



Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad

Research Paper

**Ramifications of Pakistan's Agricultural Policy on Food
Security in Pakistan**

By Mr. Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director,
Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad



Published on 19th February 2021



Table of contents

Abstract	3
Introduction.....	3
Food Security and Agricultural Policy	5
Pakistan’s Agricultural Policies: An Analysis.....	6
Pakistan’s Agricultural Policy throughout 1950s.....	6
The Green Revolution of 1960s	7
Nationalization Policy in the 1970s	8
Agricultural Policy during the 1980s	9
Agricultural Policy towards the End of the 20th century	10
Agricultural Policy and Development during Early 21st century	10
Latest Agricultural Policies by Provincial Governments: An Overview	11
Sindh Agricultural Policy (2018-2030)	11
Baluchistan’s Agricultural Policy	12
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s Agriculture Policy	12
Punjab’s Agricultural Policy	13
Findings and Recommendations	14

Abstract

The access of human beings to the available resources, necessary to thrive and develop, is becoming challenging due to the rapid increase in the population worldwide. To minimize this gap, governments have devised important policies for the better provision of resources for their nations. In the context of Pakistan, despite being an agricultural country with fertile lands and adequate irrigation system, it has struggled to keep malnourishment and food security under check. This paper attempts to understand the implications of Pakistan's prevailing agriculture policy for the food security situation.

Introduction

Pakistan has remained a predominantly agricultural country since its independence. However, there are certain alarmingly existing gaps between cost and output of agricultural production. It has been challenging



throughout past decades. Many governments in the past have responded by adopting required measures to address issues including the outdated agricultural production techniques, unequal distribution of water, lack of crop management according to land and resources and negligible spending on agricultural research. Credible evidence suggests that some of the best and most fertile lands have gone out of cultivation and



the food demand is continuously rising due to increase in population and per capita income mainly due to water scarcity and a widening gap between the supply and demand.¹

The issue of water scarcity duly deserves a special mention in this aspect. The concept of more crop per drop has been effectively floated on many occasions across the country. However, its smooth implementation in Pakistan has faced many impediments. One of the main reasons for this is water conservation strategy that has been unapt so far.

Furthermore, issues like energy crisis, lack of pragmatic land reforms, absence of distribution of certified varieties of seeds and pesticides, high cost of fertilizers, use of low-quality insecticides, non-utilization of cultivable wasteland through modern technology, conventional farming practices, absence of ecological based cropping pattern, smuggling of agricultural inputs and outputs like wheat, lack of cooperation between agricultural research, education & extension service are some of the key issues. These impediments have either been neglected or not catered to in the agricultural policy. The ramifications and justified solutions of these anomalies in our agricultural policy will be discussed in the following lines.²

¹ Abedullah. "Issues and Strategies to Revitalize the Agriculture Sector of Pakistan," February 6, 2020. <https://pide.org.pk/blog/issues-and-strategies-to-revitalize-the-agriculture-sector-of-pakistan/>

² Khan, Fawad Zafar Ahmad, Ahmad Khan, Muhammad Sagheer, and Mansoor-ul-Hasan Hasan. "(PDF) AGRICULTURAL DYNAMICS IN PAKISTAN: CURRENT ISSUES AND SOLUTIONS." researchgate.net. ResearchGate, August 3, 2013. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275892383_AGRICULTURAL_DYNAMICS_IN_PAKISTAN_CURRENT_ISSUES_AND_SOLUTIONS#:~:text=Water%20deficiency%20and%20drought%20conditions,utilization%20of%20cultivable%20waste%20land%2C

Food Security and Agricultural Policy

Even though agriculture plays an integral part in the growth and development of a country, unfortunately, many states around the world have not done



enough to ensure adequate availability of food to their population. Consequently, this dilemma leads to many socio-economic impediments. According to famous Brazilian anti-hunger activist Josue de Castro:

“Hunger is exclusion — exclusion from the land, from income, jobs, wages, life and citizenship. When a person gets to the point of not having anything to eat, it is because all the rest has been denied. This is a modern form of exile. It is death in life...”³

In this aspect, it is imperative to counter all these kinds of challenges by vigilant policy making both at the domestic and international level. Without a pragmatic agricultural policy, lack of access to resources and shortage of basic food commodities can prove to be a devastating non-traditional security threat for any country. Moreover, the experts have observed the crucial connection between agricultural policy and food security by

³ “The Living Dead.” DAWN.COM, July 30, 2011. <https://www.dawn.com/news/648226/the-living-dead>



identifying groups of different countries with similarities in their food security profiles and the agricultural-food trade in the national economy.⁴

As far as Pakistan is concerned, agriculture is surely the mainstay of the economy which contributes greatly towards our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and provides numerous employment opportunities throughout the country. Around 2/3rd of our country's rural population is directly or indirectly linked with agriculture for their livelihood. Therefore, the livelihood and consequently food security of the rural people depend on the agricultural sector.⁵ Under these circumstances, it is needless to say how much important a vibrant agricultural policy is for our food security.

