
AGRICULTURAL SUBSIDIES IN INDIA: QUANTUM OF SUBSIDIES TO SC/ST FARMERS IN KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

India ranks second worldwide in farm output. Agriculture and allied sectors like forestry, logging and fishing accounted for 17% of the GDP and employed 51% of the total workforce in 2012. As Indian economy has diversified and grown, agriculture's contribution to GDP has steadily declined from 1951 to 2011, yet it is still the largest employment source and a significant piece of the overall socio-economic development of India. Agriculture is a very integral part in the socio-economic fabric in influencing the deprived and the economically backward sections of the society. The support extended by the Government of India in providing the agricultural subsidies, in fact is a very significant support system to the farmers. The agricultural subsidy has revived the agricultural sector but the absolute contribution to the SC/ST farmers in comparison with the other sections is still to be explored and issues of social justice and equity be ensured. The present study considers two input subsidies fertilizer subsidy and power subsidy in the districts of Mandya and Raichur. It throws light on the gaps in the existing disbursal system and the recommendations to better the present system.

KEYWORDS: Subsidy, Nutrient Based subsidy, land holding, farmer

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO SUBSIDY

The Indian agrarian economy on the eve of independence was critical in situation. It could be characterized totally primitive, deteriorative and turbulent. After partition, the country is left with

82 per cent of the total population of undivided India as well as only with 69 per cent of land under rice, 65 per cent under wheat and 75 per cent under all cereals. The deficiency of food grains is quite alarming and aggravating at that time (Chahal, 1999). In view of this, after independence tremendous efforts are made to boost the economy through agriculture as one of the tools for development.

The Government of India adopted a more positive approach and hence a well defined policy of integrated production programmes with defined targets and a proper distribution programme is adopted along with other measures for the overall economic development of the country. Specific programmes like new agriculture technology are introduced to convert agriculture into a successful and prosperous business, to bring more land under cultivation and to raise agriculture production. In India, the adoption of new agricultural technique is costly than that of traditional method of cultivation.

In traditional method, inputs are least expensive, on the other hand, inputs in modern technology like high yielding varieties of seeds, fertilizers, farm mechanization and irrigation are very costly and Indian farmers being poor are not in a position to buy these expensive inputs. Then on the recommendations of food grain price committee (Jha Committee), the Government of India started the scheme of subsidies on purchase of various agriculture inputs to facilitate the farmers (Singh, 1994).

Indian Government play vital role in agriculture sector development. The government role is diverse and varied. Some of the cited reasons for vital role are self-sufficiency, employment creation, support to small-scale producers for adopting modern technologies and inputs, reduction of price instability and improvement of the income of farm households. This vital role can take a number of forms such as import-export policies and domestic policies like price support programmes, direct payments, and input subsidies to influence the cost and availability of farm inputs like credit, fertilizers, seeds, irrigation water, and the like.

Of all the domestic support instruments in agriculture, input subsidies and product price support are the most common. An agricultural subsidy is a governmental financial support paid to farmers and agribusinesses to supplement their income, manage the supply of agricultural commodities, and influence the cost and supply of such commodities.

The forms of subsidies are a cash payment to producers or consumers is an easily recognizable form of a subsidy. However, it also has many invisible forms. Thus, it may be hidden in reduced tax-liability, low interest government loans or government equity participation. If the government procures goods, such as food grains, at higher than market prices or if it sells as lower than market prices, subsidies are implied.

Subsidies, as converse of an indirect tax, constitute an important fiscal instrument for modifying market-determined outcomes. While taxes reduce disposable income, subsidies inject money into circulation. Subsidies affect the economy through the commodity market by lowering the relative price of the subsidised commodity, thereby generating an increase in its demand.

Table:- CLASSIFICATION OF SUBSIDY IN INDIA

ECONOMIC SUBSIDIES	SOCIAL SUBSIDIES
Agriculture and cooperation	Education
Irrigation and Flood control	Health
Power and Energy	Water supply and sanitation
Industry	Rural housing and others
Transport	
Communication and others	

1. 2. EIGHT TYPES OF FARM SUBSIDY

1. Direct Payment

Cash subsidies for producers

2. Marketing Loans

A price support program and part of the farm subsidy system. Originally a short-term loan program, today give large subsidies by paying guaranteed minimum prices for crops.

