

**‘Farmer Suicide in Marathwada Region: Reasons & Remedies’****Dr. Rajale V. L.**

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Introduction:

Farmer suicides in Marathwada, a drought-prone region of Maharashtra, have been a persistent crisis driven by agrarian distress. In 2023, 1,088 farmers died by suicide, a rise of 65 from 2022, with Beed district reporting the highest at 269 cases. The first quarter of 2025 saw 269 suicides, up 32% from 204 in 2024, indicating worsening conditions. Key factors include mounting debt, crop failures due to erratic rainfall, drought, and low crop prices. The region's arid climate, unsuitable for water-intensive crops like sugarcane, exacerbates losses. Government aid, typically Rs 1 lakh per eligible case, is often delayed or insufficient, with only 777 of 1,088 cases in 2023 receiving compensation. Loan waivers, such as the 2019 Mahatma Jotirao Phule scheme, have not addressed root causes like inadequate irrigation, substandard seeds, and lack of mental health support. Activists criticize government policies for failing to ensure fair crop prices or sustainable farming practices. The crisis is linked to broader issues like climate change and shrinking water resources. Despite schemes like PM Kisan Samman, distress persists, with calls for systemic reforms growing louder.

Jalna District:

Jalna District, located in central Maharashtra, India, is part of the Marathwada region and was formed on May 1, 1981, from parts of Aurangabad and Parbhani districts. Covering 7,612 sq. km, it is known for its hybrid seed industries, steel re-rolling mills, and sweet lime (mosambi) production. The district has eight talukas: Jalna, Bhokardan, Jafrabad, Ambad, Badnapur, Ghansawangi, Partur, and Mantha. It is well-connected by road and rail, with a new dry port boosting logistics. Major rivers like Godavari and Purna flow through, supporting agriculture. Jalna's economy thrives on



cotton, agro-based industries, and steel production, contributing 7% of India's steel bars. The district is culturally rich, with landmarks like Matsyodari Devi Temple and Kali Masjid. Marathi is the primary language, and festivals like Ganesh Chaturthi are vibrant. Industrial growth is balanced with environmental efforts, earning Jalna a rank as a clean air city. It is a key commercial and industrial hub in Maharashtra.

Reasons for farmer's suicide in Marathwada region:

- **Mounting Debt:** Farmers in Marathwada face heavy borrowing from banks and private lenders due to low crop yields and high input costs. Inability to repay loans, often at exorbitant interest rates, leads to financial despair. This debt trap pushes many to take their lives.
- **Crop Failures:** Erratic rainfall and prolonged droughts frequently destroy crops like soybean and cotton. Poor soil quality and reliance on rain-fed agriculture worsen losses. Repeated failures leave farmers without income or hope.
- **Low Crop Prices:** Inadequate minimum support prices (MSP) and market exploitation by middlemen reduce farmers' earnings. Crops often sell below production costs, deepening financial strain. This economic distress contributes significantly to suicides.
- **Drought and Water Scarcity:** Marathwada's arid climate and overexploited groundwater limit irrigation options. Farmers struggle to sustain water-intensive crops like sugarcane. Lack of water infrastructure exacerbates agricultural failures.
- **Inadequate Government Aid:** Compensation for suicide-affected families, typically Rs 1 lakh, is often delayed or denied due to bureaucratic hurdles. Schemes like loan waivers fail to address structural issues. This leaves farmers feeling abandoned by the system.
- **Substandard Inputs:** Poor-quality seeds and fertilizers lead to low yields or crop failure. Farmers, often misled by suppliers, invest heavily in ineffective inputs. The resulting losses deepen their financial and emotional distress.
- **Lack of Mental Health Support:** Psychological stress from financial ruin and social stigma is widespread. No dedicated mental health programs exist for farmers in Marathwada. This absence of support aggravates despair and suicide rates.



- **Climate Change Impact:** Unpredictable weather patterns, including unseasonal rains and heatwaves, destroy harvests. Farmers lack resources to adapt to changing climate conditions. This increases vulnerability and feelings of helplessness.
- **Land Fragmentation:** Small landholdings, often less than two hectares, limit economies of scale. High cultivation costs outweigh returns on small plots. This makes farming unsustainable for many.
- **Social Pressures:** Farmers face societal expectations to maintain family livelihoods despite losses. Stigma around failure and inability to meet obligations intensify stress. This social burden often drives farmers to extreme measures.

Remedies to overcome farmer's suicide in Marathwada region.

1. **Enhance Irrigation Infrastructure:** Expand access to drip and sprinkler irrigation to reduce dependence on erratic rainfall. Government should prioritize micro-irrigation projects and revive water bodies in Marathwada. This ensures sustainable water use and stable crop yields.
2. **Ensure Fair Crop Prices:** Strengthen Minimum Support Price (MSP) mechanisms to guarantee farmers profitable returns. Establish local procurement centers to eliminate exploitative middlemen. This boosts income and reduces financial distress.
3. **Provide Debt Relief and Restructuring:** Implement comprehensive loan waiver programs with timely disbursement. Offer low-interest credit and moratoriums during crop failures. This alleviates the debt trap driving suicides.
4. **Promote Drought-Resistant Crops:** Encourage cultivation of millets and pulses suited to Marathwada's arid climate. Provide subsidies for quality seeds and training on sustainable farming. This reduces crop failure risks and stabilizes income.
5. **Strengthen Mental Health Support:** Set up rural counseling centers and helplines for farmers facing stress. Train community health workers to identify and address psychological distress. This tackles the emotional toll of agrarian crises.
6. **Improve Government Aid Delivery:** Streamline compensation processes for suicide-affected families to ensure swift Rs 1 lakh payouts. Expand eligibility criteria and reduce bureaucratic delays. Timely aid restores trust in support systems.



7. **Invest in Climate Adaptation:** Provide farmers with weather forecasting tools and climate-resilient farming techniques. Subsidize crop insurance to cover losses from unseasonal weather. This builds resilience against climate change impacts.
8. **Enhance Agricultural Training:** Offer workshops on modern farming techniques, soil health, and crop diversification. Establish farmer cooperatives for shared resources and knowledge. Empowered farmers can better navigate challenges.
9. **Regulate Input Quality:** Enforce strict quality checks on seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides to prevent crop failures. Subsidize high-quality inputs for small farmers. This ensures better yields and financial stability.
10. **Support Land Consolidation:** Promote cooperative farming models to overcome challenges of small landholdings. Provide incentives for collective resource use and mechanization. This improves economies of scale and farm sustainability.

Conclusion:

The persistent farmer suicides in Marathwada highlight a deep-rooted agrarian crisis fueled by debt, drought, and inadequate support systems. Despite government schemes, systemic issues like low crop prices and water scarcity remain unaddressed. Urgent reforms in irrigation, mental health support, and fair pricing are critical. Without comprehensive action, the region risks further loss of lives and livelihoods. Collective efforts from policymakers, communities, and activists are essential to restore hope and sustainability.

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