

## **Abhijit Sen, one of India's leading Agriculture Economists and Distinguished Academics, Passes Away\***

**Harish Damodaran**

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“He suffered a heart attack around 11 pm. We rushed him to the hospital, but it was all over by the time we got there,” said Pronab Sen, his brother, also an economist who was the chairman of the National Statistical Commission and Chief Statistician of India.

Abhijit Sen, who was also chairman of the Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) in the first Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led NDA government, authored the report of the High Level Committee on Long Term Grain Policy that was submitted in July 2000.

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The M S Swaminathan-headed National Commission on Farmers, which gave its final report in April 2006, recommended that the MSPs of crops be at least 50 per cent more than the ‘C2’ costs. The Abhijit Sen committee had, however, proposed that the comprehensive ‘C2’ costs of only the efficient producing regions be considered. It also favoured a universal public distribution system with uniform central issue prices for rice and wheat, while doing away with ‘below poverty line’ and ‘above poverty line’ categories. This went on to be incorporated in the UPA government’s National Food Security Act of 2013, which now provides wheat and rice to more than a third of the country’s population at a uniform Rs 2 and Rs 3 per kg price.

Apart from policymaking, Sen also had a distinguished academic career with a PhD in Economics at the University of Cambridge in 1981. The topic of his thesis was “The agrarian constraint to economic development: The case of India”. He joined the Centre for Economics and Planning at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in 1985. This centre, which also had other well-known scholars like Prabhat and Utsa Patnaik, Krishna Bharadwaj, Amit Bhaduri, Deepak Nayyar, C P Chandrasekhar, and Jayati Ghosh (his wife), earned a reputation for critical economic thinking with a strong left-liberal orientation that was backed by quantitative research.

Sen is survived by his wife Jayati and daughter Jahnavi Sen, who is a deputy editor at The Wire.

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