

Pak Affairs - Paper 2023

Q-3: Having the largest irrigation system in the world, the land of the sub-continent served as the main food supply basket for the British power for more than a century, But now Pak has to import food commodities. Discuss in detail the causes of this agricultural decline.

Introduction

Not every country is so fortunate to have secure and reliable food supplies for its people. Pakistan, too, has been facing a serious food security crisis since long, despite the fact that the country produces a large quantity of important food crops. In an international ranking of the Global Hunger Index (GHI) this year, the country ranked 92 out of 166 nations, with its hunger categorised as 'serious'.

Preface

Agriculture is the backbone of Pakistan's economy. Agriculture contributes, 24 percent of total GDP, and employs about 42-3% of the labour force. more importantly, 67.5% of the country's population living in the rural areas is directly or indirectly dependent on agriculture for its livelihood. Almost 68% of the country's exports are agro-based. Pakistan has diversified ecological and climatic zones and thus a wide variety of crops are grown in different regions of the country. Cotton, rice, wheat and sugarcane are major crops of Pakistan.

Importance of Agriculture sector of Pakistan

1: Increasing GDP of the Economy

Agriculture sector of Pakistan has made significant contribution to its GDP. When the GDP of a country grows,

economic development takes place. In the beginning agricultural sector had highest share in the GDP but then the service sector became the chief provider with the passage of time. Fisheries and livestock also help in increasing GDP and contain exports of the country. Livestock accounts for 11.4% of the total GDP.

2: Foreign Exchange Earnings:-

The agriculture area is the major source of foreign exchange incomes in Pakistan. The imports help in vital inputs for development, i.e. import of equipment, capital machinery, technical know-how etc.

3: Sustaining the Population:-

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Pakistan is 2nd most populated country in the muslim world while 6th most populated country of the world. Agriculture is playing a

crucial role in order to withstand such an enormous population. If Pakistan's economy was not based on agriculture, then the country would have to import all the food items in order to sustain such a large population.

4: Source of Employment :-

Agriculture is the main provider of employment in Pakistan. More than the half of the population of Pakistan lives in rural areas. Approximately more than 45% of the entire employment is delivered by agriculture. Higher per capita income leads to better way of living of people, which is the sign of economic development.

Major Problems of Agriculture Sector

Growth of agriculture in Pakistan is facing a lot of problems. Due to various causes, per acre yield is very low

in Pakistan. Problems of agricultural sector are categorized as below:

1: Techno-Economic Problems

Limited Cultivable Area:-

The total area of Pakistan is about 79.6095 million hectares, out of which only 30.5 million hectares area is used for agricultural purposes. Water logging and salinity are twin problems of agricultural sector, affecting about 0.10 million acre of land every year.

Slow Growth of Allied Products:-

Allied products refer to those productions, which are not agricultural but indirectly help the farmer to improve his living standard. Rural infrastructure like, roads, storage facilities, transport, electricity, education etc is inadequate to meet the requirement of growth of agriculture.

• Old methods of Production :-

No doubt, mechanization of agriculture is increasing in Pakistan, but in most of the areas, the old implements are still being used for agricultural production. Old and orthodox techniques of production cannot increase the production according to international level.

• Lack of Irrigation Facilities :-

Shortage of irrigation facilities causes a serious limitation in the expansion of crop area in Pakistan. The lower water supplies, from water courses in the fields are the serious problem of farm sector.

2. Natural Problems

• Illiterate and Ill-health :-

Most of the farmers, tenants and labourers in our country are illiterate. They are untrained to boost up the agricultural

productivity. On the other side, the health of our farmers is improper due to rural backwardness.

° Various Plant Diseases :-

Various agricultural crops like cotton, sugarcane, tobacco, wheat and rice often come under attack of pests and insects. It reduce the annual productivity of agriculture.

° Political Instability :-

Political instability has affected development in all economic and social sectors. Unfortunately, the political situation in Pakistan is not stable. It creates the unrest among the farmers to sell the productions to various industries as a raw material.

3° Financial Problems

° Lack of Credit :-

Basically our farmers

is poor and he has low level of income. Credit that can facilitate agriculture is not available easily. Moreover non-institutional sources are available but these are not reliable due to high rate of interest.

Instability in market prices:-

The price market of agriculture goods generally remains unstable in the country.

Cobweb theorem is very popular in case of market prices; it means that a price of one commodity is much high in this year and much low in the next year vice versa.

Some other Factors Causing Agricultural Decline

- × Adverse impacts of climate change
- × Rapid industrialization
- × Increased use of land for physical infrastructure (the availability of cultivable land is declining)

Measures to Remove these Problems

Following measures are suggested to improve the agriculture:

• Supply of Agricultural Credit:-

Poor

farmers cannot afford the expensive technology from their own resources. So, supply of credit at easy terms and conditions is very necessary.

• Construction of Hydro Projects:-

Sometimes

due to heavy unwanted rains and floods agriculture productivity destroys. To tackle this problem it is necessary to construct hydro projects.

• Agricultural Research:-

Agricultural

research is compulsory to remove the backwardness of agriculture sector. Govt. should increase the research work in the field.

• Provision of HYV Seed:-

High yielding variety seed is not available at suitable price in Pakistan. Low quality seeds causes 20% reduction in total production. Govt. should provide HYV seed at minimum price in this case.

• Introducing Contract Farming

Contract farming refers to the practice where agricultural production is carried out on the basis of agreement between farmers and agribusiness firms. Typically, the farmer agrees to provide agreed-upon quantities of a specific product, set by contracting companies. Efficiently organized contract farming reduces risk for both parties as compared to buying and selling crops on the open market.

• Artificial Intelligence in Agriculture

AI analyze vast amounts of data which helps decision making processes

for farmers. Farmers are now better able to make informed choices about crop management, resource allocation and pest control. Through predictive analytics, AI has empowered farmers to anticipate and mitigate potential risks.

Conclusion

Declining in agriculture productivity is exacerbating cost of living crisis. Major factors responsible for decrease in agriculture yields are climate change, water and energy crisis and inflation. According to figures published in PAK Bureau of Statistics, food price inflation in Pakistan has been in double digits since August 2019. Thus, climate change adaptation and mitigation measures along with use of modern technology are essential for uplift of agricultural sector.