

Epidemic of Farmer Suicides (India)

The drive toward corporate culture in India is resulting in a crisis in the countryside...

The largest sustained wave of suicidal deaths in the recorded history of India is currently being recorded, according to P. Sainath, Rural Affairs Editor of *The Hindu*.

While portions of India have unprecedented levels of growth and development, India's rural farmers are sinking deeper and deeper in debt. Many were cash crop farmers who grew cotton, coffee, sugar cane, ground nuts, pepper and vanilla. But the corporate mantra pushed them in the direction of growing food for export (rice, maize, wheat, pulses). State support was promised. But the giant seed companies displaced the cheap hybrids and traditional varieties of seeds, and grasp these peasant farmers by the throat.

Meanwhile, the country's health costs increased, children had to drop out of school to work for their parents, and all were hungry. They couldn't produce even enough food to feed the family.

Credit also dried up because money is being drawn from rural credit institutions to fuel the life-styles of aspiring elites of the city.

No wonder despair abounds. "India's agrarian crisis can be summed up in 5 words, '*the drive toward corporate culture*', resulting in the biggest displacement in (India's) history".

(Written February 2, 2009 by P. Sainath, The Hindu)