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Farmer Suicides in India

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Why in news: 28-year analysis (1995–2023) of **NCRB data** shows that suicides among farmers and agricultural labourers remain **structurally entrenched**, with a sharp resurgence in 2023, highlighting persistent **agrarian distress** in India.

What Are Farmer Suicides?

1Deaths by suicide among **cultivators and agricultural labourers**, recorded annually by the **National Crime Records Bureau(NCRB)**.

2Considered a key indicator of **rural and agrarian distress**, reflecting:

- oInadequate **income security**
- oLimited **access to credit**
- oCrop failure or price volatility
- oWeak **social safety nets**

Trends (1995–2023)

1**Scale of Crisis:** ~3.94 lakh deaths over 28 years (~13,600 per year).

2**Regional Concentration:** Southern and western India account for ~72.5% of cases; **Maharashtra** and **Karnataka** are persistent hotspots.

3**Peak Years:** Intensified post-1995 (after WTO entry), with **2000–2009** as the deadliest period; **2002** recorded the highest suicides.

4Crop-linked Distress:

- oBt cotton expansion in **rain-fed areas** increased input costs and indebtedness.
- oWeak **minimum support prices (MSP)** and poor market access exacerbated vulnerability.

5**Temporary Relief Phase:** 2010–2019 saw a decline due to:

- o**MGNREGA employment guarantee**

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- o**Crop and life insurance expansions**

- o**Debt relief programmes**

Recent Reversal: 2023 recorded a **~75% rise over 2022**, due to:

- oDelayed reporting from **Covid-era backlog**

- oFresh shocks from **droughts, crop price crashes**, and inflationary pressures