

A Study on Farmer Suicide in Bargarh District: Causes and Consequences

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Abstract: This is an extensive study of the causes and consequences of farmer's suicide in the district of Bargarh in the Western part of the Odisha. The data required for the study was collected from the interview schedule. The sample size was 100. The data was analyzed through percentage and pi-chart. The results of this study shows the lack of financial support is the major causes of farmer's suicide and also suggested that welfare schemes can be provided to the farmer's to reduce this problems.

Key Words: Farmer, Bargarh, Odisha, Causes, Consequences, Suicide.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Farmer suicides in India are the intentional ending of one's life by a person dependent on farming as their primary source of livelihood. Due to various reasons like monsoon failure, high debt burdens, genetically modified crops, government policies, mental health, personal issues and family problems etc. are leads to farmer's suicide. In the state of Odisha the farmers were into paddy cultivation and their outstanding loans were very low. So they committed suicide.

Saroj Mohanty, spokesperson of Paschima Odisha Krushak Mahasangha, an organization working for farmers' interests in western Odisha, the hot bed of farmer suicides, opines that the institutional arrangements, developed with much hype during the post-reform era, have failed the farmers in the area. In his assessment of farmer suicides in western Odisha, in 2009, he pointed out that it was small and marginal farmers who were committing suicide. Most of them were into share-cropping arrangements with either fixed or variable rents. Lack of irrigation forced farmer suicides as most of those who committed suicides were from rain-fed areas. Poor farmers who were mostly below the poverty line (BPL) borrowed money from moneylenders or nongovernmental agencies and were not able to take the pressure of returning these loans. Government institutions, created to protect and promote the interests of farmers, were not effective in supporting them.

As farm crisis assumes alarming proportions in the district, excessive stress could be one of the reasons behind the spate of farmer suicides in Bargarh.

As per National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB), Odisha has recorded 2,621 farmer suicides from 2001 to 2008. The maximum number of suicides was reported in 2015 when 122 farmers reportedly killed themselves across the State of which 29 farmers were from Bargarh district. While it came down to eight in 2016 in Bargarh.

This study is an attempt at developing a comprehensive understanding of farmer suicides in Bargarh districts and also identify the various causes and how to protect the farmers.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To identify the causes of farmer's suicide in Bargarh district.
- To identify the temporal change of farmer's suicide in Bargarh district.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Das, (2011) & Schurman (2013) in their empirical study stated that now a day the spate of farmers suicide causes in a number of Indian states is one of the vital concerns to indicate the multiple crisis affecting rural economy and rural society.

Pradhan. L (2017) conducted a study on socio-economic and psychological aspect of the problem of farmer suicide. It also recommend for the suitable measures for the farmer suicide.

Gruene and Sengupta (2011) in their seminar work have stated that despite portrayal of farming as healthy and happy way of life and happy farmer's means a prosperous nation as popularly statement, agriculture sector in India records on of the highest numbers of suicide than any sector of economy categorically in last two decades.

Merroit.D (2016) conducted a study “Factors associated with the farmer suicide crisis in India”. This study contains the various factors associated with this crisis. The researcher found that socioeconomic factors, rather than mental health problems and also indebtedness and numerous factors relating to this are clearly identified as the most important risk factors.

T.S.Sonaware (2016) conducted a study on “Critical study of farmer’s suicide in Maharashtra-causes and remedies”. This research focuses on the causes of farmers’ suicide and effective remedies. The main cause behind suicides found were indebtedness, low productivity, crop failure, low income, more expenditure etc.

Ramdas.S & Kuttichira.P (2017) study conducted on “Farmers suicide and mental disorders perspectives on research approaches-comparison between-India &Australia”. This study conducted a period of 10 years from 2002 to 2012.comprehensive studies on framers’ suicide, analyzing the diverse perspectives and causes, objectively and concurrently were lacking, especially from India.

Prandhan.R.L (2017) conducted a study on “Farmer’s suicide in Odisha:-A study of socioeconomic and psychological dimension of the crisis. This study attempt to find out the causes and consequences of the farmers’ suicide in India. It also studies the temporal change of farmers’ suicide of Odisha.

4. DEED OF THE STATE AND FARMERS SUICIDE IN BARGARH DISTRICT:

The Naveen Pattnaik Government has come to power for successive years now promising a transformation of the economy. Odisha has witnessed a steady drift from poverty reduction and employment generation development strategy to a massive programme of mine-based mega projects with support from the Centre. The focus on removing obstacles to mining, reviving growth in the manufacturing sector, encouraging Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in critical sectors, and development of smart cities, conspicuously reflects the class character of the state. However, in spite of favoring the industrial and educated middle class, the state’s campaign for inclusive growth and the rights-based approach has gained popular support.

Odisha has been hailed as a growing economy and agriculture has been accorded the highest priority both by the Centre as well as the State. However, the ground reality explains that the policies of the government which stress on doubling the farm income and farm loan waivers have not only failed in arresting the alarming rise of the debt burden, but also in securing a stable income. Further, it has failed in preventing the loss of productive resources and the produce resulting in recurrences of farmers’ suicides. Since the State had declared its success in agrarian growth, it was determined not to acknowledge the agrarian crisis till the news of farmers burning their crops and committing suicide hit the headlines recently. Denial by the public officials of farmers’ suicides due to the agrarian crisis places insuperable obstacles to resolve the crisis.

Ironically, Anjan Kumar Manik, the than District Collector of Bargarh, claimed that the Bargarh district is known for bumper paddy production as 25 per cent of the State’s paddy is procured in Bargarh which is almost 10 to 11 lakh tonnes every year. A part of the district falls under the Hirakud Command area and is well irrigated. However, the remaining blocks often face droughts. Being a beneficiary of the Hirakud Dam irrigation system has not helped Bargarh much because of the high investment in paddy cultivation in recent years. These are depressing contrasts.We see an absolute lack of political will to arrest the problem. The tragic events of suicides of farmers have led the government to go into defensive mode. The Opposition parties have also fallen into the same trap as their counterparts of blaming the ruling party for its anti-farmer policies. The government at present is facing an uphill task of mitigating opposing claims rather than behaving pragmatically and sensibly by intervening to reform the investment costs which are basic to increase the farmers’ income. The farmers’ suicides have taken a political turn as Susanta Singh, the Labour, Employment and State Insurance Minister, alleged that farmer BrundaSahu took the extreme step after getting provoked by a group of BJP leaders who met the latter once the news that he set the damaged crops on fire was flashed on news channels. On the contrary, refuting the allegations levelled by Singh, BJP MLA PradiPurohit counter-alleged that the ruling BJD was so perturbed by Sahu’s suicide that their leaders were trying to cook up fake stories to defame the BJP.

Both the ruling party and the Opposition want to create the ground for their political projects. What is worrisome is that the need to see what is a failure of the callous state is passed off as a normal phenomenon that farmers experience. Increasing farmers’ suicides did not come across as shocking to the state. In fact, the government remained unmoved despite the increasing number of farmers taking their lives. The ruling and Opposition parties should move beyond such political squabbles.

The government has been driven by political calculations rather than a realistic assessment of the situation. In fact, when the government was criticized for the recent suicide of a farmer in Bargarh district, Pradeep Maharathy, the Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water Minister, asserted that the farmers die due to other causes, in particular domestic discord and not ‘farm distress’. (Bisoyi, 2017) His statement soon snowballed into a severe public agitation. It forced the government to send the Collector to the village for a recheck of the facts. The government has also chosen to stick to its stand to deny any farmer’s suicide in the State. It stated that the incidents could be due to anything but crop loss and debt.

