

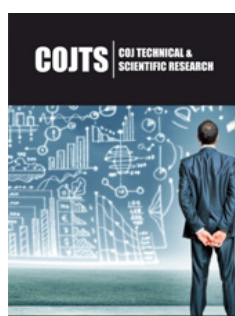
Pakistan's Agriculture Sector: Battling Climate Shocks and Nurturing Livestock Growth

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Introduction

Pakistan's agriculture sector, accounting for 22.9 percent of GDP and 37.4 percent of employment, plays a vital role in ensuring food security, providing raw materials to industries, and contributing to sustainable growth. However, in recent years, the sector has faced significant challenges due to climatic shocks, including floods, droughts, and extreme weather events. Despite these obstacles, the sector has persevered, and the government has implemented strategic initiatives to revive and nurture its growth. In particular, the livestock sector has emerged as a key driver of economic development, demonstrating resilience and potential for further expansion.

Climate Shocks and Agriculture

The susceptibility of Pakistan's agriculture sector to adverse climatic events cannot be overstated. Frequent floods, droughts, heat waves, and irregular precipitation patterns have disrupted agricultural productivity, impacting both crops and livestock. In July-August 2022, unprecedented floods devastated the sector, primarily affecting crops and livestock. The damages incurred led to a decline in domestic production and soaring prices of essential food items. Recognizing the urgency, the government took immediate action by allowing the import of essential food items and announcing the Kissan Package-2022 to alleviate the miseries of flood-affected farmers and revive agricultural activities.

Agriculture Performance and Livestock Sector Growth

Despite the challenges, Pakistan's agriculture sector demonstrated resilience in the 2022-23 period. The Rabi season crops showcased higher yields, compensating for the losses suffered during the Kharif season. Notably, wheat, sugarcane, and maize exhibited positive growth, mitigating the negative growth of cotton and rice. The livestock sector, with its significant contribution to agriculture and the national GDP, witnessed growth of 3.78 percent, outperforming the previous year. Livestock has become the backbone of rural economies, providing livelihood opportunities for millions of farmers and contributing to poverty reduction.

Government Initiatives and Livestock Development

Recognizing the potential of the livestock sector, the government has prioritized its development as a catalyst for economic growth, poverty alleviation, and food security. A comprehensive strategy focused on private sector-led development, supported by enabling policy interventions, has been implemented. The government has implemented regulatory

measures to enhance animal productivity through improved veterinary health coverage, husbandry practices, animal breeding, and balanced animal feeding. Efforts are also underway to control livestock diseases of economic importance, such as Foot & Mouth Disease (FMDE), Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR), and Avian Influenza.

Addressing Challenges and Seizing Opportunities

The challenges faced by the livestock sector, including the devastating impact of floods and the emergence of Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD), have been acknowledged by the government. The floods of 2022 resulted in substantial livestock losses, while LSD posed threats to milk and meat production, trade restrictions, and the overall value chain. Vaccination and vector control measures are being actively pursued to control the spread of LSD. Additionally, the government has launched key initiatives, such as the “Save

the Calf Project” and “Calf Feedlot Fattening” to support farmers, improve livestock quality, and stimulate economic growth.

Conclusion

Pakistan’s agriculture sector has braved the challenges posed by climate shocks and emerged with resilience. The livestock sector, in particular, has exhibited significant growth and potential for further expansion. The government’s focused initiatives and policy interventions have played a crucial role in driving this progress. However, continued efforts are required to address climate vulnerabilities, strengthen disease control measures, and promote sustainable practices. By nurturing the agriculture sector, Pakistan can ensure food security, bolster economic growth, and uplift rural communities, ultimately leading to a more prosperous future for the nation.