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Structural Challenges Threaten Indian Agriculture's Global Competitiveness

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India's agriculture sector continues to grapple with deep-rooted structural challenges that threaten its global competitiveness and long-term sustainability. Despite being one of the largest producers of food in the world, the sector faces systemic weaknesses that have persisted for decades.

One of the primary issues is limited market access for farmers. Many small and marginal farmers are unable to reach larger, more profitable markets due to inadequate supply chain infrastructure, lack of storage facilities, and inefficient distribution networks. This often forces them to sell produce at lower prices within local markets, reducing profitability and discouraging reinvestment in farming activities.

Underinvestment in infrastructure further compounds these problems. Rural roads, cold storage units, irrigation systems, and warehousing facilities remain insufficient or outdated in many parts of India. Without robust infrastructure, farmers struggle to maintain the quality of their produce, leading to post-harvest losses and reduced bargaining power in the market.

Technology gaps also play a significant role in hampering productivity. While precision agriculture, data analytics, and advanced farm machinery have transformed farming practices in developed countries, adoption in India has been slow. Small-scale farmers often lack the resources, training, and financial support needed to integrate these innovations into their operations.

Climate variability adds another layer of complexity. Unpredictable rainfall patterns, rising temperatures, and increasing frequency of extreme weather events have placed additional stress on agricultural productivity. While some farmers have started to adopt climate-resilient crops and water-efficient practices, the pace of change remains slow without comprehensive government and private sector support.

The combination of these factors creates a cycle of low productivity, reduced profitability, and limited reinvestment, leaving India's agriculture sector vulnerable to both domestic and global competition. Experts argue that without targeted policy interventions, significant investment in rural infrastructure, and widespread adoption of modern technology, India risks falling behind in the global agricultural marketplace.

Agriculture employs a large portion of India's population, making it critical not only for food security but also for rural livelihoods. Addressing these challenges could unlock substantial economic potential, improve farmer incomes, and strengthen India's position in global agricultural trade. However, this will require coordinated efforts from policymakers, private industry, and farmers themselves to modernize practices, improve market connectivity, and ensure the sector's resilience in the face of changing environmental and economic conditions.