In the past, the State officials have argued that suicides were mostly due to personal, domestic, health-related and other reasons, but not due to crop loss or debt burden. The Collector of the Bargarh district in his reports on farmers’ suicides in 2015 attributed “family dispute”, “marital discord” and “consumption of liquor” by the farmers as the possible reasons for the suicides. He further stated that since ‘Odisha has seen droughts, cyclones and floods for several decades, people have developed the resilience’. (Joshi, 2016)

The apathetic attitude of the government to prevent farmers from taking their lives is also reflected in the blame the political class imposes on the farmers for the incorrect application of pesticides. They argue to convince that the farmers are responsible for the crop loss as the pest that strikes annually can be easily controlled. (The officials at the Agriculture Department) On the contrary, the farmers in the villages of Odisha where farmers committed suicide complain that the Village Agriculture Workers (VAW), Gram Sebaks and KrusakaSathis, who are supposed to advise the farmers regarding the use pesticides, have never done so. (Patnaik, 2017: The crop loss from attacks by BPH also aggravated as there was acute shortage of government-distributed pesticides. Moreover, the pesticides used by the farmers failed to protect the paddy crop from BPH. It was two weeks after several farmers had committed suicide that the government banned 11 pesticide companies, which failed the quality check, from selling their products in the State. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, the Union Minister of State for Agriculture, who visited areas in Bargarh, Boudh and Sonepur districts affected by BHP, said the pesticides many farmers had used actually helped proliferate the pest. In fact, the government’s efforts to regulate toxic chemicals used in agriculture have failed miserably. We have seen this in the recent past, in Maharashtra’s cotton belt in Yavatmal, where farmers died from pesticide.

5. CAUSES OF FARMER SUICIDES IN BARGARH DISTRICT:

- Increased crop loss
- Indebtness
- Proverty
- Illness
- Alienation of land
- Land transfers and distress sale of land to the money lenders and landlords
- Lack of direct integration with the market
- The cost of production is higher than the profit
- Lack of subsidies
- High rate of interest on loans

**6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION:
 SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTSINTRODUCTION**

The socio-economic background of the respondents has direct concern on the analysis of the multi-dimensional characteristics of the respondent. This socio-economic background not only makes the respondents familiar with the other researcher as well as co-researcher and makes on easy distribution of the universe. In this present study characteristic relating to age, income category, and marital status shows the socio-economic background of the respondents. These data are collected through interview schedule and this beneficiary belongs to Bargarh District.

TABLE-1.1

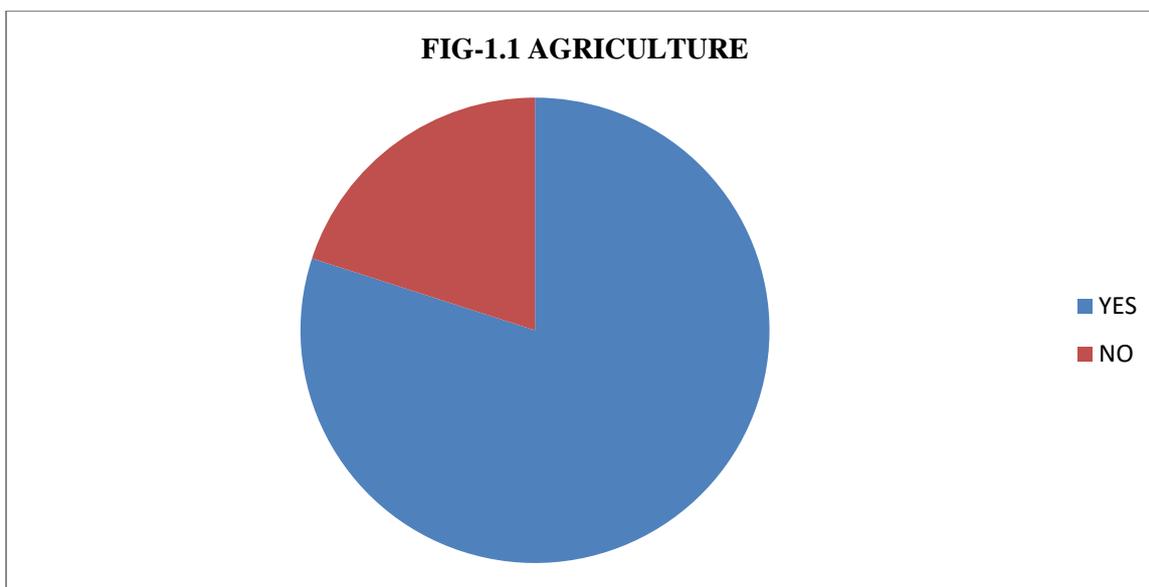
Sl.no	Variables	Respondents(100)	Percentage
1	AGE		
	(A)BELOW 35	20	
	(B)35-45	50	
2	GENDER		
	(A)MALE	80	
	(B)FEMALE	20	
3	MARITAL STATUS		
	(A)MARRIED	75	
	(B) UNMARRIED	25	
4	INCOME		
	(A)BELOW 10,000	65	
	(B)10,000-25,000	20	
	(C)ABOVE 25,000	15	

The above table reveals that majority (50%) of the respondents comes under the age group below 35-45 years. majority (80%) of the respondents are male. (75%) of the respondents are married. majority (65%) of the respondent comes under 10,000-25,000 income groups.

TABLE-1.2

Q.1. whether most of the people of Bargarh district are engaged in agriculture.

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	80	80%
NO	20	20%
TOTAL	100	100%

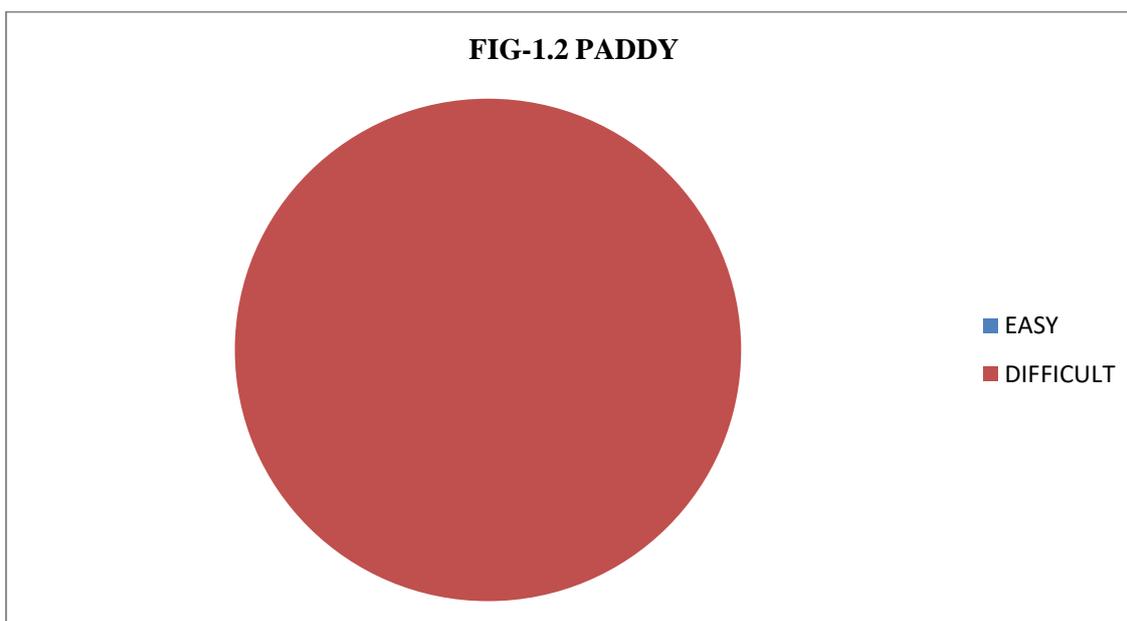


From the above table 80% respondents are engaged in agriculture and 20% respondents are not engaged in agriculture.