3. **Countercyclical payments**
4. **Conservation subsidies**
5. **Insurance**
6. **Disaster Aid**
7. **Export subsidies**
8. **Agricultural Research and statistics**

1. 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

PREVIOUS RESEARCH WORK ON AGRICULTURAL SUBSIDY

1. **Kym Anderson, Ernesto Valenzuela and Will Martin (2006)** Opines that the claim by global trade modelers that the potential contribution to global economic welfare of removing agricultural subsidies is less than one-tenth of that from removing agricultural tariffs puzzles many observers. To help explain that result, the authors first compare the OECD and model-based estimates of the extent of the producer distortions (leaving aside consumer distortions), and show that 75 percent of total support is provided by market access barriers when account is taken of all forms of support to farmers and to agricultural processors globally, and only 19 percent to domestic farm subsidies.
2. **Acharya S. S., Jogi R. L. (2004)** articulates that the genesis of input subsidies in Indian agriculture can be traced to the philosophy and objectives of agricultural development strategy launched during the mid-1960s. Input subsidies helped in balancing the conflicting interests of farmers and consumers and in achieving macro and micro food-security. Subsidies on fertilizers, electricity and canal water, which account for bulk of subsidies, have been analyzed. In 1999–00, the electricity subsidy accounted for 53 per cent; fertilizer subsidy, 28 per cent; and canal irrigation subsidy, 19 per cent.
3. **Andrew Dorward, Philip D. Roberts, Cambria Finegold, David J. Hemming, Ephraim Chirwa, Holly J. Wright, Janice Osborn, Julien Lamontagne-Godwin, Luke Harman, Martin J. Parr and Vera Barbosa** are of the view the economic justification of agricultural input subsidies involved reducing temporary knowledge and risk constraints to farmers' adoption

of improved technologies and practices, and increasing productivity, creating farmer benefits and/or consumer gains (from produce and labour market and price effects).

4. **Salunkhe and Dr.B.B.Deshmush (2012)** propogate that The agriculture subsidies are integral part of the farmers life in India. The agriculture subsidies plays very important role in agriculture sector in every country. Every year Government of India spends lot of money in various agriculture subsidies for growth of agriculture sector. The total arable & permanent cropland is 169,700 thousand hectares in India.
5. **Business Standard (2012) article reports that** Subsidies need to be differential for rain-fed and perennially-irrigated farms. The amount of subsidy must also be inversely propositional to increase in the size of land holding. This will ensure that the least common denominator, that is, marginal and small farmers, is satisfied.
6. **Barry K. Goodwin, Ashok K. Mishra, and Fran,cois Ortalo-Magn´e (2004)** find that subsidies have a significant impact on farm land values especially the subsidies with a built-in insurance feature. They also report evidence that lease rates incorporate a significant portion of agricultural support, even if the farm legislation mandates that benefits must be allocated to farm operators.
7. **Reena Badiani, Katrina K. Jessoe and Suzanne Plant (2012)** articulate that, in India, the Government provides agricultural electricity subsidies amounting to 85% of the average cost of supply to encourage agricultural production and economic growth, especially among the rural poor.
8. **Vijay Paul Sharma (2012)** analyses the fertilizer subsidy from two different aspects, both important for policy planners in the country. First, who is benefiting from the current system of fertilizer subsidies and secondly what is the impact of recent policy changes on fertilizer consumption and prices and proposed removal of fertilizer subsidies on farm income.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In our country, agriculture and subsidy are inseparable. As long as agriculture is there, subsidy will be there. Government with a view to augment the food production and also to reduce the import of the food grains from other countries resorted to giving subsidies to all the farmers in India. It is a very utilitarian concept. Because, it helps greatest number of people for the greatest

happiness. A large number of farmers will benefit out of it. It is observed that in India, we have large farmers, medium farmers and marginal farmers. Now the Government gives subsidy to farmers uniformly without any basis.

Because of the subsidy, large landholders are availing larger benefits and small and marginal farmers with small holdings are getting less subsidy. So, the uniform policy of providing subsidy to all farmers without basis impacted small and marginal farmers. Therefore, a slab would have been a beneficial measure as has been observed by the experts. As per the policy, nutrients based subsidy is the need of the hour. In the context, because of the uniformity in the subsidy which is without any ceiling or slabs who is drawing much of the subsidy? The haves are becoming enriched further.

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the impact of fertilizer and power subsidy on SC/ST farmers;
2. To compare and contrast the fertilizer and power subsidy between general farmers and SC/ST farmers in Mandya and Raichur districts of Karnataka;
3. To identify the pros and cons of existing state policy relating to fertilizer and power subsidy; and
4. To validate the data and offer constructive suggestions.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

The proposed research programme will adopt descriptive, analytical and survey method of research to collect, analyze and interpret the research objectives and hypothesis.

