

Problems of Pakistani Farmers

About 65 percent of Pakistan's population is living in rural areas and is directly involved in agricultural activities. The major crops of Pakistan are wheat, rice, maize, cotton and sugar cane. These major crops contributed 7.7 percent last year against the set target of 4.5 percent. Though the agricultural sector is facing problems in Pakistan yet the major chunk of money comes from this sector.

No mechanism has been adopted to eradicate the issue of soil erosion and even after harvesting, nothing is done to improve or restore the soil energy. Therefore, the fertility of soil is decreasing day by day. Water wastage is also very high in our country. The archaic method of flood irrigation is still in practice, which wastes almost 50 to 60 percent of water. A new irrigation system called drip irrigation system has been introduced in many parts of the world. This not only saves water but also gives proper quantity of water according to the needs of plants. Thirdly, owing to old methods of cultivation and harvesting, Pakistan has low per acre yield, whereas Nepal, India and Bangladesh are using modern scientific methods to increase their yield. Fourthly, the small farmers are increasing in our country as the lands are dividing generation by generation. So, there are large number of farmers who own only 4 acres of land. These small farmers do not get credit facilities to purchase seeds, pesticides, fertilisers etc. Additionally, a large area of land is owned by feudal and the farmers who work on their lands, are just tenants. Fifthly, water logging and salinity is increasing day by day. No effective measures have been taken to curb it. As the storage capacity of the dams is decreasing so the water availability per acre is also decreasing. More dams should be constructed on Indus, Jehlum and Chenab rivers. This will enhance the storage capacity of water and reduce the per acre cost of all the crops. This step will also reduce the salinity chances of the lands as less tube well water will be flooded to the lands which cause salinity.

Quite unfortunately, network of water channels existing in Pakistan has become redundant. Perennial canal system of irrigation, when formed, was a very efficient in 1960's. But today, Pakistan is deprived of the modern ways of irrigation that is drip and sprinkle irrigation. A huge amount of water is lost due to seepage and evaporation. Moreover, due to problem of distribution of water in fields, farmers do not practice the standard water required in fields.

In Pakistan, construction of water reservoirs has become a matter of political tussle. Due to which construction of dams has been in halt since last major project of Terbela. Indus Basin Treaty 1960 has failed to stop India from constructing water reservoirs on the channels flowing

to Pakistan. However, Pakistan consistently failed to establish its view point on international forums. The present canal water is not effectively used in our irrigation system. 25% - 35% losses of water are recorded out of total applied to fields. Out of 142 MAF, total quantum of water available to crops is only 42 MAF. Due to shortage of canal water farmers have to use tube well water.

Less than 4% of land in Pakistan is forested and rate of deforestation is around 3%. From northern highlands to the coastline of Karachi, Pakistan has diverse range of forests from coniferous to mangroves respectively. However, deforestation is the result of increased and unplanned urbanization. Therefore, expanding urban units grow at the cost of trees. This is not only causing environmental hazards, but also accentuating the impacts of global warming.

During Ayub's era, first time land reforms was practiced. Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto introduced more reforms in 1972. The Law Reforms Act 1977 was also enforced by Bhutto's regime. The most important change was that individual holdings, including shares in shamilat, if any, in excess of 100 acres of irrigated land or 200 acres of un-irrigated land. Furthermore, notwithstanding the above, no land holding could be greater than an area equivalent to 8,000 PIU. However, these laws were declared in contradiction to Islam and have ceased to be in effect since 1990.

Due to excessive use of canal water, most of cultivated lands have become victims of these two dangerous diseases. Every year, salinity alone is turning about 100,000 acres of arable land into marches and salt lands. Water-logging is no less injurious. About 25% of the irrigated area of Pakistan is affected by water logging and salinity problems.

Firstly, No mechanism has been adopted to eradicate the **soil erosion** and even after harvesting nothing is done to improve or restore the soil energy. Therefore, the fertility of soil is decreasing day by day. The thickness of fertile layer of soil in Pakistan is more than 6 inches but the average yield is lower than other countries where layer of fertile soil is only 4 inches.