TABLE-1.3

Q.2. Whether the process of marketing of paddy in the local market.

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
EASY	0	0
DIFFICULT	100	100%
TOTAL	100	100%

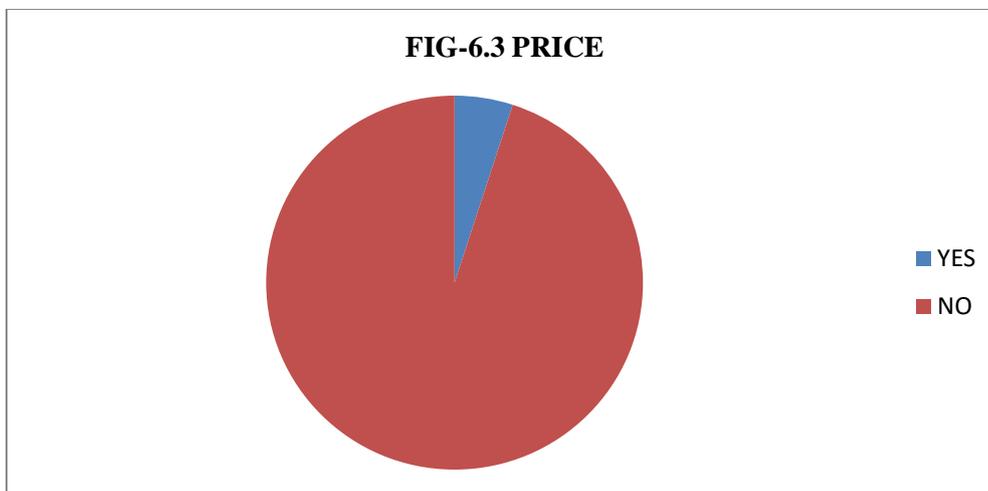


From the above table 100% respondents are said that marketing of paddy in the local market is difficult.

TABLE-1.4

Q.3. Is the market prices of paddy are sufficient?

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	0	0
NO	100	100%
TOTAL	100	100%

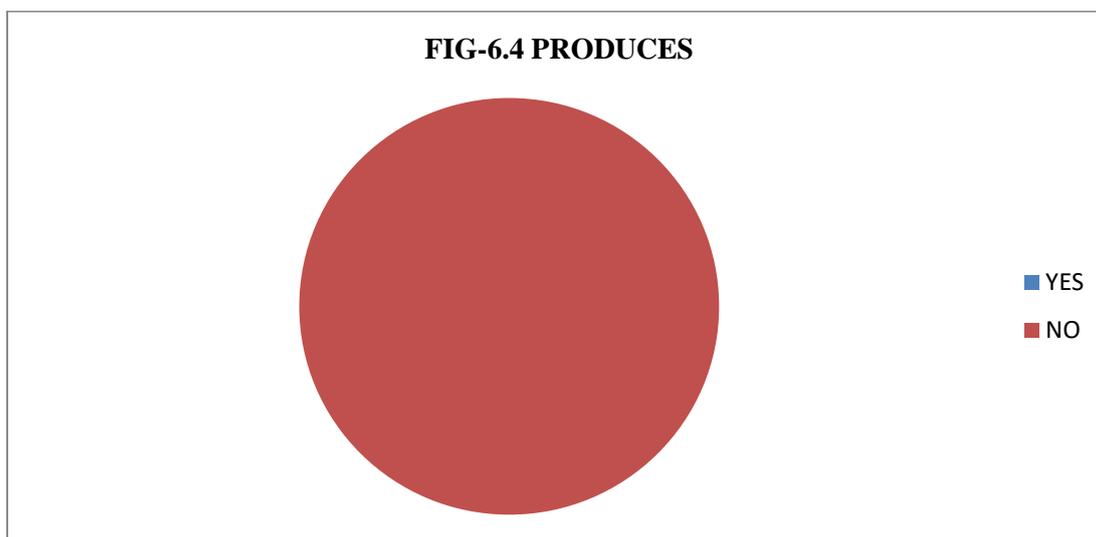


From the above table 100% respondents are said that market prices of paddy are not sufficient.

TABLE-1.5

Q.4. Direct payment of the produces of the framer.

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	0	0
NO	100	100%
TOTAL	100	100%

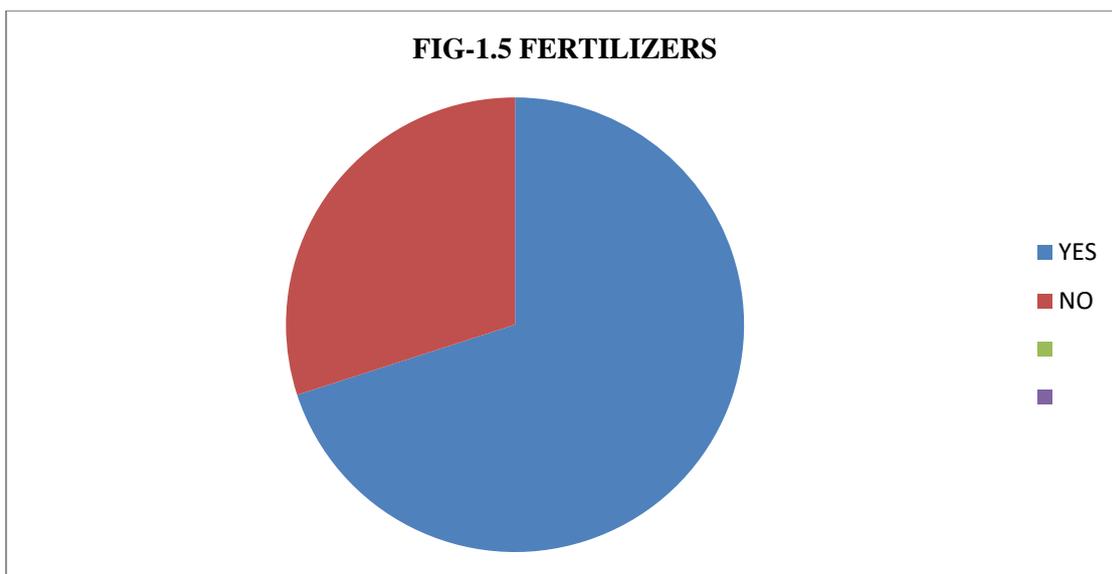


From the above table 100% respondents are said that there was no direct payment for produces.

TABLE-1.6

Q.5. Are the farmers of Bargarh district are using more fertilizers and pesticides.

