

# PALE - AFFAIRS

Having the largest irrigation system in the world, the sub-continent remains the food basket for British power for more than a century, but now Pakistan has to import food commodities. Discuss in detail the causes of this agriculture decline.

## Introduction:

Uninterrupted food supply is the essential commodity for colonial powers to capture subcontinent. The British empire successfully earned that basket and benefited its economy and wars for more than a century. However, after partition Pakistan failed to get benefits of agriculture potential due to irregular management of water, rapid change in climate and fertility of soil declined. Moreover, the traditional techniques of farming and increasing cost is moving farmers to find new economic streams. The above mentioned causes can be curtailed through development of water management infrastructure, storage capabilities to counter climate calamities and implementation of new agriculture practices. These practical measures help the country to overcome the decline of agriculture.

i) British economy engine steamed by agriculture system of sub-continent :

British empire established its full control over sub-continent in 1858. The main reason behind the eagerness of Britishers is to exploit the fertilized land for their economic benefits. Sub-continent at that time produce wheat, rice, cotton, chillies and sugarcane. To boost the production the Britishers introduced well planned irrigation system in 1850. The targeted areas include Punjab, Sindh, area between Kashmir and Bengal. The rising demand of fabric and sugar helped the British empire to source low cost raw material from sub-continent. Britishers earn around 900 million pounds between 1870 to 1900 and till 1947 the agriculture sector provide share of 400 million pounds each year approximately. The economic engine of the empire is 60% powered by agriculture of sub-continent.

The sub-continent agriculture a weapon for British super power status :

On its peak in 1913 the empire rules directly over 23% of the world. To remain in power the empire fought multiple wars

because the agriculture of sub-continent provide them uninterrupted support. During world war 2 in 1943 around 3.8 million people died in the sub-continent due to hunger because all the food was supplied to British army and economy. This shows that the agriculture of sub-continent is not only the food basket but a way to enjoy superpower status.

iii) Post partition era and development of agriculture sector in Pakistan.

In 1950 the 53% of GDP comes from agriculture sector. Due to its importance, the President Ayub Khan introduced land reforms. During that time few families hold millions of acres alone. The reform took the land from them and distributed among peasants, this helped to increase the production of agriculture. Moreover, green revolution project was launched and financial support was given to farmers to install tubewells to control water problem. Additionally, Tarbella dam was built to boost the agriculture sector of Pakistan. Until 1990 the country relied upon self growth but after that due to some cause the agriculture economy

trapped into reliance of importing food.

There are following causes of agriculture decline in Pakistan:

i) Irregular management of irrigation leading to decline in growth:

The country is blessed with 48% of its land fertile. From which only 28% is irrigable because of irregular management. The major irregularity comes in sense of corruption. The department sells the water to particular influential land lords, which cause the large area of land irri out of reach of water. Due to this the production declined. According to world bank report the irregular management happens due to corruption and contributes in decline of agriculture of Pakistan.

ii) Climate change cause loss of large area of land uncultivated:

The rapid change in climate due to global warming heavily effect the agriculture of Pakistan. Pakistan is facing deadly floods particularly after 2010. The floods effect the

because to protect ~~over~~ urban areas the water is released to agricultural canals. The improper management results in breaches on banks of canal and destroy agriculture land. In recent floods of 2022 around 9.8 million acer of land comes under water, around which 20% is still not able to cultivated, according food and agriculture organization (FAO). The climate change is one of the significant cause of agriculture decline.

iii) Traditional farming techniques are major hurdle in agriculture growth.

Technology play significant role in growth of agriculture. Unfortunately, a large portion of farmers are still relying on traditional ways, particularly in watering of crops. Farmers still use drowning technique to irrigate crops. This cause improper distribution of water according to crop need. This technique invites different diseases which cause decline production. For example drowning of cotton crop cause bacterial blight and this disease turned the plant in weak condition and the production decline.

iv) Increasing cost of cultivation moving farmers to find new economic streams:

The cost of cultivation and raising healthy crops need heavy financial investment nowadays in Pakistan. To irrigate land for seeding requires the use of fuels for tubewell. The fertilizers price has been significantly increased, in 2024 DAP costs around ten to thirteen thousand per bag which costs 3200 in 2016. All these factors increase the production cost and in the end middle men and irregularized market practices causes the loss of investment. Therefore, the farmers are moving to urban areas for new opportunities causing decline in agriculture of Pakistan.

However, there practical ways to overcome the problems and to boost agriculture sector.

i) Decentralized system of management of water:

Decentralization of management of water is possible through devolution of power. The elected committee on union council level mostly comprised middle level people. These people must be authorized to manage the release of water in their areas. Because

They are easily reachable to everyone and selected by population of the area, so they use proper management practices for their population. This practice was introduced in Bangladesh to curtail the management issues. The decentralized authority will help to increase the growth of agriculture sector.

(i) Building of storage capacities on local level:  
Building dams cost billions of dollars and take long time. Therefore, the storage capacities must be setup by local farmers with help of government. These compounds help to store flood water and can be used by farmers in scarcity. Australian government initiated the projects in drought effected areas of Murray river. Farmers store excessive water use during scarcity. This practice will help Pakistan to climate driven challenges of agriculture sector.

(ii) Implementation of new technologies to boost the agriculture sector:

Technology is a vital element to boost agriculture sector of Pakistan. One of the major problem faced by farmers is attack

diseases and controlling the disease is very costly. This happens due to lack of research and development of seeds. Many countries has developed the seeds that have immune capabilities to fight diseases. The United states has developed genetically modified crops that are resilient against pest disease. This investment and implementation of ~~dechnology~~ technology will significantly contribute in growth of agriculture in Pakistan.

Conclusion: