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## CONSEQUENCE OF COVID-19 ON SMALLHOLDER CULTIVATORS

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**Abstract:** Indian economy is mostly as rural region with two-thirds of its populations and its labour force is also from rural region. It plays an important part of the total net value added in many sectors, with an overall 46% contribution to our national income. The growth and development of the rural economy is an authoritative of wide-range development and overall growth of the country. Small cultivated holdings constitute the massive majority of farms in many developing countries. Smallholder cultivators are a vital part of the food value chain in India, as well as a critical element of the global food system. In December 2019 in a Chinese city of Wuhan that a new human coronavirus now popularly known as COVID-19 emerged. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought new risks that threaten livelihood as well as food security. Every year, Indian farmers face risks such as low rainfall, price volatility and rising debts, but risks from the COVID-19 pandemic are putting new challenges in front of a sector. The nationwide lockdown came at an unfortunate time for farmers, as it was the harvest season for the rabi crop. The lockdown created both shortage of labour and equipment - migrant laborers in India usually move to rural areas during harvest, and smallholder farmers often rent harvesting equipment as this is cheaper than purchasing it. The purpose of this paper is to discuss about performance of crops, wild plants, livestock, buying selling the product and the problems faced during this lockdown period. A survey was based on face to face interview of smallholder cultivators. Statistical tools of Likert five point scales and Friedman ranking analysis have been used to find results.

**Index Terms - Covid -19, smallholder cultivators, farmers, problem faced by farmers.**

### I. Introduction

Agriculture is the largest livelihood provider in India, more so in the vast rural areas. It is the primary source of livelihood for about 58 % of India's population. Gross Value Added (GVA) by agriculture, forestry and fishing was estimated at Rs 19.48 lakh crore (US\$ 276.37 billion) in FY20(PE). Growth in GVA in agriculture and allied sectors stood at 4 per cent in FY20.<sup>1</sup> The Indian food industry is poised for huge growth and increasing

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ibef.org/industry/agriculture-india.aspx>

its contribution to world food trade. Agriculture continues to be the backbone of livelihood for more than 50 per cent of the population in Tamil Nadu. It contributes 12 per cent of Net State Domestic Product. It is the single largest private sector providing job opportunities for rural people besides being the source of supply of food grains and other dietary staples and serving as the prime source of raw materials for industries. Small agricultural holdings constitute the vast majority of farms in many developing countries. A rural area is a geographic area that is located outside cities and towns and agriculture is the chief source of livelihood along with fishing, cottage industries, pottery, etc. It was in December 2019 in a Chinese city of Wuhan that a new human coronavirus now popularly known as COVID-19 emerged. During COVID-19 pandemic is substantially affecting smallholder producers' access to markets. The impact of the current COVID-19 virus on rural small holder producers is unprecedented. The effects are already being felt within the economies of the rural Indian farmers.

## II . Review of Literature

**Ishwari Singh Bisht et al (2020)** has focused on the biodiverse, predominantly crop-livestock mixed-farming in India is key to ensuring resilience to climate change and sustainability of smallholder farming agroecologies. Farmers traditionally grow diverse crops as polyculture, and agriculture is mainly organic/biodynamic with spirituality in food systems deeply ingrained. The organic and local food movements are but specific phases of the larger, more fundamental sustainable agri-food movement. While it is very critical to increase farmer livelihood, it is even more important to increase overall rural economy. The transition to more sustainable methods of farming by selling the farm produce “locally” helps both consumers and farmers alike and is considered a future strength of smallholder Indian agriculture.

## III Objective of the Study

To examine role and challenges of small holding agriculture in achieving agricultural growth in rural areas.

### Limitations of the study

- Due to shortage of time it is not possible to cover all the factors related to the study.
- Inability to cover large area.
- The statistical methods used to analyze the data have their own limitations.
- All the limitations of primary data are applicable to this study

## IV. Methodology

### Sample Size

A total of 60 farmers were selected by way of proportionate random sampling method.

### Study Area

Coimbatore is a ‘dry’ district with a minor part of canal irrigation and a relatively high concentration of wells. It was in the forefront of the spread of electric pump sets that revolutionised the agriculture of ‘dry’ areas. Coimbatore, for decades had an expressively higher proportion of labourers in the rural population than other districts in Tamil Nadu.

