fundamental challenges, many of which disproportionately affect small-scale farmers:

- 1) **Dominance of Small-Scale Operations:** Agriculture is largely characterized by small, family-run establishments, which often lack the scale and resources to compete effectively with larger operations.
- 2) **Limited Technological Access:** Small farmers frequently struggle with inadequate access to modern agricultural technologies, including machinery, precision agriculture tools, and digital information systems, hindering efficiency and productivity.
- 3) **Climate Change and Sustainability Demands:** The sector must feed a growing global population while simultaneously adhering to the principles of climate-smart agriculture (CSA), which requires adapting to climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



- 4) **Market Volatility and Resilience:** High volatility in food prices necessitates the development of more resilient crops and robust yield protection measures to ensure stable incomes and food security.
- 5) **Increasing Demand for Quality and Quantity:** There is a persistent need to increase both the quantity and quality of food produced globally to meet the demands of a growing and more affluent population.
- 6) **Reducing Food Waste:** A significant portion of food produced is lost or wasted. Addressing this requires improvements across the entire supply chain, from harvest to consumption.
- 7) **Data Scarcity:** Farmers often face a decrease in reliable on field and off-field data sources (e.g., soil data, weather forecasts, market prices), making informed decision-making difficult.
- 8) **Optimizing Chemical Use:** There is a critical need for the optimal and sustainable use of agro-chemicals (fertilizers and pesticides) to maximize yield while minimizing environmental harm and health risks

### Opportunities for Improvement

Karnataka offers numerous farmer schemes, including direct income support like Raitha Siri (millets incentive) & PM Kisan, irrigation aid via Krishi Bhagya (ponds/pumps) & Surya Raitha (solar pumps), crop insurance (PMFBY), and mechanization subsidies for tillers/tractors, plus forestry incentives via Krushi Aranya Protsaha Yojane, all aimed at boosting farm income and sustainability. Farm worker opportunities in Karnataka under the government primarily involve rural employment schemes like **MGNREGA** for guaranteed work, skill development via missions like **DDUGKY (Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana)**, and specific roles in **Agriculture/Horticulture Departments** (e.g., Field Officer, Asst. Officer) often requiring degrees, plus support through schemes like **PM-KISAN** for farmer welfare, with opportunities expanding through allied sectors like Animal Husbandry and Horticulture for training and subsidies.

- 1) **Policy Reform:** Granting collective bargaining rights and extending labor protections (like overtime) to farmworkers is crucial for fairness.
- 2) **Technological Integration:** Automation and tech can reduce physical strain and labor demands, though careful implementation is needed to support workers, not replace them.



- 3) **Sustainable & Fair Agriculture:** Promoting sustainable practices can improve environmental health and offer new, dignified work, alongside supporting local economies.
- 4) **Investment in Workforce:** Better training, accessible education, and pathways to higher-skilled roles can empower workers and address shortages.
- 5) **Immigration Solutions:** Stable, legal pathways for workers can provide security for families and reliability for farmers.
- 6) **Increased Awareness:** Public recognition of farmworkers' critical role can drive demand for better conditions and fairer policies.

**Results and Discussion:**

**Table No. 1**

**Increasing challenges in the field of Agriculture**

Variables	Respondent	Percentage
Yes	80	80%
Some level	20	20%
No	000	000%
Total	100	100%

Agriculture faces a growing number of increasingly complex challenges, including climate change, escalating input costs, soil degradation, and water scarcity, alongside labor shortages, pest and disease outbreaks, and shifting consumer demands. These interconnected issues threaten food security and profitability, forcing farmers to find innovative, sustainable solutions to increase yields while managing environmental and economic pressures

The table shows the perceptions of respondents regarding the increasing challenges in the field of agriculture: 80% of respondents (80 out of 100) agree that challenges in agriculture are increasing. 20% of respondents (20 out of 100) acknowledge that challenges are increasing to some extent. 0% of respondents (0 out of 100) believe that challenges in agriculture are not increasing. The overwhelming majority (100% of respondents, with 80% strongly agreeing and 20% partially agreeing) recognize that agriculture is facing growing challenges, indicating a widespread concern about the sector's difficulties.