Pakistan's Agricultural Policies: An Analysis

Pakistan's Agricultural Policy throughout 1950s

After independence from British India, the Pakistan government's initial agricultural policy lingered around exporting raw materials to most markets in South Asia and beyond. However, farm products were procured at rates less than in the global markets during those times and inter-district movement and the export of major crops were banned. Moreover, wheat and sugar were subsidized for urban consumers only.

⁴ Pawlak, Karolina, and Małgorzata Kołodziejczak. "The Role of Agriculture in Ensuring Food Security in Developing Countries: Considerations in the Context of the Problem of Sustainable Food Production." MDPI. Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute, July 7, 2020. <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/13/5488/htm>

⁵ Arif, Mazhar. "AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY IN PAKISTAN." sappk.org. THEMATIC PAPER, n.d. Accessed January 23, 2021. https://www.sappk.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/eng_publications/Agriculture_and_Food_Security.pdf



Nevertheless, the agriculture sector benefited from the Korean War (1950-53) despite an overvalued rupee adversely affected agricultural exports during those topsy-turvy years.⁶ Consequently, the growth rate of the value added by agriculture was barely above 1.0 percent per annum during the early 1950s and 2.1 percent during 1954-55 to 1959-60.⁷

The Green Revolution of 1960s

The Ayub Khan led government introduced and executed the following policies during 1960s, which led to a more relaxed and prosperous agricultural boom during that era. As a result of the below-mentioned policies, the average annual growth rate rose to 6.8% during that decade.⁸

- a. Land reforms putting a ceiling on individual holdings.
- b. The first agricultural university in the country was set up in Faisalabad. This university, later on, pioneered agricultural research and development and provided Pakistan with valuable experts in various multi-faceted fields related to agricultural science.

⁶ Mahmood, Amjad. "The 70 Erratic Years of Pakistan's Agriculture Sector." DAWN.COM, August 14, 2017. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1351486>

⁷ Chaudhry, M. Ghaffar, and Ghulam Mustafa Chaudhry. "Pakistan's Agricultural Development since Independence: Intertemporal Trends and Explanation." *The Pakistan Development Review* 36, no. 4 (1997): 595. <https://go.gale.com/ps/anonymouse?id=GALE%7CA182200341&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=abs&issn=00309729&p=AONE&sw=w>

⁸ Mahmood, Amjad. "The 70 Erratic Years of Pakistan's Agriculture Sector." DAWN.COM, August 14, 2017. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1351486>



- c. Liberal subsidies were offered for the import of tractors and compulsory procurement of farm produce was replaced by voluntary sales.
- d. A major water reservoir was also developed in the form of Mangla Dam which helped bring more area under cultivation in large swathes of agricultural land. Furthermore, link canals were constructed for supplying irrigation water to the command areas of the three rivers given to India under the treaty. Tube-wells were installed to overcome water scarcity in the wake of the Indus Basin Treaty.

Nationalization Policy in the 1970s

In the aftermath of the disintegration of East Pakistan early in the 1970s, the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto led government introduced major policy changes like the nationalization program under which the government kept production and distribution of farm products within the relevant domain. The government devised a policy under which limit was corked upon land ownership. The limit to own canal land was fixed between 150 and 500-acre while 300 to 1000-acre rainy land was allowed to be owned by the orders of the central government. This had adversely affected the agricultural production in Pakistan and the annual growth rate in agriculture faltered to a lowly 0.78% during the first half of this decade. However, subsequent stabilization in agricultural policies and growth revived, the agricultural growth in the second half of

the 1970s, crop output, and livestock registered respective growth rates of more than 4.0 and 3.0 percent.⁹

