This lecture traces the trajectory of growth of Indian agriculture over the last 5 decades. From the mid 1960s through the 1980s, rapid growth in production and productivity of food grain, rice and wheat, in particular, resulted in big gains in output and reduced dependence on imports to meet domestic consumption requirements. The trajectory has been more uneven in the 1990s and after.

The lecture argues that there are huge problems that beset agrarian India, arising out of inequalities across crops, regions and classes. In particular, the policies of the last two decades have neglected small farmers who still constitute the vast majority of rural cultivators. The lecture draws on official statistics as well as evidence from village-level surveys across the country.