

Agriculture Decline in Pakistan and How to Counter it

Outline

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2. Decline in Agriculture Sector of Pakistan in the Recent years

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2.3 Food insecurity owing to decline in Agriculture that forced Pakistan to import wheat of 10 billion in 2023

3. Pragmatic Measures to Counter Agriculture Decline and Enable Pakistan towards Sustainable Growth in this Sector

3.1 Climate resilient agriculture infrastructure and crops adaptation

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3.4 Investment in rural support development programs by providing targeted subsidies and loans programs

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4. Conclusion

Essay

"The Predominance of agriculture sector in economy indicates that the agriculture sector is a critical driver for economic growth, employment, and food security given by its linkage to other sectors," Ishaat Hussain. This in-depth analysis of agriculture envisioned the importance of this sector in every field. Once called backbone of the economy of Pakistan, now stood at the critical juncture. Agriculture has always played key role in economic development with Ahsan Shah in 23.5 percent, almost half of the population employed by it, and majority involvement to fulfill the food demands in the country. In early decades of the country, agriculture had prominent share in exports of the Pakistan but as time passes its share has been reducing gradually. Last five years have hit very hard and not only stagnated the growth but also threatened the future through uncertainty in climate, water resources, and volatile markets. Environmental disasters and floods in recent

years severely impacted the agricultural production. That eventually put the country into food insecurity and price uncertainty in the markets. This decline is because of both universally effected and also of own misgovernance and ineffective policy making. To shift this decline into economic opportunity state needs to adopt environmental friendly infrastructure and proper water management to mitigate the ~~decl~~ natural decline. On the policy making and governance side, the state could implement investment in rural support development program, upgradation of degraded land and provide direct access to market to the very farmers of the country. Foreign direct investment in vast resources of agrarian would surely tap the resource potential and also bring modern technology in the country. There is no doubt that Pakistan is facing severe decline in agriculture, but by adopting pragmatic policy measures these challenges can be transformed into sustainable agricultural growth.

In recent years, Pakistan has seen multiple shocks in agricultural sector that have shattered the trajectory towards growth. This led the Country towards decline with the report assessment of Economic Survey of Pakistan that shows agriculture growth declined to 0.8% this years with 6.3% in comparison to previous years.

This is mainly because of environmental uncertainty, disasters, and ecological changes overall.

Moreover, uncertainty in the markets and minimal support by the government have also played a key role to shattered the moral of common farmers. Major crops like Cotton, wheat, rice, and sugarcane have seen notable decline that eventually resulted in overall production. Ecological protection, suitable agrarian land, and most importantly farmers are three major pillars of this field, if one among them seems uncertainty then overall share automatically declined.

More on this, Climate change broadly and in short floods of 2022 and this years have created inevitable challenges to the

agriculture sector. Floods of 2022 have solely resulted in the overall loss of 23 trillion rupees to agriculture growth. This year, floods have inundated the 1.8 million acres of arable land according to final assessment of National disaster management authority. These changes in climate patterns are eventually challenging the sustainable development of the country. With multiple other challenges which country is being facing from several years, these disasters have made the country more vulnerable. Steady crops have been damaged, agricultural infrastructure has been vanished, and farmers go into financial crisis. These disasters have brought the farmers back to start given by no financial resources to restart and already investment is multiplied by zero.

Above mentioned challenges and decline have challenged the food security in the country. Almost every sector of the economy is somehow dependent on agriculture, the decline in this sector eventually resulted in overall decline. Wheat and rice are primary consuming commodities in Pakistan and due

to decline in agriculture food crisis has been emerged. Interprovincial conflicts emerged and resource capture blame game has become the normal in political and economic spheres.

These crisis have become much critical that in 2023, Pakistan has imposed the wheat of 10 trillion rupees in order to fulfill the need of domestic consumers. These all challenges, if not addressed timely could create more challenges to national integration and unity.

These mentioned discourses have highlighted that how agriculture sector has declined in the past years and what challenges it imposed on the country. Meanwhile, ahead are several pragmatic measure that the analyst and economists have proposed to counter agriculture decline and to shift Pakistan towards development in this sector.