Agricultural Policy during the 1980s

Throughout the 1980s, there was a steady rise in agricultural growth in Pakistan especially concerning farm growth rate which was 5.4% annually. Much of this growth was due to a new agricultural policy that was released by the government to ensure parity between domestic farm prices and global rates vis-à-vis these products. Moreover, an agricultural price commission was also formed for facilitating the government in setting prices of agricultural commodities.¹⁰

To understand this decade more aptly, a clearer picture is depicted by the facts that during 1984-85 and 1989-90, the production of cotton and livestock witnessed a further acceleration and contributed to more rapid



agricultural growth (4.57 percent) than in the previous period. However, despite some recovery in wheat, the growth rates of sugarcane and rice remained very low.¹¹

⁹ Chaudhry, M. Ghaffar, and Ghulam Mustafa Chaudhry. "Pakistan's Agricultural Development since Independence: Intertemporal Trends and Explanation." *The Pakistan Development Review* 36, no. 4 (1997): 595. <https://go.gale.com/ps/anonymouse?id=GALE%7CA182200341&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=abs&issn=00309729&p=AONE&sw=w>

¹⁰ Mahmood, Amjad. "The 70 Erratic Years of Pakistan's Agriculture Sector." DAWN.COM, August 14, 2017. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1351486>

¹¹ Chaudhry, M. Ghaffar, and Ghulam Mustafa Chaudhry. "Pakistan's Agricultural Development since Independence: Intertemporal Trends and Explanation." *The Pakistan Development Review* 36, no. 4 (1997): 595. <https://go.gale.com/ps/anonymouse?id=GALE%7CA182200341&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=abs&issn=00309729&p=AONE&sw=w>



Agricultural Policy towards the End of the 20th century

Fragile economy, political turmoil, and the persistent change of governments during the 1990s led to an ever-changing growth rate between 5.9% to 4.4%. Many major structural changes were introduced during the meantime which somewhat exacerbated agricultural growth even though the contribution of livestock, fisheries and forestry in the agricultural GDP of Pakistan grew exponentially.¹²

Agricultural Policy and Development during Early 21st century

In line with the policies of the previous governments in the past decades, the agricultural development in Pakistan continued its downward slope from 2000-2010. During this decade, the overall annual agricultural growth rate fell to 3.7%. Moreover, the growth of agricultural GDP during the same period was 1.3%. The main reason behind this slow growth of the agricultural sector was that the services and industrial sectors were prioritized and given more opportunities to grow than agriculture during the 2000-2010 era. Growth in both these sectors was 5.0% and 4.3% as compared to 3.7% vis-à-vis the agriculture sector as mentioned above.¹³

¹² Mahmood, Amjad. "The 70 Erratic Years of Pakistan's Agriculture Sector." DAWN.COM, August 14, 2017. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1351486>

¹³ Spielman, David J., Sohail J. Malik, Paul Dorosh, and Nuzhat Ahmad. "FOOD, AGRICULTURE, AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN PAKISTAN," n.d. <https://ebrary.ifpri.org/digital/api/collection/p15738coll2/id/131012/download>

Latest Agricultural Policies by Provincial Governments: An Overview

Following are the salient features of the agricultural policies of all four provinces within Pakistan:

Sindh Agricultural Policy (2018-2030)

This policy seeks to help eliminate hunger and food insecurity from the Sindh province. It also seeks to reduce rural poverty to half of the current level and has



set the goal of eradicating the severe insecurity and malnutrition found therein. This policy initiative ensures that substantial efforts will be made to increase the agricultural sector growth to 4-5% per annum which is a necessary condition for raising incomes, reducing poverty and food insecurity. Furthermore, it is also hoped that steps will be taken in the pursuance of this policy for providing decent employment, especially to the large numbers of youth entering the labor market.¹⁴

¹⁴ “Sindh Agricultural Policy (2018-2030).” FAO.org: FAOLEX Database, n.d. Accessed January 26, 2021. [http://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC191432/#:~:text=Sindh%20Agriculture%20Policy%20\(2018%2D2030\).&text=Efforts%20will%20be%20made%20to,youth%20entering%20the%20labour%20market.](http://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC191432/#:~:text=Sindh%20Agriculture%20Policy%20(2018%2D2030).&text=Efforts%20will%20be%20made%20to,youth%20entering%20the%20labour%20market.)