**Table No. 2**  
**Farm Workers and Challenges**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Low Wages	21	21%
Seasonal Employment	33	33%
Irregular working hours	11	11%
Lack of job security	04	04%
Health Risks	03	03%
Exposure to pesticides	09	09%
Physical strain	11	11%
Extreme weather conditions	02	02%
Limited Access to Benefits	03	03%
Difficulty accessing social security benefits	03	03%
Total	100	100%

The table shows the challenges faced by Farm Workers, with the following breakdown: Top Challenges- Seasonal Employment: 33% of respondents face irregular employment opportunities due to seasonal fluctuations. Low Wages: 21% of respondents struggle with insufficient income to meet their basic needs. Work-Related Challenges- Irregular working hours: 11% of respondents face unpredictable working hours. Physical strain: 11% of respondents experience physical strain due to manual labor. Exposure to pesticides: 9% of respondents are exposed to hazardous chemicals. Job Security and Benefits- Lack of job security: 4% of respondents face uncertainty about their employment. Limited Access to Benefits: 3% of respondents struggle to access benefits. Difficulty accessing social security benefits: 3% of respondents face challenges in accessing social security benefits. Health Risks: 3% of respondents face health risks. Extreme weather conditions: 2% of respondents are exposed to extreme weather conditions. The table highlights the various challenges faced by agricultural laborers, with seasonal employment and low wages being the most significant concerns. Agricultural laborers in Karnataka face numerous challenges that affect their livelihood and productivity.

**Table No. 3**  
**Opportunities to Improve the Plight of Farm Workers**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
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Economic Opportunities	31	31%
Government Initiatives	27	27%
Social Opportunities	34	34%
Asset-based Solutions	08	08%
Total	100	100%

The table shows the perceptions of respondents regarding the opportunities to improve the plight of Farm Workers. 34% of respondents believe that social opportunities, such as education, healthcare, and social protection, can improve the lives of agricultural laborers. Agricultural laborers in India face numerous challenges, but there are opportunities to improve their plight. Economic Opportunities: - Diversification to non-farm activities: Encouraging agricultural laborers to explore non-farm activities, such as small-scale industries or services, can help increase their income and reduce dependence on agriculture. Access to credit and financial services: Providing affordable credit and financial services can enable landless laborers to invest in small-scale enterprises or improve agricultural productivity. Minimum Wage Act: Implementing and enforcing the Minimum Wage Act can ensure that agricultural laborers receive fair wages for their work.

31% of respondents think that economic opportunities, such as better wages, employment, and income-generating activities, can make a positive impact. Social Opportunities: Education and skill development: Providing education and vocational training can help agricultural laborers acquire new skills and improve their employability. Social protection programs: Strengthening social protection programs, such as food security, healthcare, and education, can reduce the vulnerability of landless laborers. Land reforms: Implementing land reforms and providing land to landless laborers can help them gain economic independence and improve their livelihood.

27% of respondents believe that government initiatives, such as policies, programs, and schemes, can improve the plight of agricultural laborers. Government Initiatives:- Employment programs: Government initiatives like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) provide employment opportunities to rural laborers. Skill development programs: Programs like the National Scheme of Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSM) offer vocational training to rural youth. Agricultural Insurance: Schemes like the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) provide insurance against crop failures, offering economic stability to farmers.



8% of respondents think that asset-based solutions, such as access to land, tools, and technology, can also make a difference. Asset-based Solutions: - Farm tools and technology: Providing access to farm tools and technology can improve the productivity and earnings of landless agricultural laborers. Studies have shown that this can lead to higher demand for labor, increased earning days, and improved investment in agricultural activities.

The majority of respondents (65% combined for social and economic opportunities) believe that opportunities related to social and economic aspects can improve the lives of agricultural laborers, highlighting the importance of addressing these areas to bring about positive change.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Indian farm workers handle diverse tasks: soil prep, sowing, weeding, irrigating, fertilizing, harvesting, packing, selling crops + caring for livestock & maintaining farm infra (fences, machinery). They work outdoors, need physical stamina & equipment skills (tractors etc.) for farm productivity. One solution transforming agriculture is Cropping Cloud - the world's first industrial cloud platform for agri. It bridges info gaps between stakeholders, is simple to deploy, and boosts agri ecosystem efficiency.

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