

# **Covid19 lockdown impact on Rural economy: A case study of a village in Haryana**

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The History of humankind evolve by struggling with Nature. Human race faces a lot of troubles in their history like World War I and II, Global financial crisis or Great Depression in 1929-34, epidemics like Black death, Plague, Smallpox, Ebola etc. So this time again it builds the history as per Yuval Noah Harai: the world after the Coronavirus (Financial Time). Every epidemic or pandemic of their time had horrified impacts on the human society. Perhaps at present the coronavirus disease called the Covid19 may also be the most dangerous pandemic to the whole world. How much this pandemic is dangerous to mankind, you can imagine by the movement of Covid19 epicentre from China's Wuhan to Europe's Italy to USA' New York city. Every country take their appropriate action to tackle the Covid19 outbreak such as social distancing, contact tracing, lockdown, curfew etc. and research & development to make vaccine. Perhaps it will functioning well or not, as China has gained control over the covid19 pandemic but USA most powerful nation facing the problem of continuous increase in the number of infected cases, Italy continuously reported the increasing number of deaths and India facing the problem of their large number of poor masses, casual-informal labor, agricultural community in villages and migrant laborers from many metro cities due to the decision of sudden unplanned lockdown by our PM.

After Covid19's attack on China, Europe, USA, Canada most of the researchers see India may be the next hot spot for this coronavirus because of the second largest populous country in the world (1.4 billion population) with a large number of poverty. To combat this horrified situation government take such initiative like Janta Curfew, Social Distancing, contact tracing, lockdown, section 144 etc to protect their citizen in their early phase, which causes to less number of Infected people in India. It takes 12days to reach at 1000 infected positive cases from 10 positive cases, far less as compare to other. But the less number of infected people in the country may also

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show the less number of testings as compare to other western countries. India's total number of test is approx 40,000 till 31<sup>st</sup> march, which is very less as compare to other countries. US did more then 11lakh tests till 31<sup>st</sup> march and Germany conducting more than 50,000 tests per day.

In this report we are covering the effect of covid19 lockdown on the rural economy to analyse how it affects the farmers, informal labour, MGNERGA workers, PDS and food chain supply, milk supply chain etc. So for the present case study, I did some telephonic interview of the villagers (because of ongoing lockdown) of the village Mameran near Ellenabad (Sirsa) to analyse the instant impact of covid19 lockdown. On 24<sup>th</sup> march PM Narendra Modi announce a hasty and unplanned lockdown from midnight which is good step to effectively reduce contagion from covid19 but the decision was taken sudden and without any planning or discussion, which seems to arise new threats to our economy. It's not a cardboard games which can be start playing anytime at midnight. It's the game of life of poor masses, migrant labors, informal labors, agriculture community and playing with their emotions. It's not means that I'm not in the favour of lockdown but I'm against the effects of lockdown, against the administrative policy. We are proud to be say, India is a vast country extent from Kahmir to Kanyakumari and Kutch to Arunachal Pardesh, it takes average 48 hour time via passenger train to cover the one side distance without counting distance and time covered from their village to village. So if the ruling government know "from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, Kutch to Arunachal Pardesh, people have reposed faith in BJP & see BJP as a party to fulfil their dreams" (tweet via official tweeter handle @narendramodi on 06 Apr,2016). They must know the time required from one place to another place for Migrant laborers and other passengers. The alternative solution to combat this problem is that, government must take action to provide home shelter, food & water supply with proper medicare facility to the poor masses as well as migrant labors. Which help us in to reduce contagion disease as well as problem of poor masses. These are the failures of the government that should be improved. These such type of problems faced by casual workers lived in metropolitan city as well as informal labors of rural area.

Rural area population has more severed condition. Based on the telephonic interview of respondents of the village some problems are explained here. We divide rural

