SUBJECT:

Agricultural Issues in Pakistan and its Remedies under Pakistan Environment

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Introduction

“Pakistan is mainly an agricultural country” the phrase is now questionable as in present scenario, although gains in this sector are much important and required in case of Pakistan’s economy as the environment of the country supports this sector the most but its shrunken contribution in the gross domestic product of the country has questioned the importance of the sector. In 1947 share of agriculture share in GDP was 53 percent and now it has decreased to 21 percent only. In past, although there were great strides in this sector to overcome the problem of food security in the country like during the era of green revolution but, in last decade the yield remained stagnant while the neighbouring countries like India, Bangladesh and China have shown remarkable growth in the this sector. Pakistan has alluvial soils and these soils show a great potential of productivity further the weather of the country supports the production in agricultural sector if the available resources are used in an efficient way. Because of the seasonal rainfall, agricultural sector is affected by the calamtic vagaries and lack of management from the government side leads to diminished production. Agriculture sector is divided into many sub sectors as mentioned and to develop this sector requires that considerations must be given on
these sub sector as well. Only crop production although having major share, cannot lead to the way to progress. To take a sector on the way to progress requires that it must be improved from all dimensions.

Favourable pricing policy can boost up the production as while formulating pricing policy the authorities know that what will be the demand for the produce and what will be the supply. Although it depends on several other factor but this factor can majorly determine the direction of production in this sector. It effects the income distribution of the farmers and also the terms of trade can be decided between agriculture and the others for example industrial sector which is also a big consumer of the agricultural products. A good pricing policy can be defined as “ceteris peribus, price acts as an incentive to produce certain goods in required quantities”. Further, provision of credit to small farmers can also lead the sector towards its increased share in the economy of the country. The provision of agriculture credit increases the overall growth of the economy also like in Pakistan during last decade, according to a research, agriculture credit affected the growth of the country positively. Besides other determinants agricultural credit is also a major factor determining the share of the agricultural sector in the economy of the country and consequent increase in the growth of the country.

The sector is confronted by many problems and few major problems are discussed below which need to be addressed.

**Small Farmers**

Due to generation by generation division of land the number of small farmers is continuously increasing in the country which as a result cannot attract the capital investment. Subsidies or any targetted credit also goes in favour of the large farmers. These small farmers are also compelled to use the time out equipment because they cannot afford to buy latest machinery to be used at the field. Factor price distortions also affect the smallholders.

**Irrigation Problems**

In 1960 the perennial canal system was although efficient but it has now become redundant because todays farmer is deprived of the modern irrigation systems like sprinkler irrigation and drip irrigation. Desilting of canals and crumbled canal banks create the problem of the water
losses from the head of the irrigation source to the root zone. About 35-40 % of water is lost due to water course losses. As a result inadequate water provision problem causes water logging. The distribution of water in the field causes farmers not to practice the standard water requirements at the field level. And the losses due to seepage and evaporation also lead to increased loss of water at the field.

**Water availability and usage Problems**

The underprising of water is the major problem and the complex system of water rate assessment decreases the incentive of the farmers and they do not use water in an efficient way which leads to increased water logging and salinity. The water crises in Pakistan is mainly due to five reasons

1. The rivers in the country are highly seasonal so at the peak flows we do not have reservoirs to store that water for productive uses.
2. Irrigation losses from the canal head to the root zone.
3. Inadequate drainage system causes an increase in water tables during showering season which lead to further salinity and water logging.
4. Large farmers use much larger share of water by pumping water directly from the canals so the tail-end farmers suffers due to this unjust utilization of water.
5. Lack of maintenance of the irrigation network also leads to aggravate the problem.

**Marketing Problems**

Marketing problem in agriculture sector is the big hurdle of the decreasing share of this sector in the GDP. Market organizations are not proper due to which our farmer cannot get just price for their produce. Middle man takes alot of share as a return of his services of taking produce from producers to the consumers. The major benefit goes to the middle man instead of producer or consumer. This also leads to decrease the economic share of the sector.