1.7 SAMPLING

Universe/ Population/ Sampling Frame

1. The population of the Mandya and Raichur district
2. All the farmers in the Mandya and Raichur district

1.8 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study is restricted to the farmers in the district of Mandya and Raichur districts.

1.9 TOOLS USED

A well structured questionnaire is used for the purpose of collection of Primary data on the topic.

1.10 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

ANALYSIS-I: PROFILE OF FARMER RESPONDENTS

1.1 CLASSIFICATION OF FARMER RESPONDENTS BASED ON SOCIAL GROUPS

CLASSIFICATION BASED ON SOCIAL GROUPS

<i>Social Groups</i>	<i>Responses (n=120)</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
SC	25	20.83
ST	35	29.17
OBC	34	28.33
GENERAL	26	21.67
Total	120	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Analysis

The farmers from the ST category account for 29.17% of the total composition. 78.33% of the respondents belong to Non-Creamy Layer.

1.2 AGE-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF FARMER RESPONDENTS IN MANDYA AND RAICHUR DISTRICTS

AGE-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

<i>Age in Years</i>	<i>Responses (n=120)</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
Below 25 years	20	16.67
25-50 years	28	23.33
50-75 years	70	58.33
Above 75 years	02	1.67
Total	120	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Analysis

58.33% of the respondents belong to the age-group of 25-50 years. Only 1.67% of the respondents are above the age of 75 years.

1.3 MONTHLY INCOME-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF FARMER RESPONDENTS IN MANDYA AND RAICHUR DISTRICTS

INCOME-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF FARMER RESPONDENTS

<i>Monthly Income in Rupees</i>	<i>Responses (n=120)</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
Below 5,000	40	34.72
5,000-10,000	59	49.17
10,000-15,000	14	11.67
Above 15,000	07	4.87
Total	120	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Analysis

49.17% of the respondents have an average monthly income in the range of Rs.5000-Rs.10,000. Second largest monthly income is Below Rs.5, 000 is accounting for 34.72% of the total composition of respondents.

1.4 LAND HOLDINGS OF FARMERS IN MANDYA AND RAICHUR DISTRICTS

LAND HOLDINGS BY FARMERS

<i>Land holding in hectares</i>	<i>Responses (n=120)</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
1. Marginal (< 1 ha)	10	8.33
2. Small (1 – 2 ha)	29	24.17

3. Semi medium (2 – 4 ha)	56	46.67
4. Medium (4 – 10 ha)	13	10.83
5. Large (> 10 ha)	12	10.00
Total	120	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Analysis

46.67% of the respondents have an average land holdings in the range of 2ha -4 ha. Second largest holdings is accounted for the Small holdings 1ha- 2ha with 24.17%.

ANALYSIS-II: RESPONSES OF FARMER RESPONDENTS

1.5 ESSENCE OF AGRICULTURAL SUBSIDY

ESSENCE OF AGRICULTURAL SUBSIDY

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Scale</i>	<i>Mandya Farmers</i>		<i>Raichur Farmers</i>	
		<i>Number</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>(%)</i>
Agricultural subsidy is essential to farmers	Always	38	63.33	43	71.67
	Not Always	12	20.00	7	11.67
	Sometimes	8	13.33	10	16.67
	Never	2	3.33	-	
TOTAL		60	100	60	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Analysis

Over 3/5th of the respondents in both the Districts of Mandya and Raichur contend that the agricultural subsidy is always essential to the farmers. Only 3.33% of the farmers in Mandya district turn down the statement.

1.6 SKEWNESS OF AGRICULTURAL SUBSIDY

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Statement	Responses	Mandya Farmers		Raichur Farmers	
		Number	(%)	Number	(%)
Subsidy policy in India is tilted towards the large and medium farmers	Strongly Agree	22	36.67	31	51.67
	Agree	18	30.00	20	33.33
	Neutral	10	16.67	03	5.00
	Disagree	09	15.00	01	1.67
	Strongly disagree	01	1.63	05	8.33
TOTAL		60	100	60	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Analysis

More than 2/3rd of the respondents in Mandya and more than 4/5th of the respondents in Raichur agree that subsidy policy in India is tilted towards large and medium farmers.