population mainly into four categories: Farmers, Informal labors, Milk producer, MGNREGA Workers. In **first category the farmers** are mostly the land owner, on the basis of response of respondents of the village, they are not effected much yet from this corona outbreak because they didn't have the problem of food stock, vegetables and milk etc. as they themselves are the producer of most of the items. But the problem they may be faced in coming days, as the harvesting season is coming. As they said, earlier they used migrant labors and hired machinery such as farm equipment and combine etc for harvesting. One of the farmer of the village Mameran said, the combine used for the harvesting in the village is come from Punjab and problem is that the combines of Punjab are yet not came back from other states like MP, Gujarat etc. where harvesting season is going in these days. So farmers of the village feel there may be delay in the harvesting season of Rabbi crops and leads to too late to Kharif season due to nationwide lockdown. But there has been no announcement by the government regarding the help of farmers for harvesting of crops during ongoing lockdown. **Second category is of Informal labors**, this the most effected category in the village. In this category most of them are daily wage earners, most of are going outside village to the city for there earning. This is the class which work in unorganized sector. They face the problem of basic necessity of life like food, milk, medicine etc. as they did not have much stock of these items. Their life is based on the daily wage earnings. But the problem is solved, if government provide food security to these peoples. During telephonic interview of one milk dairy owner of the village, he said that I badly feel the condition of these daily wage earners. They didn't have money to purchase grains, vegetables, milk etc. The announcement of government to provide extra grains with regular PDS is far, they didn't get the monthly PDS even in this lockdown because of lack of supply of PDS. Milk dairy owner said, "I sell milk generally 40 rupees per litre but now I charge 25₹ per litre (4% Fat) if there is poor people came to me". He said, "If life is there then money is there, otherwise nothing is there". **Third category is of Milk Producers**, it comprises three players. First is Individual milk producer: generally small farmers in the village, Second is middle men: milk dairy owner in the village or city, Third is Dairy plant at district level. Because of the perishable characteristics of milk, this occupation has most ill effected in the rural area after covid19 lockdown. As per discussion with one of the the milk

producer, the prices of milk is very high in the month of January and February 2020 it reaches upto 72₹ per litre (10% Fat). Therefore, to earn high prices producers purchase more cows and buffaloes. At that time the capacity of Vita dairy plant of district Sirsa is more than two lakh litre milk per day. But due to sudden lockdown the demand of dairy products like ghee, curd, butter, paneer, lassi, kheer and other sweets goes decline, earlier which were usually used in public functions, marriages etc. Due to lockdown, consumption of these dairy products are declining so the demand for milk capacity of Vita dairy plant Sirsa is also declining to one lakh litre milk per day, which is trickle down to middlemen and small individual producers in the village. One of the middlemen said that, earlier Vita dairy plant demand 1000 litre milk per day from me but nowadays they demand only 600 litre milk per day, the reason for this is that declining consumption of milk and other diary products and second thing is if vita plant use this milk for making Ghee and store it then he didn't have money to pay the village milk producer as there is no demand for ghee in the market. Therefore, Prices of milk is declining to less than 60₹ per litre (10% Fat) because of less demand and more supply of milk from village milk producer. Individual milk producer sale milk at less rate generally those sell at 35₹ per litre (4% Fat), now after lockdown sell at less than 20₹ per litre (4% Fat) because of perishable characteristic of the commodity they can't store it. So, they can only consume it or sell at less prices. **Fourth category is of MGNERGA workers**, due to the lockdown in the country they didn't get work anywhere. So they are in very bad situation and didn't get the benefit of increase in wage rate after lockdown. They are helped by some rich people of the village. **Fifth category is of Vegetable producer:** Prices of vegetables in the market are increases from 10 to 20% as compare to usual days before lockdown. Because due to fear factor of covid19, households pay any price for purchase this. On the other side one of the vegetable producer respondent said on telephonic interview that he didn't get assured price in mandi especially for cabbage. One of the vegetable producer respondent said the price for cabbage in mandi is 3-4 ₹ per kg, earlier that was 8-10₹ per kg and in market it is same 20₹ per kg before and after lockdown. So the respondent Mohan Singh of village Mameran near Ellenabad said "I sown the cabbage in 3 acres of land and as the price of cabbage is 3-4 ₹ per kg, which didn't cover the harvesting cost and to reach at mandi so I ploughed through my 3 acre

cabbage field. Another farmer said the price of pea is also go down from 25 ₹ per kg to 15-17₹ per kg. One another farmers of village Talwara khurd near Ellenabad said,“ There are many farmers in the village, who sown the sugarcane crop but now due to ongoing lockdown they are not getting any type of access to the market.

Besides this agricultural problems in the rural village, there is problem of liquidity of money. As movement of people is restricted during prevailing lockdown in the country. So villagers are unable to go to city to get cash from main branch & ATM's. So, there should be ATM Mobile vans for the villagers to get access of cash, which they need for purchase of their basic necessity of life. So we conclude that, Lockdown is good for the rich people who has space in their houses but not for poor masses who lived in congested houses, jhuggi-jhopdi or slum area, how they can maintain social distance in cramped spaces. There should be announcement minimum 3-4 days before the lockdown with proper planning and road-map. Now, government must take strict action to combat the health pandemic as well as self generated economic pandemic of poor masses to get victory over coronavirus otherwise we are standing busy in switch off the lights lighting the candle in our balcony and corona will defeat all of us.

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