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGES
YES	70	70%
NO	30	30%
TOTAL	100	100%

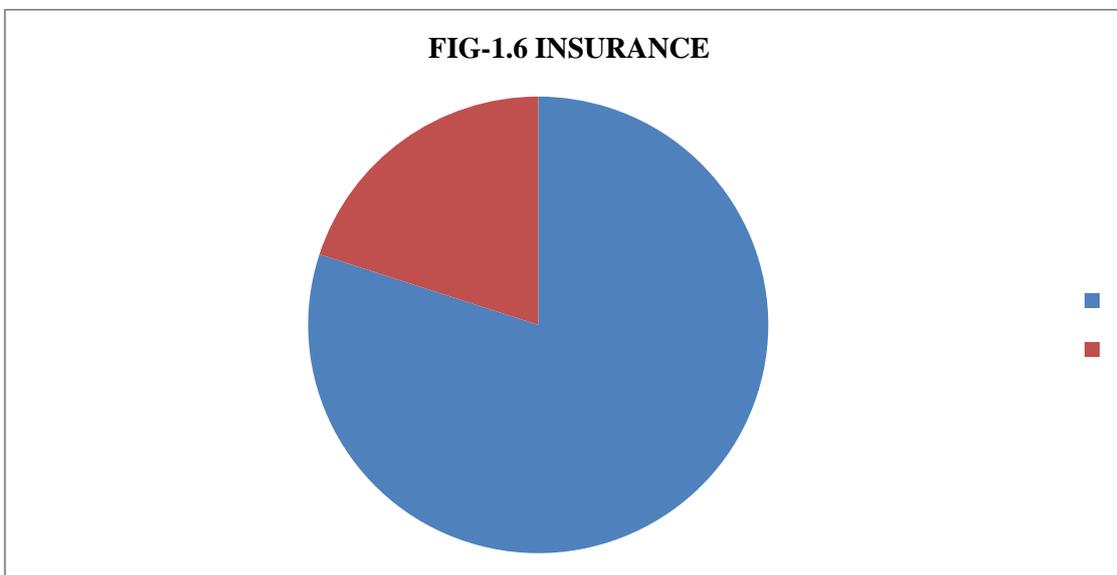


From the above table 70% respondents are said that farmers are using more fertilizers and 30% respondents are said that not using fertilizers.

TABLE-1.7

Q.6. Is the insurance of the farmer and his family is necessary.

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	80	80%
NO	20	20%
TOTAL	100	100%

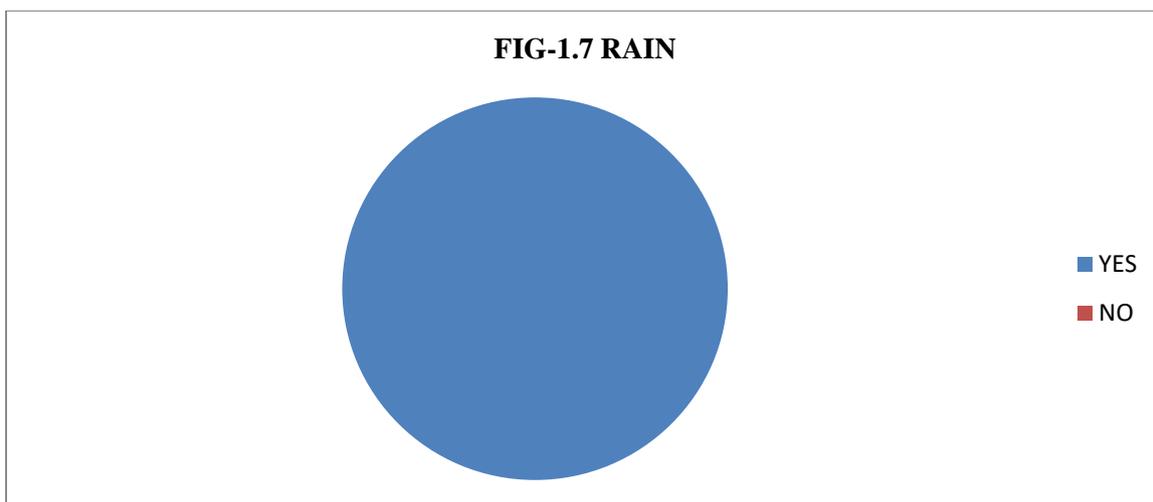


From the above table 80% respondents are said that insurance is necessary for farmer and his family and 20% respondents are said not.

TABLE-1.8

Q.7. Rain plays a vital role in agriculture sector.

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	100	100%
NO	0	0
TOTAL	100	100%

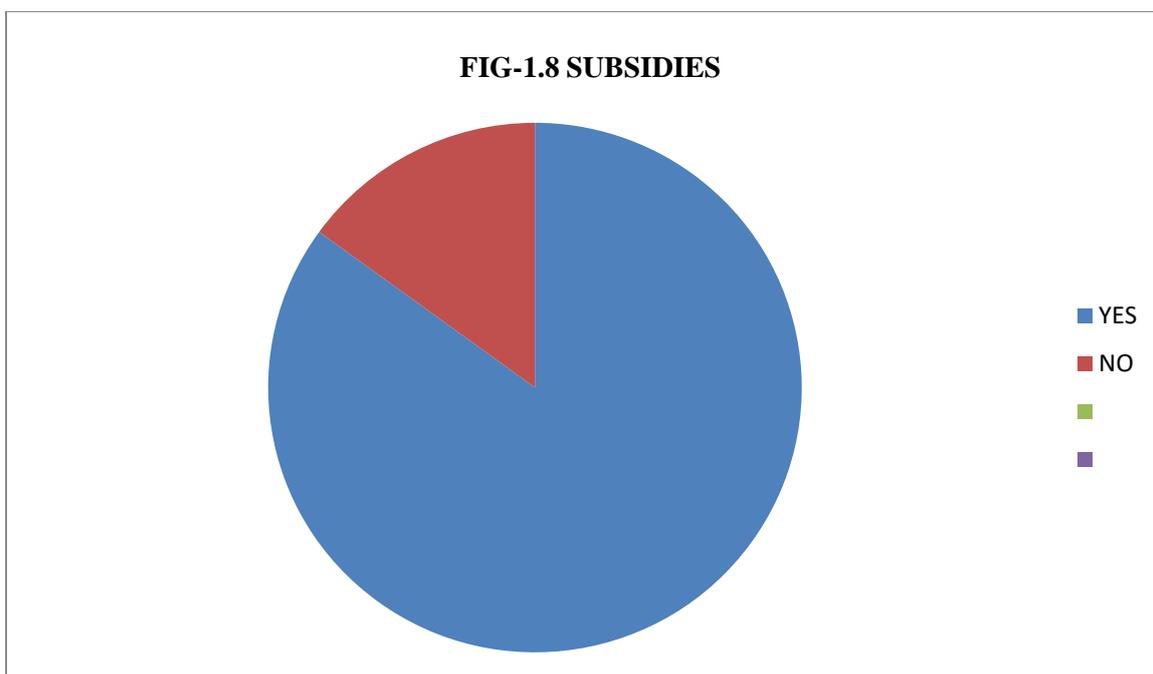


From the above table 100% respondents said that rain plays a vital role in agriculture.

TABLE-1.9

Q.8. Are subsidies needed to carry on?