Baluchistan's Agricultural Policy

Following are the important points of Baluchistan's agricultural policy vis-à-vis food security challenges within the province and Pakistan:

- a. To improve the participation of women and other at-risk groups in socio-economic life and to ensure the food security of the people of Balochistan to take them out of their decades-long misery.
- b. It emphasizes focusing on food distribution schemes for the neediest and poor parts of the population along with the provision of a viable livelihood for the vulnerable people within Balochistan. Special care of food insecurity and malnutrition hotspots, including areas affected by recent emergencies or disasters is also mentioned as an important aim under this project.
- c. Special schemes and initiatives like household food security and sustainable food security models are also ensured under this policy.¹⁵

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Agriculture Policy

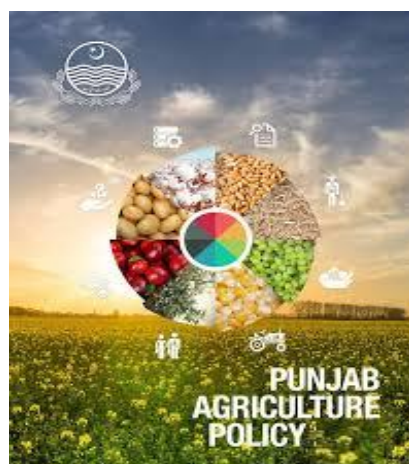
The agricultural nature of the economy of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where 80% of the total population is rural, with agriculture as their major source of livelihood, agriculture contributes 22% to the provincial GDP and employs 44% of the labor force. Under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa agricultural policy's 10-year perspective (2015-2025), efforts are

¹⁵ "Agriculture Sector Policy and Security - Balochistan." FAO.org: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2014. <http://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC173418/#:~:text=Agriculture%20Sector%20Policy%20and%20Strategy,rapid%20resource%20degradation%20taking%20place>.

being made to address the multiple economic challenges by taking advantage of the ideal and diverse agro-climatic conditions of the province. This has provided great potential for agriculture development. For this purpose, an illuminating vision along with efficacious guiding principles with regards to the right use of natural resources vis-à-vis increasing agricultural production, building local skills, the involvement of relevant stakeholders, creation of a precisely built public support system, and human resource development are all part of it.¹⁶

Punjab's Agricultural Policy

The Punjab government is rampantly making efforts to bring all stakeholders on board for devising a homogenous agricultural policy within due course of time. During the past two years, this government has allocated almost Rs. 36 billion during 2018-19 for agriculture growth of the province. Furthermore, it has



increased the limit of Rabi interest-free loans from Rs 25,000 to 30,000 and distributed interest-free loans among 1,01,228 registered farmers worth Rs 5 billion during Rabi 2018-19 according to the states given by the provincial government. Moreover, the

¹⁶ “Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Agricultural Policy; A Ten Year Perspective.” <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org>. Minister for Agriculture, Livestock and Cooperatives Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, n.d. Accessed January 26, 2021. <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/pak173417.pdf>



government has also pledged to keep the farmers' association and all other stakeholders on board for creating a better agricultural policy for this province.¹⁷

Findings and Recommendations

After all the elaborated details regarding Pakistan's economic condition until 2010, it was expected that better sense will prevail during the second decade of 2021 to keep Pakistan's growing food security woes under control. However, the agricultural policies of the Pakistan Peoples Party's government led to agricultural growth of just 2.8% between the years 2010-2014. Moreover, the decentralization of agriculture and other key sectors after the passing of the 18th amendment also hindered agricultural growth within Pakistan considerably.¹⁸

Unfortunately, the succeeding government also neglected to restructure Pakistan's agricultural policies, which led to the decline in the share of agriculture production vis-à-vis its contribution in GDP. From 53% in 1949-50 to a meager figure of 19.8% in 2016-17, the decline of Pakistan's agricultural sector due to ineffective policies is surely not a sight for the sore eyes of everyone who knows about the true potential of Pakistan as an agrarian country.¹⁹ Many grueling challenges and obstacles in the food security

¹⁷ Baig, Zahid. "Buzdar to Announce First Agriculture Policy for Punjab on February 20." Business Recorder, n.d. Accessed January 26, 2021. <https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/02/20190214447014/>

¹⁸ Spielman, David J., Sohail J. Malik, Paul Dorosh, and Nuzhat Ahmad. "FOOD, AGRICULTURE, AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN PAKISTAN," n.d. file:///C:/Users/pc/Downloads/p15738coll2_131012.pdf

