



Mains Practice Question

Q. Examine the concept of cooperative farming, in light of problem of land fragmentation, in promoting the socio-economic welfare of farmers. (250 words)

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Approach

- Write in brief about the concept of cooperative farming.
- Just give current status and challenges of land fragmentation.
- Examine how cooperative farming can be beneficial and enumerate its challenges and the solutions.
- Emphasize on the future need of the land consolidation and cooperative farming.

Introduction

- When various farmers in a village pool their land together and agree to treat the pooled piece of land as one big farm for the purpose of cultivation, purchase the necessary inputs for the cultivation, and market the crops jointly, they are assumed to have formed a cooperative farming society. Such a society, for its proper working elects its office bearers on the basis of one member-one-vote.

Body

Land fragmentation- Current status and challenges

- The average per capita operational size of land holding in India is 1.33 ha, which is far below the world average of 3.7 ha per person. Further, land holdings have shown a marginal decrease from the holding size of that of a decade ago (1.41 ha).
- Small and marginal holdings have an adverse impact on efficient farming thereby impacting the economic prosperity of the farmer.
- Difficulty in access to agricultural credit is a prominent drawback related to small farm holdings.
- Producers with small holdings also often face problems due to inefficiencies in transporting their produce leading to increased dependence on middlemen. Therefore, there is loss of income which becomes the middleman's commission.

To ensure farmer-centric agricultural development, land consolidation efforts for good quality and efficient farming needs to be undertaken. Cooperative farming to resolve the problem of land fragmentation in following ways:

- **Economies of Scale:** Co-operative farming can solve all the problems of small and uneconomic holdings. While purchasing agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilisers etc. the society can purchase in bulk quantity and thus it costs less. Big machineries like tractors, harvesting machines can now be purchased by the society and the agricultural operations can now be managed in a more scientific basis. Agricultural implements will be fully utilized and there will be no under-employed farmers as they will be gainfully employed in the co-operative farms.
- **Marketable Surplus:** The marketable surplus of food grain and industrial raw materials can be

transported and marketed on a bulk basis suitably by the society and also can fetch remunerative prices.

- **Creditworthiness:** Co-operative farming can attain higher creditworthiness as compared to that of individual farming as such large scale farming can attract greater amount of finance for its productive activities

Criticism in respect of co-operative farming in India

- Co-operative farming failed to make a frontal attack on the prevailing inequality in the economic structure as the traditional status distinction of land owners, landless labourers and sharecroppers are still being maintained.
- Mechanisation of agriculture through co-operative farming will squeeze the scope of employment and is likely to make workers redundant in the rural areas.
- Co-operative farming is not the only method to raise agricultural productivity. There is the availability of better alternatives like adoption of HYV seeds, fertilisers, implements etc. for raising the productivity of agriculture.

Solution to these criticisms:

- The members of the cooperative society should be active & vigilant. Every member should exercise her/his rights & insists for transparency in operation, accountability of the executive members & fairness of activities.
- It is necessary to spread the movement as people's movement. People should not think it as a part of the govt or a department of the govt. People should own it and manage it. People should be educated and about the advantages of this mechanism.

Conclusion

The change in the coming decades as growing population, further fragmentation, land conversion will lead to lower productivity, shortage of labour and dwindling natural resources. These may put us back in the grip of a perennial food crisis. There is, therefore, a great responsibility on the farming community and the government alike to realize this future shock and take proactive steps to avoid such crises. Consolidation through cooperative farming is one such solution theme.