RESPONSES	RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
YES	85	85%
NO	15	15%
TOTAL	100	100%

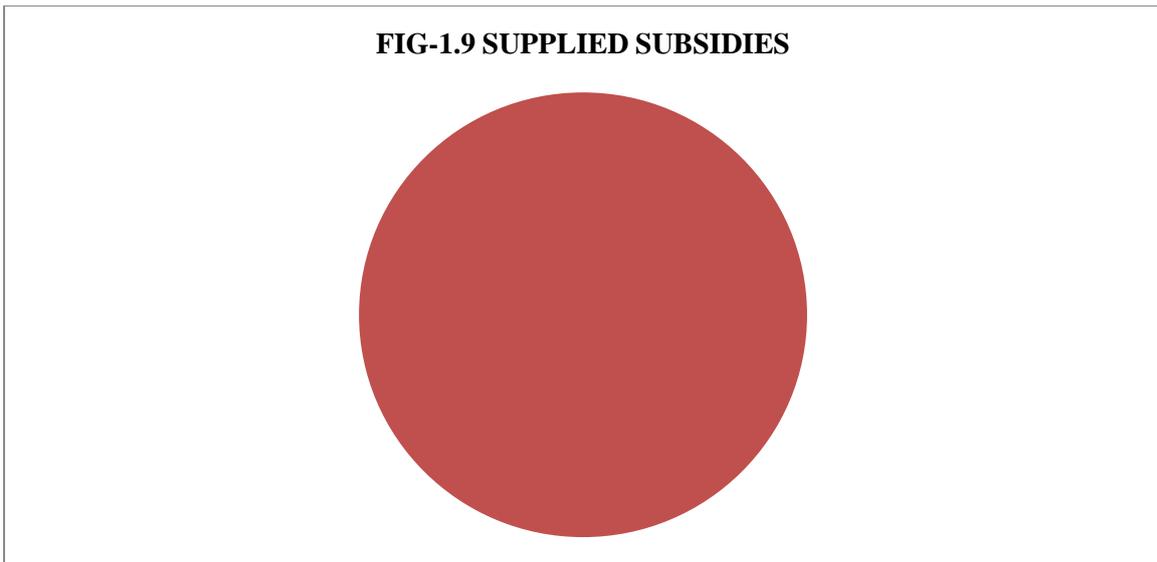


From the above table 85% respondents are said that subsidies are needed and 15% respondents are said that subsidies are not needed.

TABLE-1.10

Q.9. Should quality seeds and pesticides are supplied to the farmers in subsidies?

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	0	0
NO	100	100%
TOTAL	100	100%

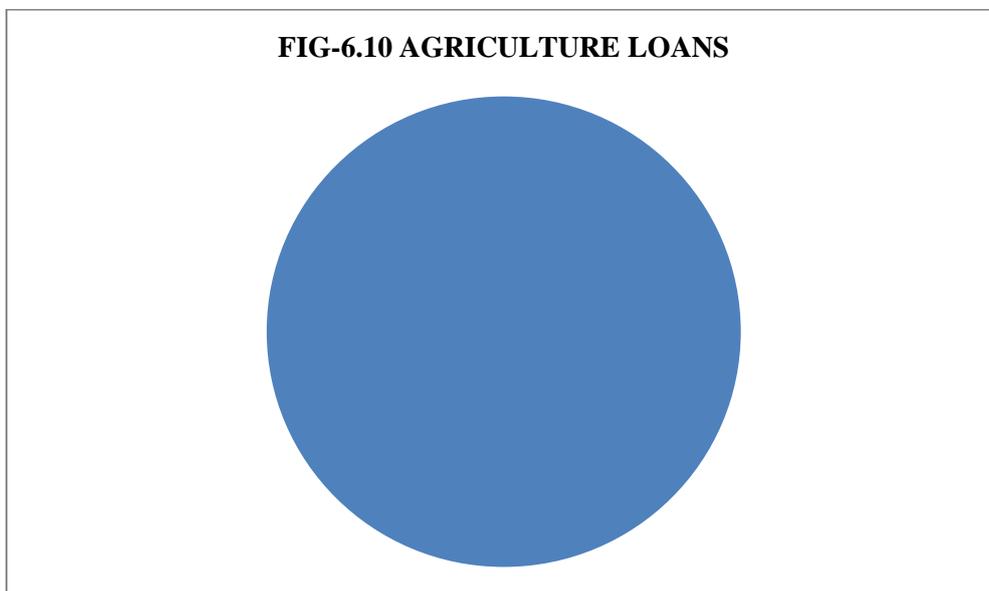


From the above table 100% respondents are said that there is no supplied of seeds and pesticides on subsidies.

TABLE-1.11

Q.10. Farmers needed agriculture loans.

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	100	100%
NO	0	0
TOTAL	100	100%

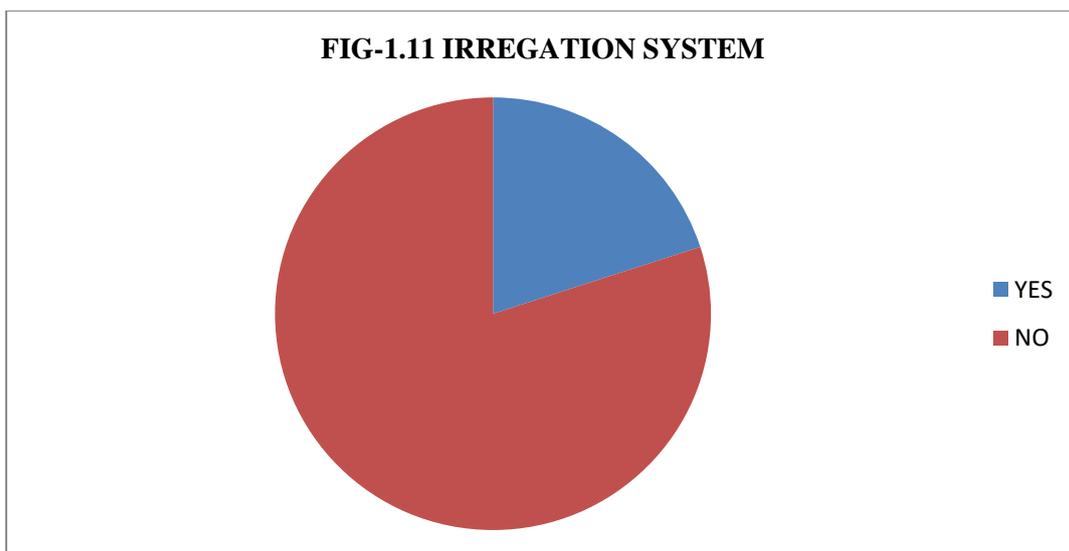


From the above table 100% respondents said that agriculture loans are required for farmers.

TABLE-1.12

Q.11. Is special attention is made to the irrigation system.

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	20	20%
NO	80	80%
TOTAL	100	100%

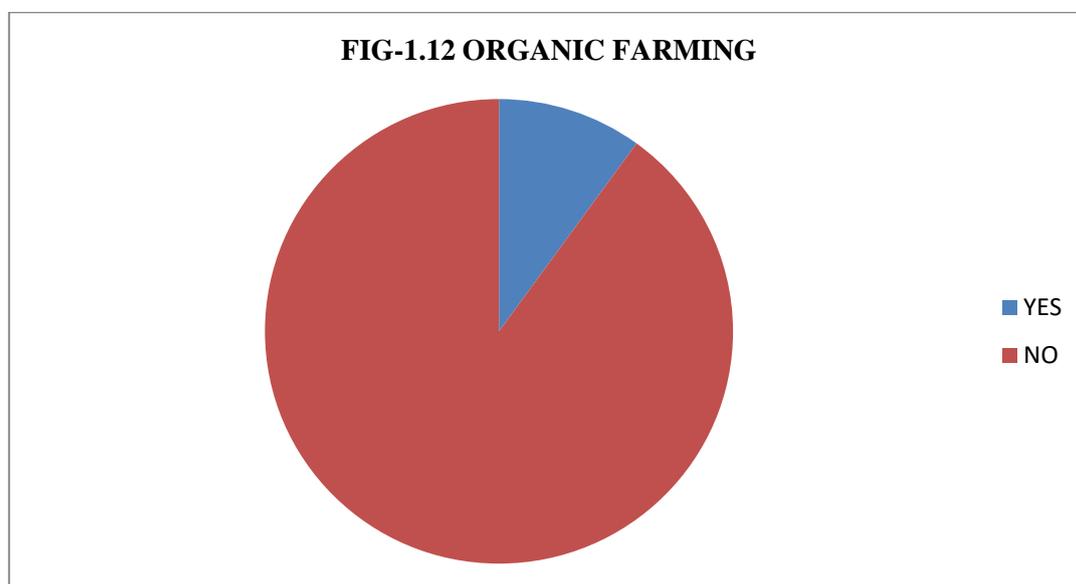


From the above table 20% respondents said that special attention to irrigation system and 80% respondents said that there is not special attention to irrigation system.