1.7 FACTORS IN UNINTERRUPTED DISTRIBUTION OF SUBSIDY

FACTORS IN UNINTERRUPTED DISTRIBUTION OF SUBSIDY

Statement	Options	Mandya farmers		Raichur Farmers	
		Number	(%)	Number	(%)
Factor that can facilitate uninterrupted subsidy distribution without political interference	Direct	21	35.00	31	51.67
	Through intermediaries	05	8.33	10	16.67
	Debiting Cash benefit to Farmer's Wife Account	34	56.67	19	31.67
TOTAL		60	100	60	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Analysis

More than half of the respondents in Mandya feel debiting Cash benefit to Farmer's Account could ensure subsidy distribution to be free from political interference. However, roughly about half of the respondents in Raichur contend direct distribution to be a better option.

1.8 CHARACTERISTICS OF POWER SUBSIDY

CHARACTERISTICS OF POWER SUBSIDY

<i>Statement</i>	<i>Factors</i>	<i>Mandya Farmers</i>		<i>Raichur Farmers</i>	
		<i>Number</i>	<i>(%)</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>(%)</i>
Power subsidy is characterized by	Depleting underground water levels	37	61.67	35	58.33
	Unreliable Electricity supply	12	20.00	10	16.67
	Increased Electricity Consumption	08	13.33	06	10.00
	Preference to Water incentive crops	03	05.00	09	15.00
TOTAL		60	100	60	100

(Source: Primary Data)

Analysis and Interpretation

The Power Subsidy exhibits various characteristics both at the supply point and at the distribution point of farmers. The burgeoning problems of depleting underground water level at global and at Mandya and Raichur districts is very evident. Unreliable Electricity Supply, increased Electricity Consumption and preference to Water intensive crops over other crops have an impact on Power Subsidy.

1.9 RANKING OF THE FORM IN WHICH SUBSIDY IS DISBURSED

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<i>Form</i>	<i>Districts of study</i>	<i>Ranking</i>		
		Easy	Cumbersome	Difficult
Form of price support	Mandya	43(71.67)	10(16.67)	7(11.67)
	Raichur	38(63.33)	12(20.00)	10(16.67)
Export subsidies	Mandya	30(50.00)	15(25.00)	15(25.00)
	Raichur	50(83.33)	10(16.67)	-
Input subsidies for Export crops	Mandya	46(76.67)	10(16.67)	4(6.67)

	Raichur	41(68.33)	10(16.67)	9(15.0)
Input subsidies in use of fertilizers		To Full Extent	To a great Extent	To some Extent
	Mandya	34(56.67)	21(35.00)	5(8.33)
	Raichur	31(51.67)	19(31.67)	10(16.67)

(Source: Primary Data)

(Figures in the parenthesis show percentages)

Analysis and Interpretation

Majority of the respondents feel that the Agricultural Subsidy if disbursed in the form of price support is easy. One-half of the respondents in Mandya feel that export subsidies are worth giving. Majority of the farmer respondents contend with input subsidies for export crops.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

H₀ - There is no relationship between Agricultural Subsidy on one hand and the exports and imports of food grains on the other

H_a – There is a relationship between Agricultural Subsidy on one hand and the exports and imports of food grains on the other

Elements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
O	55	20	20	10	15	120
E	24	24	24	24	24	120

Alpha=0.05

Degree of freedom= 5-1=4

Chi square=53.29

Table value of F (0.05) at 95% level of significance = 9.94

Conclusion

Hypothesis is rejected

So, hypothesis is rejected but the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

FINDINGS

1. Agricultural Input subsidy is viewed as an excellent mechanism with the Indian Economy. Government's initiative is successful in benefiting the farmer community. The Agricultural Input Subsidy is existing for a very long time and this has been revived to be able to change with the demands of the times.
2. The farmers affirm satisfactory opinion on the Agricultural Input subsidy. The Agricultural Input Subsidy is a very important ingredient which increases the agricultural produce. The Agricultural Input Subsidy has been able to influence the farmers to use it to optimum levels.
3. Complexity of the Agricultural Subsidy to be in consonance with the quantum of land holding is conceded by the respondents in Mandya and Raichur. Allocation of the Agricultural Input Subsidy is questionable.
4. The Agricultural Input Subsidy which has to be useful to the needy small and marginal farmers is failing in the primary objectives of ensuring equity among the farmers.
5. The Agricultural Input Subsidy exhibits a huge gap where it fails to fulfil the objectives of the Policy.
6. The existing Agricultural Subsidy Policy has many critical gaps. It is evident that the farmers strongly contend that the Agricultural Input Subsidy is to be structured and customized through the Need based Subsidy by scrapping the present Agricultural Subsidy distribution. The need to follow a scientific base in the distribution of the Agricultural Input is emphasized.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the Agricultural Input Subsidy is an essential factor in the Indian agricultural scenario. The Agricultural Input Subsidy is instrumental in increasing the exports and reducing the imports. The farmers are getting benefitted through the scheme with huge gaps yet to be fulfilled. There is an universal and uniform way of distributing the subsidy. The large farmers are treated on par with the small and marginal farmers causing regression in the sectoral development. The Agricultural Input Subsidy has always enjoyed an important role of being the backbone of the Agricultural sector in India and has elevated the Indian Economy.

