

Tenant farmers bear the brunt of agri distress

Most suicides among landless and marginal farmers

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Tenant farmers and cotton growers in Telangana are under severe distress according to a survey of farm families whose bread winner committed suicide.

About 75 per cent of the suicide were by tenant farmers and 81 per cent of them were cotton growers.

The survey by the Rythu Swarajya Vedika and a group of students from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) during May 10 to June 13 covered 700 families out of the 3,500 families that witnessed a suicide from June 2014 to April 2018.

“The sample is 20 per cent of the total subject size. We collected details on the extent of land, tenancy, loans from banks and private lenders and the crops cultivated,” Kiran Kumar Vissa of Rythu Swarajya Vedika said.

“About 13.5 per cent or 93 farmers didn’t own any land and were either landless farmers or small and marginal farmers,” Kondal Reddy, who took part in the survey, said.

The erstwhile Warangal district topped the list with 121 suicides followed by Adilabad with 115.

The survey revealed the lack of access to institutional financial credit for tenant farmers, which forced them to approach private lenders who charge usurious rates.

“They deserve the Rythu Bandhu scheme more than anyone else. But they are kept away. On the other hand, non-practicing farmers are getting the benefit,” S Malla Reddy of All-India Kisan Sabha said.

“The tenant farmers will have to bear the burden of rent over and above the regular cost of production,” he said.

The average private loan burden on 520 tenant farmers was pegged at ₹4 lakh .

Over 60 per cent of the farmers who took the extreme step belonged to backward castes, followed by Scheduled Castes (17 per cent) and Scheduled Tribes (11.3 per cent).

Incidentally, the period of survey also saw distribution of Rythu Bandhu cheques to eligible farmers with the State government doling out ₹4,000 an acre as financial assistance for the kharif season. This scheme, however, excludes tenant farmers.

Source: <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/markets/commodities/tenant-farmers-bear-the-brunt-of-agri-distress/article24175385.ece>