TABLE-1.13

Q.12. Whether farmers should go for organic farming.

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	10	10%
NO	90	90%
TOTAL	100	100%

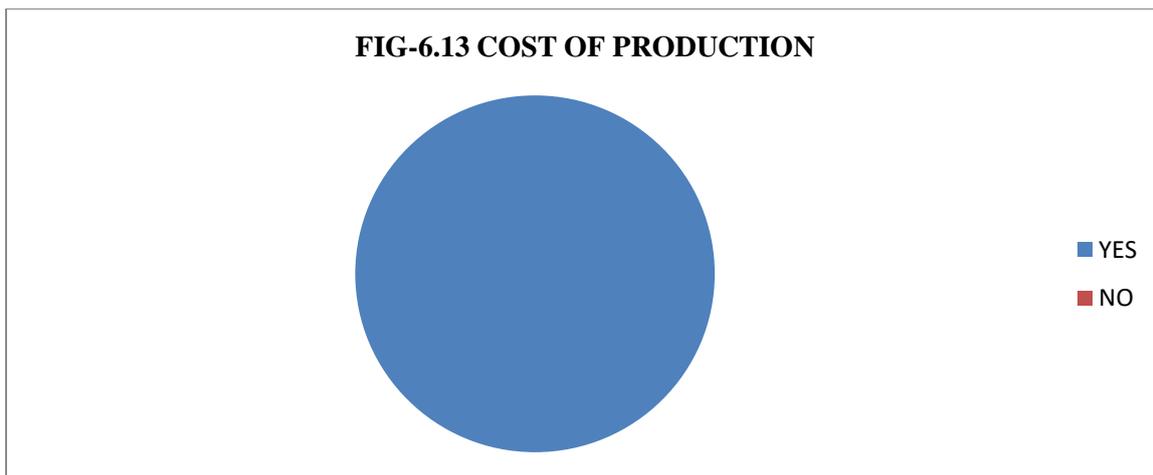


From the above table 10% respondents are go for organic farming and 90% respondents do not know about organic farming.

TABLE-1.14

Q.13. Is the cost of production is more than the income?

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	100	100%
NO	0	0
TOTAL	100	100%

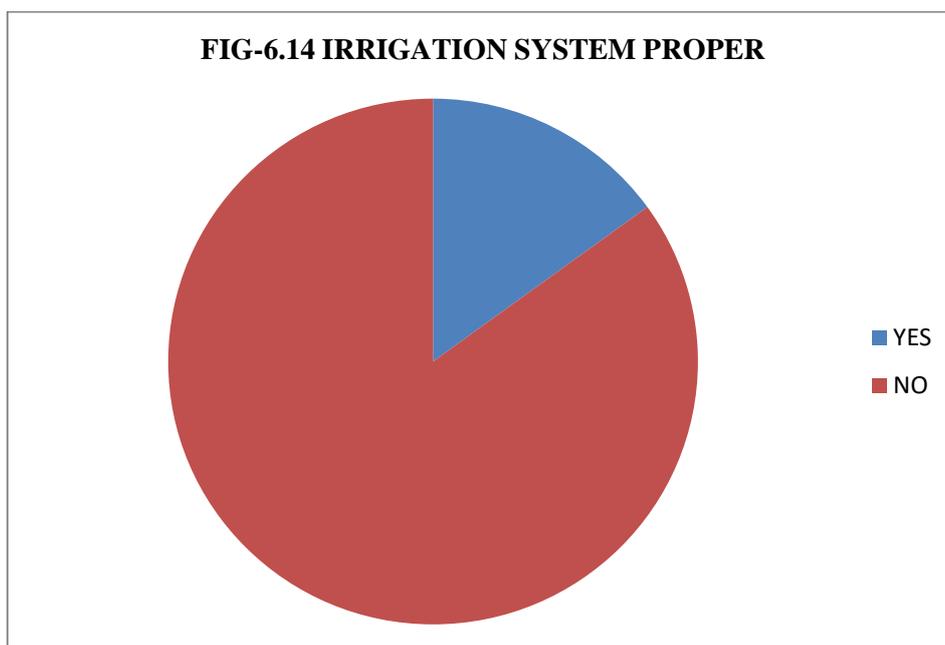


From the above table 100% respondents are said that cost of production is more than the income.

TABLE-1.15

Q.14. Is irrigation system is proper throughout the district.

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	15	15%
NO	85	85%
TOTAL	100	100%

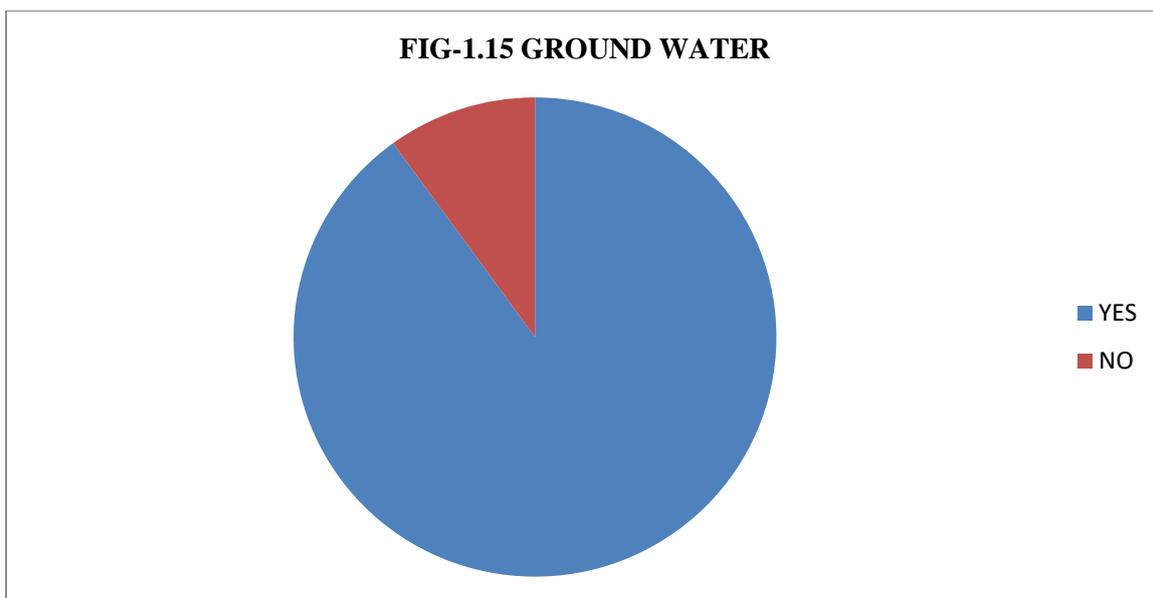


From the above table 15% respondents are said that irrigation systems are proper and 85% respondents are said that irrigation systems are not proper.

TABLE-1.16

Q.15. Is decreasing level of ground water is a serious problem for farmers?