¹⁹ Munir, Qaiser, Muhammad Afzal, Kanza Sohail, and Hania Afzal. "Does Democracy Foster Agricultural Efficiency in Pakistan: A Historical Perspective." pide.org.pk. IBA, Karachi and Planning Commission Pakistan, n.d. Accessed January 26, 2021. <https://www.pide.org.pk/psde/pdf/AGM34/papers/Qaiser-Munir.pdf>

paradigm, stable agricultural production and development also exist in Pakistan which are briefly elaborated below along with their possible solutions:

Efficacious Use of Modern Techniques and Expertise

Improving the quality, quantity, and timing of the supply of agricultural inputs by using modern methods and techniques is a big challenge for agricultural policymakers in Pakistan. Securing



qualified human resources for food security and food systems analysis is also the need of the hour and can provide the solution for many problems in this regard. In this regard, developing infrastructure and technologies for post-harvest management and value addition and improving the rate of diffusion of technological innovations can be quite helpful.²⁰

Challenges of Pricing, Market Infrastructure and Affordability

Increase in the farm gate prices, reducing price fluctuations, and managing declining international prices are also problems in agricultural policymaking and addressing market infrastructure requirements and trade restrictions by vigilant policymakers is

²⁰ Warraich, Shehryar. "The Solution to Pakistan's Agricultural Challenges: Political Economy." thenews. TNS, February 2, 2020. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/607466-the-agriculture-challenge#:~:text=The%20agriculture%20sector%20in,of%20irrigated%20land%20has%20tripled.>



surely the need of the hour for enhancement in the level of affordability of food for poor segments of society.²¹

Issues Related to Utilization of Natural Resources

Sustainable use of natural resources (land, water, rangelands, pastures, and forests) for exponentially enhancing agricultural production. In this aspect, capitalizing the potential of mountain agro-ecological zones. Mitigating and adapting to climate change effects on agriculture and livestock.

Challenges Regarding Incentive-Based Participation of Women in Agricultural Activities

The issues of unpaid female workers in the agricultural workforce are alarmingly high as there are 67% women involved in agricultural work in the rural sector while 60% of their work is being utilized as unpaid. According to Food and Agriculture Organization, if women farmers can somehow have equal access to land ownership, farming equipment, and new technologies, agricultural production can increase by 30 percent per household and countries can experience an increase in agricultural output by 2.5 to 4 percent. Women also reinvest up to 90 percent of their earnings back into their households and that money is mostly spent on nutrition, food, health care, school, and

²¹ “National Food Security Policy.” <http://www.mnfsr.gov.pk/>. Government of Pakistan Ministry of National Food Security and Research Islamabad, March 11, 2014. [http://www.mnfsr.gov.pk/userfiles1/file/National%20Food%20Security%20Policy%20202018%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.mnfsr.gov.pk/userfiles1/file/National%20Food%20Security%20Policy%20202018%20(1).pdf)



income-generating activities that help in breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty.²²

Moreover, the following recommendations are imperative to consider;

- A detailed sectoral framework for agriculture-related sustainable development goals to be developed containing clear indicators and framework of implementation.
- The targets should be categorized in short-, medium- and long-term goals so that implementation may properly be evaluated and altered, if necessary.
- These goals must be communicated to the local government and community level so that the agriculture crisis and food security issues may be catered at the grass root level.
- Structural reforms should be made in state institutions that are working in this domain so that effective implementation of policies and accountability in case of negligence be properly carried out.
- New effective methods should be adopted with advanced techniques and infrastructure related to farming.
- Food supply chain mechanisms all over the country should be more inclusively monitored along with government willingness, robust mechanism, and revised agriculture policy targets.

²²“Women in Pakistan Agriculture ” Pakissan.com.” Pakissan.com, December 12, 2018. <https://www.pakissan.com/2018/12/12/women-in-pakistan-agriculture/#:~:text=Women%20comprise%2041%25%20of%20the,comprise%20major%20part%20of%20Pakistan.&text=Women's%20multi%2Ddimensional%20roles%20in%20agriculture%20need%20to%20be%20recognized.>



- There is a stark need to apply existing knowledge of effective interventions targeting agricultural production and farm-level economic factors.
- There is also an imminent requirement to conduct rigorous evaluation studies on interventions specifically aiming to shape the food supply.
- Mainstreaming women's contribution in value-added agriculture and family nutrition.
- Enhancing non-farm income opportunities, particularly in the marginalized and remote areas (i.e., mountains and deserts) is also vital.