**Data Collection**

The data were collected through structured interview schedule. The collected data were analysed by using statistical technique.

**V. Analysis and Interpretation****Table No : 1****Main Agricultural Activity**

| S.No | Main Agricultural Activity  | Number | Percentage |
|------|-----------------------------|--------|------------|
| 1    | Mainly crop production      | 24     | 40         |
| 2    | Mainly livestock production | 10     | 17         |
| 3    | Mixed (crop and livestock)  | 26     | 43         |

The above table shows that, 43 % of the cultivators have main agriculture activity as mixed (crop & livestock), 40 % of the cultivators were mainly crop production and 17 % of the cultivators were mainly livestock production.

**Table No : 2****Purpose of Crop Production**

| S.No | Purpose of Crop Production                           | Number | Percentage |
|------|--|--------|------------|
| 1    | Producing only for sale                              | 21     | 35         |
| 2    | Producing mainly for sale with some own consumption  | 27     | 45         |
| 3    | Producing mainly for own consumption with some sales | 7      | 11.7       |
| 4    | Producing only for own consumption                   | 5      | 8.3        |

The above table depicts that, 45 % of the cultivators were producing mainly for sale with some own consumption, 35% of the cultivators were producing only for sale, 11.7 % of the cultivators were Producing mainly for own consumption with some sales and 8.3 % of the cultivators were Producing only for own consumption.

**Table No : 3****Major field crops cultivated**

| S.No | Major field crops cultivated          | Number | Percentage |
|------|---------------------------------------|--------|------------|
| 1    | Spinach (Leafy greens)                | 33     | 27.4       |
| 2    | Rice (red rice, local aromatic types) | 6      | 4.8        |
| 3    | Native fruits                         | 5      | 4.1        |
| 4    | Native Vegetables                     | 46     | 37.2       |
| 5    | Milk and milk products                | 15     | 12         |
| 6    | Native millets                        | 12     | 9.7        |
| 7    | Pulses                                | 6      | 4.8        |

Out of total respondents taken for the study, 37.2 % of the cultivators were cultivated for native vegetables, 27.4 % of the cultivators were cultivated for Spinach (Leafy greens), 12 % of the cultivators were cultivated for milk and milk products, 9.7 % of the cultivators were cultivated for native millets and 4 % of the cultivators were cultivated for rice, pulses and fruits.

### Garrett's Ranking

**Table No : 4**  
**Problems Faced by Small Holders**

| S.No | Problems Faced by Small Holders                       | Mean Value | Rank |
|------|---|------------|------|
| 1    | Low level of formal education and skills              | 41.23      | 10   |
| 2    | Shortage of cultivable land and unpredictable weather | 55.43      | 5    |
| 3    | Globalization challenges                              | 45.23      | 8    |
| 4    | Risk and vulnerability:                               | 42.53      | 9    |
| 5    | Credit and Indebtedness                               | 57.66      | 4    |
| 6    | High costs of technologies                            | 47.48      | 7    |
| 7    | Impact of climate change                              | 62.33      | 3    |
| 8    | Transport   | 66.60      | 1    |
| 9    | Shortage of agricultural labourers                    | 64.33      | 2    |
| 10   | Man, Animal conflict                                  | 50.21      | 6    |

It is revealed that majority of the cultivators were problem faces in transport, followed by Shortage of agricultural labourers, Impact of climate change. Credit and Indebtedness and Shortage of cultivable land and unpredictable weather.

### Conclusion

Smallholders are entrepreneurs in a broad sense. They run their farms but are also involved in many other activities away from them, trying to make the best they can. During COVID-19, it has been crucial to maintain agriculture within the list of essential businesses and services that can operate during lockdown to ensure the continuation of production and the protection of rural employment. Employment agencies have also started to facilitate the process of recruiting those interested in working in the food and agricultural sector. In response to COVID-19, Government and financial institutions have promulgated and adopted a series of financial support measures to support smallholder producers and agricultural micro, small and medium enterprises.

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