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Natural Interest Rate: Assessing the Stance of India's Monetary Policy under Uncertainty

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Abstract

The constant natural interest rate assumption implicit in Taylor type feedback rules to assess the stance of monetary policy could be misleading at times, particularly because of the time-varying nature of the natural interest rate. In the post crisis period, reflecting a complex web of supply side, demand side, regulatory and global factors, natural rates of both advanced and emerging economies have been estimated in the literature to have altered considerably. Using a theoretical framework that combines the essence of Ramsay's growth model and the New-Keynesian macrodynamics, and applying the Kalman filter estimation technique, this paper finds that India's estimated natural real interest rate in Q4 of 2014-15 lied in a range of 0.6 per cent to 3.1 per cent, even though core estimates point to a narrower range of 1.6 per cent to 1.8 per cent. These estimates indicate that the real interest rate gap was negative in India for a major part of the last about ten years when CPI inflation was persistently high, implying that monetary policy stance of the Reserve Bank was largely accommodative rather than anti-inflationary.

Keywords: Natural Rate, Real Interest Rate, Monetary Policy Stance, New-Keynesian Framework, Kalman Filter, Time-varying Estimates.

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