An ideal subsidy distribution based on the economic levels, size of the holdings, fertility of the soil can bring the lamenting small and marginal farmers belonging to the neglected section of the society to the main stream. The individual social responsibility of the large farmers may result in

strengthening the small farmers so that the issues related to the small and marginal farmers belonging to SC/ST get a proper focus.

It is the economically weaker category farmers who suffer and get worst affected in the instances of shortage of the agricultural subsidies. Different Slab rates which is in fact, a meticulous way to workout the subsidy distribution is missing and the present policy is largely benefiting the large farmers. The funds are also lacking with the poor farmers making them incapacitated to use power subsidy which calls for the Pumpsets and other infrastructure. Power subsidy can be worthy to the small and marginal farmers only if it is backed by the Parallel incentives.

SUGGESTIONS

- ❖ Agricultural Input Subsidy is a wonderful mechanism to establish the link between the Government and the farmers. The cost benefit analysis and reviews should be made from time to time accurately and appropriately with bonafide intentions. It should not be a eye-patch review.
- ❖ Debt trap among the farmers and the consequent suicides have always been a matter of concern to the Government of India. Hopefully, the Agricultural Input Subsidy can elevate the farmers and can be a solution to reduce the debt crisis. Indian Economy has always had trade deficit where imports are more and exports are less. The Agricultural Input Subsidy results in higher food grains production leading to reducing the imports and increases the exports.
- ❖ International agencies like WTO and International Trade agreements like Uruguay Round Agreements and the like can give away the guidelines in the handling of the effective disbursement and management of the Agricultural Input Subsidy. It is suggested that the easing out of the procedural delay in the distribution of the Agricultural Input Subsidy can make it more effective. To reiterate, the Agricultural Input Subsidy would be effective if it is reaching the small and marginal farmers belonging to the deprived section of the society.
- ❖ Today, the Government of India is experiencing Critical gaps in the Fertilizer Subsidy distribution. The Government of India procures the fertilizer from the Fertilizer manufacturing companies to supply the fertilizer through Fertilizer Subsidy to the farmers. The problem subsists where there is already a huge amount of outstanding debt to be cleared by the Government of

India to these fertilizer supplying companies. The Government should speed-up the clearance of the bills so that there is no problem in the initial stage.

- ❖ Agricultural sector is a core sector and is a fundamental source of income to human sustenance and survival by extension to economic opportunity. Agricultural Input Subsidy no doubt plays a very crucial role in the agricultural productivity in India.
- ❖ Electricity again is got by the electricity supplying boards both regulated or government owned to provide the Electricity to the farmers. The Electricity supply is subject to 'network externalities'. The electricity can be broken down into three components: Production, transmission and distribution. A special focus is to be on the proper structure for the transmission and distribution infrastructure. Slab rates, Parallel incentives and Community based programs can bring out the small farmers belonging to the SC/ST community to the forefront.
- ❖ Any Policy for that matter, which is implemented must always be reviewed to rectify the loopholes and the problems. The ground realities in the farm fields is what matters rather than the policy framework itself. The figures in quantity may be astounding and impressive but what one needs to introspect is whether it is from the masses or is because of small group with vested interests.
- ❖ The Agricultural Input Subsidy has not to be a political agenda in the political parties but must be a reform measure or a tool to the small and marginal farmers belonging to SC/ST category to serve its intended purpose. The Agricultural Input Subsidy needs a facelift as in the Nutrient Based Subsidy which can again bring reform in the agricultural sector.
- ❖ Debiting cash to farmer's wife account may bring about the proper usage for the said purpose. Consonance of the Agricultural Input Subsidy with the quantum of land holding can be one of the remedial measures.
- ❖ For the poor farmers, the investment on source of water like bore well is high. Costs averted and productivity gained shows a huge gap. So, incentives to own the source of water can improve the agricultural productivity. Government can subsidize solar energy as an alternative to conventional form of water lifting. This can really bring forth the productivity.

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