**Storage Problems**

The country is facing a serious problem of grain storage. Temporary storage facilities cause damage to the grain which destroys due to inadequate protection and pilferage. Lack of proper ventilation, increased temperature and humidity, lack of cleanliness in godowns, broken walls
and roofs and increased moisture content in the seeds lead to the rotten seeds and increased sprouting and more insect damage.

**Discussion on some of the other sectors of agriculture**

**Fruit and Vegetable production**

This is also a subsector of the agriculture sector and this sub sector is also facing many problems like

i- Lack of cold storage facility
ii- Problems of grading and packaging
iii- High prices of processed items
iv- poor planting materials and certified nurseries

**Livestock and Milk Production**

Being a part of the agriculture sector these sectors are also suffering. There often disease outbreak problem in livestock and and breeds for mutton and beef production are less in the country. In case of milk production byproducts are extracted at a low rate and there is less product diversification also. And due to the high price of processed milk its demand shrinks which also shrunkens its economic share. Only 13 procesing units are working out of 38 major processing plants. And 6 powder milk units are working with only 50 percent efficiency which are total 10 in number.

**Problems in fisheries subsector**

In Pakistan this sector is facing problems because there is very low institutional as well as human resource capacity. Further, proper feed for the fish is not available and shrimp resources are being exploited.

Solution to the problems in agriculture sector can lead to increased employment generation and macroeconomicstability will also be ensured as because of the lack of skilled
labor in industrial sector this labor can be best utilized in the agriculture sector. Further the reduction in poverty is also one advantage of solving the problems of this sector.

**Remedial Measures**

i- Taxes should be levied by devising the limit of land holdings but not the income because it will affect the small farmers as well. And further land should be distributed to the small farmers.

ii- Those seeds should be approved which are tested on Pakistani soil and weather conditions. Some of the international countries are introducing such seeds which can be confronted by the increased pest attack in near future. Such seeds should be banned by the government.

iii- Increased reservoirs can lead to increased and proper drainage of water and irrigation losses can be avoided.

iv- The agricultural land of the country should be divided into zones. And then the farmers in those areas should be trained according to the production of that particular crop. And after making these zones which should consist of even small divisions. Then agricultural graduates should be appointed according to their specialization in those particular areas. The graduates from all the departments of agriculture should be employed there and the farmers of that zone and these employees should be encouraged to discuss their ideas with each other and across the zones.

v- Although the small farmer in Pakistan suffers from the lack of credit facilities but there are many farmers who do not have the proper information that how they can get small loans being the small landholders. They should be provided with information to avail these credit facilities which are offered by the government.

vi- Cattle rearing or livestock is also a sub sector of agriculture contributing almost one third in the agriculture GDP. If a farmer has land less then two acres he should be encouraged to go for cattle farming and small loans should be provided to them to smartly start their business.

vii- In the conditions of Pakistan as we have less resources inter cropping must be encouraged because due to this farmers can get more benefits from almost available resources. And this leads to better absorption of available resources, increases
diversity and and stability as well. Like growing leguminous crops with the major crops can help in more efficient utilization of the nitrogen resources.

viii- In fruit and vegetable sector proper cold storage facilities must be developed and certification system must be established. Grading and packaging facility should be improved.

ix- Research on fisheries must be increased. Shrimps must be reared in aquaculture and cage culture so that its exploitation can be controlled. Moreover there must be proper provision of the fish feed as well. Brackish water is better for fish production so its availability must be ensured.

x- Local cattle breeds must be improved and fodder and rangelands should be managed to feed the livestock. Processed and powdered milk demand must be enhanced and diversification in the milk products should be introduced and there should be proper packaging and chilling capacity to maintain the quality of the milk and milk products.

If all the problems are addressed with proper management by the government then this sector can make progress. Along with all these remedial measures the adoption of the new and changing technology can add up the growth of agricultural productivity. Research and development are necessary tools to compete in the international markets. Physical as well as institutional infrastructure is required and development of human resource in the field of research and development. Combining all the remedial measures with the research and development can lead to increase in the share of agriculture sector in the economy of the country and we can get rid of the phrase that “agriculture in Pakistan is a white elephant”.