



Resilience in Adversity: The Agricultural Sector's Positive Growth Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

The agriculture sector contributes 18.8 per cent of Gross Value Added (GVA) of the country in 2021-22 has experienced excellent growth in the past 2 years. It grew at 3.9 per cent in 2021-22 and 3.6 per cent in 2020-21 showing resilience in the face of COVID-19 shock. The factors might be good monsoon, various Government measures to enhance credit availability, improve investments, create market facility, promote infrastructure development and increased provision of quality inputs to the sector. It also observes that livestock and fisheries have experienced buoyant growth and had helped the sector perform well.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on global economies, causing widespread disruptions and uncertainties. Amid the turmoil, one sector stood resilient, displaying remarkable growth

and stability - agriculture. This article explores the factors that contributed to the agricultural sector's positive trajectory during the pandemic and its pivotal role in ensuring food security and economic stability. The

agriculture sector which accounts for 18.8 per cent of Gross Value Added (GVA) of the country in 2021-22 has experienced buoyant growth in the past 2 years. It grew at 3.9 per cent in 2021-22 and 3.6 per cent in 2020-21 showing resilience in the face of COVID-19 shock. (Ministry of Finance, Government of India, Economic Survey 2021-22)

Unwavering Essential Services

While various sectors experienced setbacks due to lockdowns and supply chain disruptions, agriculture emerged as an essential service that continued to function. Farmers, recognized as frontline workers, diligently worked to ensure a steady supply of food, overcoming logistical challenges and labor shortages.

Localized and Decentralized Nature

The decentralized and localized nature of agriculture played a crucial role in its positive growth. Unlike industries heavily dependent on global supply chains, agriculture relies on local and regional networks. This inherent characteristic allowed farmers to adapt swiftly to changing circumstances and minimize the impact of disruptions.

Technological Integration

The pandemic accelerated the adoption of technology in agriculture. From precision farming to online marketplaces, farmers embraced digital solutions to streamline operations. Technology not only increased efficiency but also facilitated communication and coordination in a time of social distancing.

Government Support and Policies

Governments worldwide recognized the importance of a stable agricultural sector during the pandemic. Various stimulus packages, financial aid, and policy initiatives were implemented to support farmers. These

measures not only sustained agricultural activities but also stimulated growth by encouraging investments in the sector. (Annual Report 2020-21, Department of Economic Analysis & Research, NABARD, Government of India)

Shift in Consumer Behavior

As the pandemic unfolded, there was a noticeable shift in consumer behavior. Health-conscious consumers turned towards fresh and locally sourced produce, leading to increased demand for agricultural products. This change in preferences benefited local farmers and promoted sustainable farming practices.

Global Supply Chain Reevaluation

The pandemic prompted a reevaluation of global supply chains, highlighting vulnerabilities in various industries. This shift encouraged a focus on local and resilient supply chains, with agriculture being a prime example. Countries recognized the importance of food self-sufficiency and invested in strengthening their domestic agricultural capacities.

Job Creation and Rural Economy

While other sectors faced job losses and economic downturns, agriculture became a source of employment stability. The rural economy, heavily dependent on agriculture, experienced a boost as increased agricultural activities created jobs and contributed to income generation.

Environmental Benefits

The pandemic-induced slowdown in industrial activities inadvertently led to environmental benefits. With reduced pollution and carbon emissions, agriculture's role in promoting sustainable practices gained prominence. Practices like organic farming and agroforestry

gained traction as a part of global efforts towards environmental conservation.

CONCLUSION

The positive growth of the agricultural sector during the COVID-19 pandemic underscores its resilience and importance in sustaining societies during crises. The lessons learned from this experience should guide future policies and investments to further strengthen and modernize the agricultural sector. As we

navigate the post-pandemic world, the agricultural sector's role in ensuring food security, economic stability, and environmental sustainability remains paramount.

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