Secondly, water wastage is very high in our country. The **archaic method of flood irrigation** is still in practice in whole of the country which wastes almost 50 to 60 percent of water. A new irrigation system called drip irrigation system has been introduced in many parts of the world. This not only saves water but also gives proper quantity of water according to the needs of plants.

Thirdly, owing to old methods of cultivation and harvesting, Pakistan has low yield per acre that means the average crop in Pakistan is just 1/4th of that of advanced states. Whereas Nepal, India and Bangladesh are using modern scientific methods to increase their yield per acre. For this purpose, these states are using modern machines to improve their yield.

Fourthly, Exploitation and plight of small farmers: the small farmers are increasing in our country as the lands are dividing generation by generation. So, there are large number of farmers who own only 4 acres of land. These small farmers do not get credit facilities to purchase seeds, pesticides, fertilizers etc. Additionally, a large area of land is owned by feudals and the farmers who work on their lands, are just tenants. This uncertain situation of occupancy neither creates incentive of work nor does attract capital investment.

Fifthly, water logging and salinity is increasing day by day. No effective measures have been taken to curb it. As the storage capacity of the dams is decreasing so the water availability per acre is also decreasing. Therefore, the farmers are installing more and more tube wells to irrigate their crops. This is why salinity is becoming the major issue in most parts of Punjab and Sindh.

Sixthly, focusing more on land, crops and yield problems the man behind the plough is always ignored. While formulating the 5 or 10 years plan, no emphasis has been laid on the importance of solving the **problems of farmers**. Most of the farmers are illiterate, poor and ignorant. In this wake the loans issued by ADBP or other banks are used by them in other fields like repayment of debts, marriage of daughters etc, in spite of its befitting use in agricultural sector.

Seventhly, The only **mean of communication** in rural areas is T.V or radio so it is urgently needed on the part of these mass communication resources to air the programmes related to the new agricultural techniques and allied sciences. But these programmes should be telecast in regional or local languages. Because lack of guidance is the main reason of farmers backwardness. The **communication gap** between well qualified experts and simple farmers have not been bridged. Availability of these experts is not ensured in rural areas as they are reluctant to go there.

Eighth Pakistan is rich in fertile land yet the land is being wasted in different ways. 79.6% million hectares of land is culturable whereas only 20.43% million hectares is cultivated. The reason can be described in two points. A major area is owned by **feudals**. It is difficult to manage such a huge area so only that part is cultivated which is easy to manage, the rest is left ignored. **The rise of industrialization** has given threat to this sector. People are migrating to cities

and cities are expanding, thus new towns and colonies are constructed on fertile lands. The irrigation system of Pakistan needs improvement as about 67% of the land is irrigated with canals.

Ninth Monopoly of Foreign Big Companies The pesticides companies are sorting partnership with "World Bank". These companies are selling adulterated but expensive pesticides to a poor farmer thus leaving him helpless. These pesticides are not only hazardous for health but also a filling the pockets of companies. By moving according to world bank these companies are gaining their own aims. Moreover there is a conflict of interests. It is not ensured that either the company conducting agreement is basically trying to get access to international market or just working according to their aims.

Tenth False policies of Government: 18 billion in budget was allocated for agricultural sector of Pakistan but the withdrawal of subsidy on pesticides and electricity on the conditions of IMF has done serious damage to this sector. Whereas America and European Union are giving a huge amount of subsidy to their farmers and that is a greatest hurdle in the implementation of W.T.O rules. Additionally, price policy is very weak. In Punjab sugar cane is sold 200 Rs. per 40 kilograms. It was purchased and later on stocked by Industrialist in their stores. When Brazil bought sugarcane from International Market and prices become high, the Pakistan sugar mills owners projected demand of selling sugar at high prices, thus Pakistan faced sugar crisis. Then Pakistan had to import Sugar at high prices therefore, the prices of sugar went high in local markets.