Among them, Climate resilient agriculture infrastructure is at top of the list. Development in this domain is much important because the agriculture sector has not become vulnerable from any other than this particular threat.

unless agricultural sector infrastructure has been upgraded, ~~non~~ investment in other challenges or adaptation plan would not provide sustainable result. Upgradation of waterways, dams and river banks are important but more development in the construction of small dams, canals, and rivers are required. With the infrastructure developments, climate friendly crops should also be adopted to minimize the risk of loss in unpredictable uncertainty.

Secondly, effective water management is highly required in order to utilize the already scarce resource in proper and effective way. Proper channeling of water pathways and modern irrigation techniques like drip irrigation and other advanced technologies are mandatory to minimize the vulnerability. Pakistan's 80% of water resources are consumed by agriculture sector yet contribution in GDP is merely at 23.5%.

In contrast, America uses its only 1% of water resource in agriculture yet its food and agriculture exports are in surplus. This illustrates the importance of adoption of modern technologies and proper water management.

Thirdly, degraded land is another reason in agricultural decline and counter measure are necessary for agricultural growth. Overuse of chemicals and urea in arable land has resulted in degradation of land and its become less output generated. However, analysts suggests that with the use of modern agriculture machinery and advance procurement techniques this problem can be mitigated. Move on this, updated and new seeds sowing could generate the maximum output even in the less fertile land. Pakistan has much fertile land as compare to other counterparts, the very need is to properly utilizing those resources in proper and effective manner through adoption of modern technology and seeds.

Fourthly, government has to be proactive in the investment in rural support and development programs. Multiple floods and natural disasters have break the back of common farmer that resulted in decline in agriculture sector. Targetted and transparent mechanism should be adopted by

Providing subsidies and flexible loans to the farmers. However, government should prioritise transparency and meritocracy while providing loans in order to achieve outcome maximization. By upgrading small and medium agriculture sector through flexible and variable loans scheme would not only provide relief to farmers, but also helps to fulfill the food demands. Targeted subsidies to most affected crops and by prioritizing demand, should also be given to balance the production and demand of the crops. Sugarcane, wheat, and rice are highly consumed items that should be kept in policy making.

Foreign investment in agriculture sector should be attracted. Many countries are highly in shortage of arable and fertile land, those countries should be engaged to invest in huge resource in Pakistan's land. Countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and other middle eastern states along with China should be briefed and attracted. Government initiative is highly commendable in the form of SIFZ, however barriers must be minimized to properly achieve

the maximum benefit from it. Multiple channels can be adopted like creation of tax lands through domestic support or land could be provided to foreign investors on contractual lease that would also be beneficial in overall tax collection. Famous quote by analysts clearly describes that Pakistan has vast resources but poorly managed. Effective policy making and governance effectiveness could bring admirable outcomes.

One of the most important measures to counter the agriculture decline is providing direct market access to every farmer. Farmers are often demotivated due to unavailability of proper market rate against cultivated crops. This is mostly because of the middlemen or merchants who exploit the very man resources to benefit themselves. Elite capture and feudalism are major hindrances in this sphere, government must prioritize whether it needs long term sustainable growth through diversification of agriculture sector or it wants to keep power in some elite and feudals. Direct access for every farmer to market and

digitization of ^{markets} would provide effectiveness and enhance the transparency in agriculture sector.

To sum up all the difficulties, decline in agricultural sector is ~~in~~ growing with every coming day whether through natural disasters or own misgovernance, but rational approaches and policy measure could reactivate the country's agricultural growth. This year Pakistan has faced lowest growth in agriculture mainly because of floods and ecological changes. These crisis are transferred throughout country in terms of food insecurity. Analysts proposed some of the key reforms and policy measures if utilized, can bring prominent changes in the agriculture downfall. These challenges are not only in Pakistan, several countries had faced, and have been facing these challenges, but real problems lies whether the government has adopted the required policy measure to counter it. The choice is in the hand of the strategic elite of Pakistan whether they adopt effective policies to bring back that growth that was called the backbone of the economy.