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	90	90%
NO	10	10%
TOTAL	100	100%

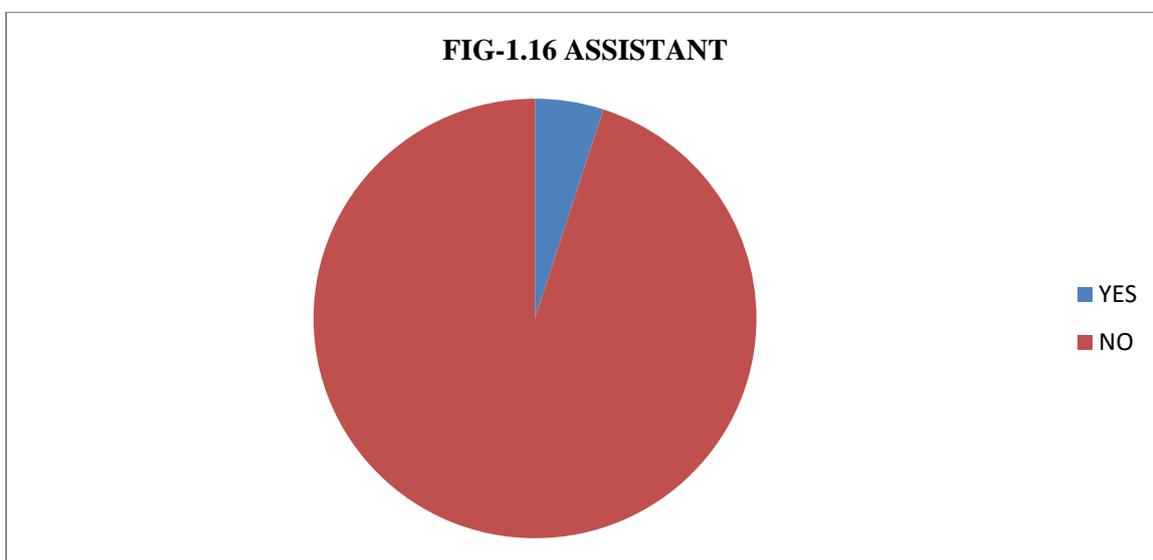


From the above table 90% respondents said that decreasing level of ground water is a serious problem for farmers and 10% respondents are said that not a serious problems.

TABLE-1.17

Q.16. Is the assistant provided by the govt.is sufficient for a farmer.

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	5	5%
NO	95	95%
TOTAL	100	100%

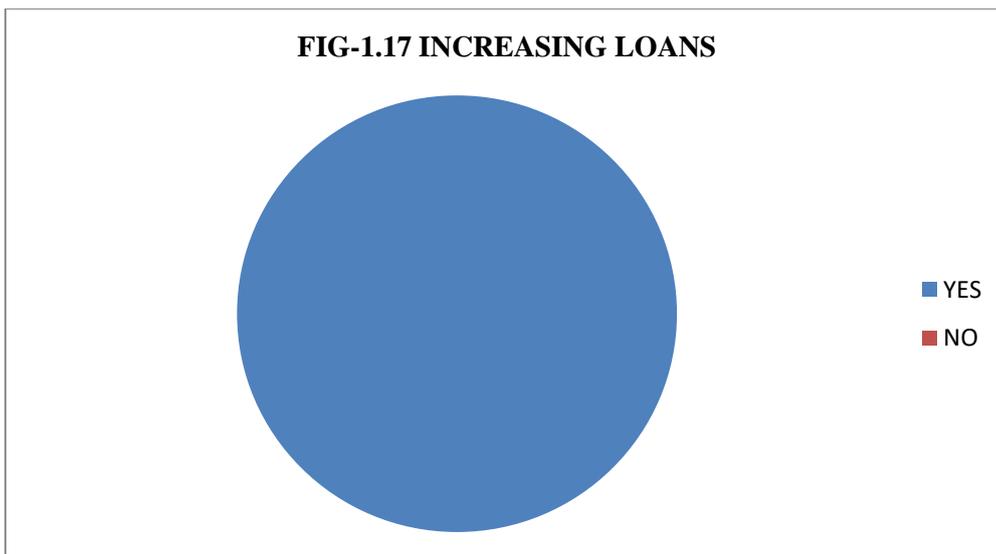


From the above table 5% respondents said that sufficient assistant provided by the govt. and 95% respondents said that not provided sufficient assistant to the framers.

TABLE-1.18

Q.17.Suicides committing by farmers due to increasing loans.

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	100	100%
NO	0	0
TOTAL	100	100%

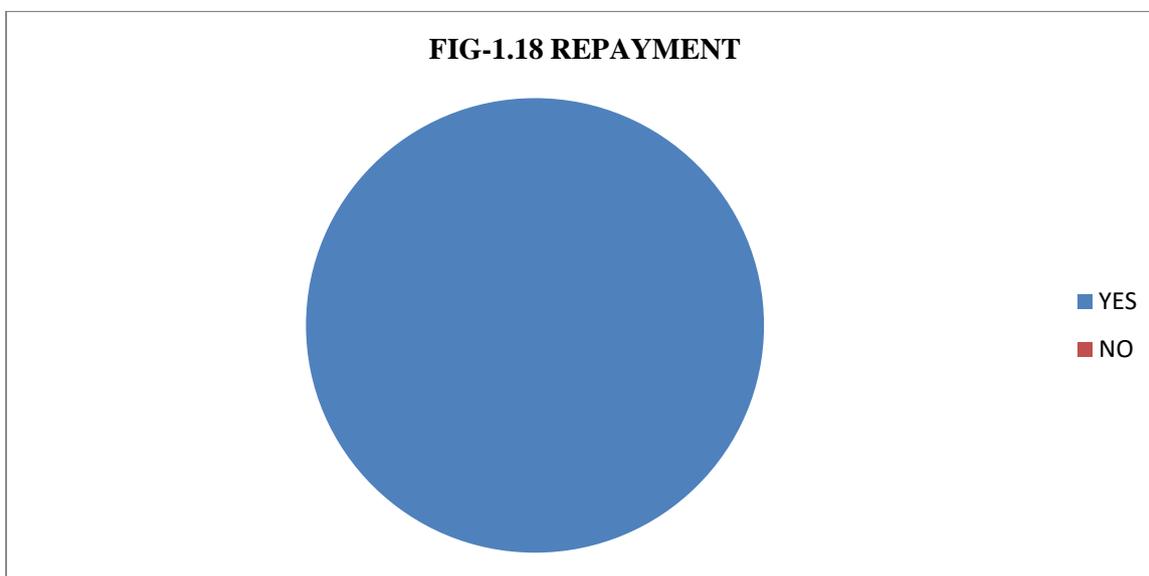


From the above table 100% respondents are said that increasing loans is the main cause of farmers suicides.

TABLE-1.19

Q.18. Is heavy interest on repayment of loans in banking sector/private financial institutions/moneylenders causes farmers suicides.

