



## Economic Impact of Post COVID Changes on Agriculture

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While the COVID-19 pandemic shook global economies like never before, bringing about large-scale uncertainty and economic carnage, India's agriculture sector proved to be an unlikely bastion of resilience in these times of chaos. Unlike the services and manufacturing sectors, which suffered substantial contractions and miseries during this pandemic-influenced crisis, agriculture not only continued to grow but was also instrumental in accommodating millions of returning migrant Laborers to their home villages, thereby supporting minimum food security for a large part of the Indian population. Using a systematic diagnostic tool besides existing literature, this article comprehensively evaluates the disparate economic impact generated by changes in Indian agriculture post-COVID as compared to that during pre-COVID (2015–2020) and post-COVID years (2021–2025). Based on an eclectic array of sources including government reports, academic literature and journalist accounts, the study identifies substantial changes in areas such as incomes for farmers, exports of agricultural products and employment opportunities, as well as a range of policy regimes. It also sensitively contemplates the very human aspects of rural despair and resilience, documenting the experiences of farming communities as they continue to weather such times.

### Introduction

Agriculture has historically been the mainstay of India, helping employ about half the workforce. It became even more important during the pandemic: when urban industries closed down rural fields were where millions fell back on. However, this resilience was purchased through reducing hours of work, stagnant real income and increasing exposure to climate shocks. In order to understand these changes, we must look at a comparison across pre- and post-COVID years.

After COVID, some big changes rolled out. The Natural Farming Mission started pushing for chemical-free farming and healthier soil. They changed MSP, making sure it's set at one and a half times the cost of production—especially raising rates for pulses and oilseeds. Digital Agriculture Mission expanded e-NAM to help farmers get better prices. When migrant workers faced tough times, schemes like MNREGS and PM-KISAN stepped in to help them out. Export policies shifted too, focusing more on seafood and processed foods, which made things less shaky for the market.

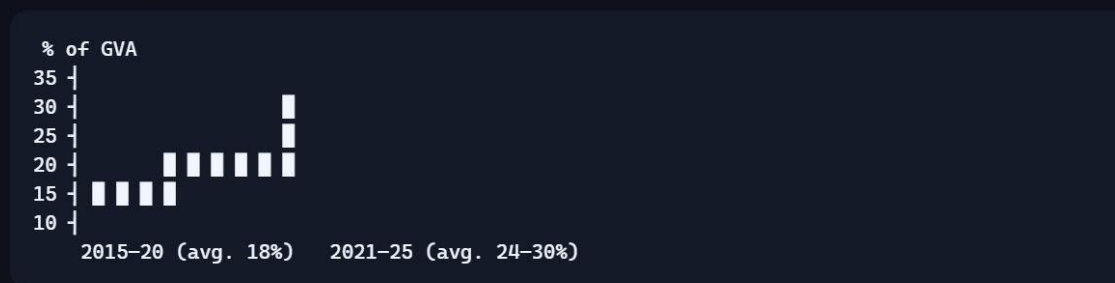
The pandemic changed rural life in ways you can't see just by looking at numbers. More women ended up working in agriculture—not because they wanted to, but because they had to. Cutting back on work hours and stagnant pay just made poverty harder to spot. Malnutrition got worse, so fortified foods became essential. And to top it off, unpredictable monsoons and higher farming costs made things even tougher. Honestly, the story of agriculture isn't just about money—it's about real people trying to adapt.

### Comparative Analysis: Pre vs. Post COVID

Indicator	2015–2020 (Pre-COVID)	2021–2025 (Post-COVID)	Key Observations
<b>Agriculture GDP Share</b>	~17–18% of GVA (2015–19)	~20–30% of GVA (FY23)	Sector's share rose as services/manufacturing contracted
<b>Farmer Incomes</b>	CAGR ~2.1% (2012–20); avg. monthly ₹7,336 (2018–19)	CAGR ~5.2% (2020–25); avg. monthly ₹7,617 (2025)	Growth modest; inflation eroded gains
<b>Exports</b>	Stable growth; cereals, cotton, spices dominant	Diversification into seafood, horticulture; Gujarat led with 25% share	Export volatility reduced
<b>Employment</b>	Declining share (42% workforce in 2018–19)	Reverse migration boosted rural labor; women's participation doubled (18% → 34.6%)	Distress-led employment
<b>Government Policies</b>	Focus on MSP, irrigation	Natural Farming Mission, Digital Agriculture, MSP hikes	Stronger emphasis on sustainability

Diversifying exports helped a bit. By focusing on seafood and processed foods, the country managed to smooth out some of that economic volatility.

**Chart: Agriculture GDP Contribution (2015–2020 vs. 2021–2025)**



After COVID, Indian agriculture really held up the economy. Farmers saw their incomes go up, even if just a bit, exports branched out into new areas, and officials started focusing more on the environment. Still, big issues remain — rural communities are struggling, climate change keeps hitting harder, and old systems just don't work well enough. If anything, the next chapter for Indian agriculture isn't only about bouncing back. It's about real change: fairer pay, greener methods, and a focus on making life better for people.

### References

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