Dealing with the agrarian crisis

What is the issue?

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- Frequency of farmer's agitations in different states is on the rise.
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- Rising incidences of farmer’s suicides in rural India are also getting to be a cause of major concern.
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- These worrying realities call for sustainable alternatives to present agricultural methods.
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Why agriculture is significant?

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- Though agriculture now accounts for less than 15% of gross domestic product (GDP), it is still the main source of livelihood for nearly half of our population.
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- Agriculture is still the core of our food security.
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- With rising population and increasing needs, imports will not solve these problems for ever.
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What are the problems in agriculture?

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- There is an intense pressure of population on land resulting in **low land-man ratio** in rural areas.
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- The landlessness and presence of marginal farming households are the

consequences of decades of **land fragmentation.**
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- The landless or marginal farmers **lack** the **resources** to either buy or lease more land or invest in farm infrastructure to compensate for the scarcity of land.
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- Government procurement at the minimum support price is supposed to protect these farmers but it mainly benefits the large traders.
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- Small farmers typically do not have enough marketable surplus to justify the cost of transporting the crop to government corporations in the towns.
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- **Uncertainty with the price** of the produce is a cause of concern. Many farmers continue to be at the mercy of the trader.
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- Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs) are also unfavourable because farmers have to sell their produce through auctions in regulated markets controlled by cartels of licensed traders.
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- These cartels fix low purchase prices, extract large commissions, delay payments, etc.
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- Despite subsidies on power, fertilizers, etc., input costs have been rising faster than sale prices, squeezing the meagre income of the small farmers and driving them into debt.
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- Other risks include weather, a weak monsoon or even a delayed monsoon, weak soil fertility, pests and plant diseases, perishability of crops, etc
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What are the possible solutions?

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- Institutional transformation of our small farmer economy into **cooperative farming systems** on a national scale is a viable option.
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- Variants of cooperation range from collective action in accessing credit, acquiring inputs, marketing to production cooperatives that also include land pooling, labour pooling, joint investment, joint water management and joint production.
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- The key feature of successful models like Kudumbashree programme in

Kerala is that they are women-led initiatives founded on a base of voluntary women's **self-help groups (SHGs).**
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Source: Livemint

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