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	100	100%
NO	0	0
TOTAL	100	100%

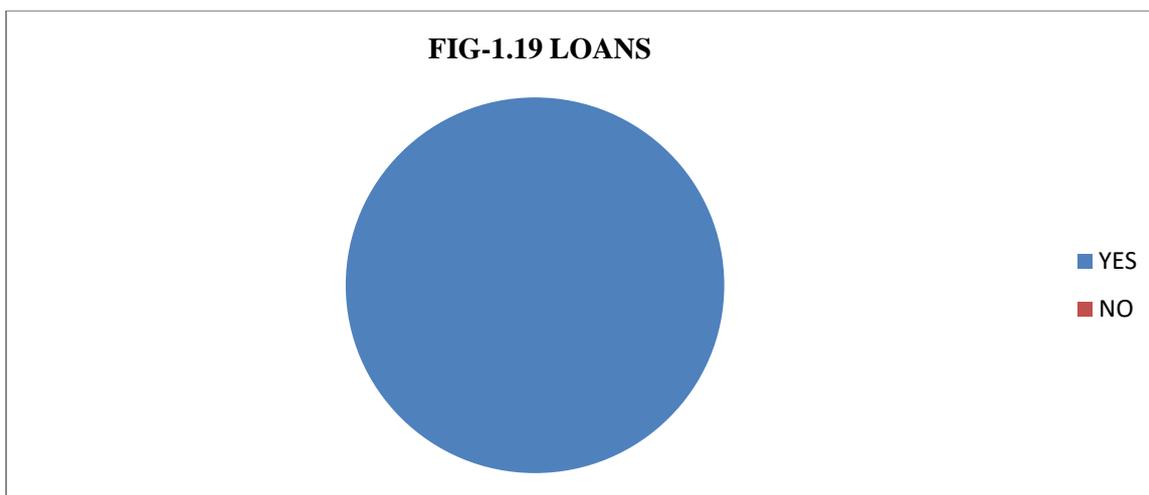


From the above table 100% respondents are said that heavy interest on repayment.

TABLE-1.20

Q.19. Is loans from private sector and private money a lender is a major cause of farmer suicides.

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	100	100%
NO	0	0
TOTAL	100	100%

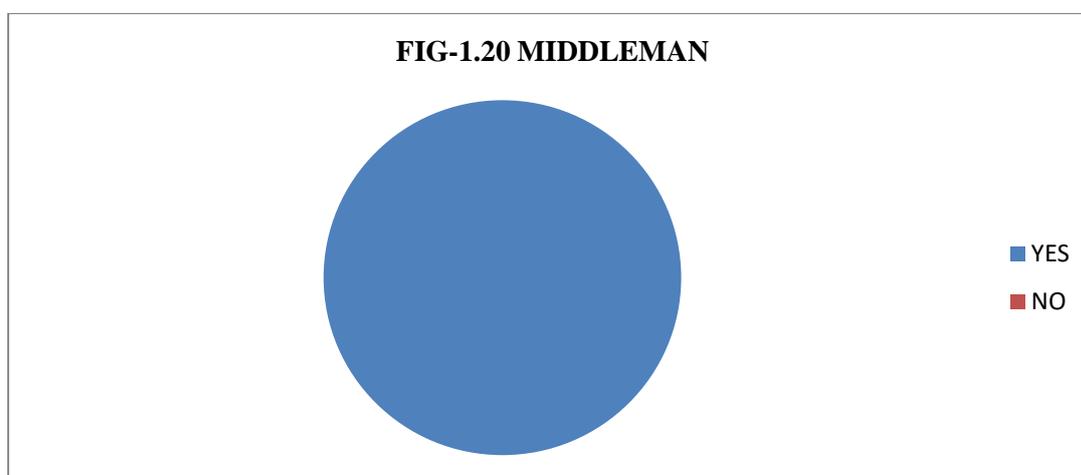


From the above table 100% respondents said that loans from private sector and private money lenders are the major cause of suicides.

TABLE-1.21

Q.20. Is the middleman is taking maximum benefits out of the profit of the farmers.

RESPONSES	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
YES	100	100%
NO	0	0
TOTAL	100	100%



From the above table 100% respondents are said that middleman is taking maximum benefits from the farmers.

7. FINDINGS:

- All respondents are said that marketing of paddy in the local market is difficult.
- All respondents are said that market prices of paddy are not sufficient.
- All respondents are said that there was no direct payment for produces.
- Most of the respondents are said that farmers are using more fertilizers.
- Most of the respondents are said that insurance is necessary for farmer and his family.
- All respondents said that rain plays a vital role in agriculture.
- 85% respondents are said that subsidies are needed.
- 100% respondents said that agriculture loans are required for farmers.
- 80% respondents said that there is not special attention to irrigation.
- 100% respondents are said that cost of production is more than the income.

- 15% respondents are said that irrigation systems are proper and 85% respondents are said that irrigation systems are not proper.
- 95% respondents said that not provided sufficient assistant to the farmers.
- 100% respondents are said that increasing loans is the main cause of farmers' suicides.
- 100% respondents are said that heavy interest on repayment.
- 100% respondents are said that middleman is taking maximum benefits from the farmers.

8. SUGGESTIONS:

To avoid farmer suicide and to restrain them from such act or depression certain firm measures has to be taken theses are:-

- Government and the local administration so also the bureaucracy has to admit the suicides of the farmers is due to crops loss, loans, or natural calamities.
- The Odisha government like the Kerala & Maharashtra government should establish a commission to listen the problems of the farmers on regular basis, so that the loan loaded farmers should not feel themselves helpless.
- The government should supply subsidized seeds, fertilizers and pesticides to the farmers.
- Some serious thought is to be given to reducing the cost of production, minimizing risks and maximizing returns.
- Long-term steps has to be taken to ensure the economic viability of farming and not just farm loan waiver. It is not just the inability to pay off the debts. Paying compensation is not the solution. Rather long term steps to be taken to enhance the economical strength of the farmers.
- Prevention of the agrarian crisis should not just be concerned with containing farmers' suicides. It should ensure right to access, ownership and control over the livelihood resources to secure the people a certain normality of livelihood, and the right to live a dignified social life.
- The constitutional responsibility of the democratic state to secure basic rights to its people must not become the prerogative of the state. Failure of the state to secure the basic needs to its citizens not only describes the failure of democracy but also marginalizes equal citizenship.
- While the farmers are the strength of the country, their voices have been marginalized in the mainstream discourse on development of agriculture. This needs to be reversed. The state should to create an atmosphere to enable the deprived and marginalized to voice their concerns and participate in the development plans that impact their lives and livelihood.
- In an agrarian economy, when markets and monsoon determine the fate of farmers, besides land, they should have the money to sustain their lives in case of a failure in the crop or fall in prices or any natural calamities. Where bumper harvests also do not ensure reasonable profits, it is important to find ways to lower the cost of production and reduce the risk of pests and weeds. Since a majority of farmers are marginal and small farmers and depend on rain-fed farming, a policy to protect farmers against the vagaries of nature is important. The state-supported insurance should have universal coverage.
- Provisions to check land encroachments and prevent alienation of land. Besides ownership of land, they should have access to market and credit system, which will save them from money lenders, landlords, middlemen and traders. Elimination of destitution needs to be considered in the context of three objectives—regaining control over land and other productive resources, regaining control over one's labour, and regaining control over the produce of labour.

9. CONCLUSION:

From the above study found that the issue of farmers committing suicide has now become a national problem. Particular .It is urgent to pay attention to the rising incidents of the framers committing suicide. The government should come forward and take necessary steps to safeguard the farmers against all those issues which compel them to commit suicide. It should make adequate arrangements for the farmers in case they lose their crops due to any eventuality and moreover it should also provide them loan on the most economical interest rate to safeguard them from becoming victims of landlords as well as money lender. For an agricultural country like India, farmers' suicide is an extremely worrying situation and it certainly is a national problem which demands immediate solution. The government should run more effective welfare schemes for the poor and landless farmers, some of which may be like crop insurance and providing loans to the farmers on minimal interest rates. If such welfare schemes can be offered immediately and without losing time any further, only then the farmers can be prevented from committing suicides.

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