

Impact on Agricultural and Rural Employment: An Economic Study

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Abstract

Agricultural labourers who are mostly landless and form a significant section of rural society mainly depend on wage employment in agriculture. Majority of them belong to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and are among the worst exploited section of the society. Unlike the industrial labourers are neither well organized nor well paid. These constitute the major portion of have-nots who are basically unskilled and earn their livelihood through manual labour. The present study attempts to look deep into the level of employment and suggest appropriate measures to improve the living standards of the agricultural labour households in Palayamkottai Taluk of Tirunelveli District. From the study, it is clear that male headed families had higher per capita income than female headed families. Generally it was concluded that, agricultural activities provided 88 per cent of employment to agricultural labourers. Out of the total agricultural employment, nearly 60 per cent of the employment was provided by paddy cultivation only. As far as paddy cultivation is concerned, season II was the main provider of employment. It provided nearly 50 per cent of employment. In paddy cultivation, female labourers got more employment compared to male labourers. The labourers who migrated to other places had employment for more number of days. In short, there was a change in the employment pattern of agricultural activities.

Key Words: Agricultural Labourers, Employment and Paddy

Introduction

The agricultural labourers are mostly unorganised. There is no agglomeration of labourers as a farm continuously for a long time to enable them to develop their collective bargaining power as an industry. There is absence of fixed occupation. The holdings of producers are mostly fragmented and uneconomic. Agricultural operations provide employment on a sufficiently large scale during busy seasons, but during slack seasons they look for alternative opportunities of employment.

Agricultural labourers who are mostly landless and form a significant section of rural society mainly depend on wage employment in agriculture. Majority of them belong to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and are among the worst exploited section of the society. Unlike the industrial labourers are neither well organized nor well paid. These constitute the major portion of have-nots who are basically unskilled and earn their livelihood through manual labour. Since the nature of industry, which provides them employment, is purely seasonal, they never remain fully employed throughout the year. Their income has always been meagre, resulting in poor living and heavy indebtedness. Much worse are those who get casual agricultural employment and work on daily wages and do not own a piece of land. They merely exist and do not live. Their morning holds no promise for the evening and they can never sleep without tensions for they have no stocks left for the morning.

A theoretical approach is necessary to understand the socio-economic conditions of the agricultural labourers. The present survey is to examine the nature of agricultural labourers regarding their occupational structure, level of income, savings and consumption pattern and the standard of living.

Agriculture is the oldest occupation of rural India and it occupies an important place in the economic development of our country by contributing factors of production like labour capital and raw materials. Besides, it also acts as a market for non-agricultural sectors to Gross Domestic product.

Similarly, the improved rural infrastructure and effective markets, primary education, health care and good nutrition will reduce the poverty of agricultural labourers. Agricultural labour means "those people who are engaged in raising crops on payment of wages". Agricultural labourers constitute the largest chunk of the labour force. Most of the agricultural labourers are illiterate, unskilled, and they hail from depressed communities who are landless and depend upon wages.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the per capita of income of the male and female headed households of agricultural labour
2. To study the agricultural labourers and rural employment.
3. To suggest policy measures to improve their social status.

Methodology

The present study attempts to look deep into the level of employment and suggest appropriate measures to improve the living standards of the agricultural labour households in Palayamkottai Taluk of Tirunelveli District, Tamilnadu. Tirunelveli District comprises of 19 taluks, out of which Palayamkottai taluk was selected for this study. In this taluk only one block namely Palayamkottai was selected and there were 1,595 agricultural labour households in this block. From this block 150 agricultural labour households was selected randomly for the study. Interview method was used to supplement the information wherever necessary. The investigation was carried out during the period July 2016 to December 2016.

Results and Discussion

Gender of the Head of the Household

The senior male member is the head of the family, who takes all important decisions in domestic and other affairs. In some families, due to the early death of the senior male family member or separation in the family, the female senior member has to head the family affairs. The entire decision making rests on her. So the sex of the head of the agricultural household plays an important role in the determination of the level of employment, income and poverty. In the study area, out of 150 agricultural households, 110 households were male headed households and the remaining 40 were female headed households. The average per capita income of the male and female headed households is given in the table 1.

Table: 1 - The Average Per capita Income of the Male and Female Headed Households

Gender	No.	Average Per capita Income (Rs.)	Significance
Male Headed Family	110	4,047.01	Significant
Female Headed Family	40	3,243.04	
Calculated Z Value 173.05 > Table Z Value 1.96 at 5% level			

The average per capita income of male headed households was Rs.4047.01 and female headed households were Rs.3.243.04. The average per capita income of the male headed households

was higher than the female headed households. Z test was employed to examine whether the difference in per capita income was significant or not. The difference is significant at five per cent level. So, it can be concluded that sex of the head of the households plays an important role in the determination of the family income.

A study on the difference in per capita income alone is not sufficient to throw light on the income pattern of household. A study on the inequality in the income distribution is essential. The following table gives a clear picture of inequality in the income distribution.

Table: 2 – Inequality of Income in Male Headed and Female Headed Households

Gender	Per capita Income of (in Rs.)		Per capita Income of (in Rs.)	
	Bottom 10%	Bottom 25%	Top 10%	Top 25%
Male Headed Family	2,417.25	2,881.21	5,609.34	5,307.57
Female Headed Family	1,795.92	2,175.77	4,392.17	4,103.47

The average per capita income of the bottom 10 per cent of the male headed households was Rs.2,417.25 and female headed households was only Rs.1,795.92. Compared to male headed households, the average per capita income of female headed households was very low. Further the average per capita income of bottom 25 per cent male headed households was Rs.2,881.21. But the average per capita income of the female headed households was only Rs.2,175.77. On the other hand average per capita income of the top 10 per cent of the male headed families was `5,609.34 and female headed families was Rs.4,392.17. The average per capita income of the top 10 per cent of the male headed families was much higher than the female headed families. In the same manner, the average per capita income of the top 25 per cent of the male headed families was much higher than the female headed families.

From the above analysis, this is clear that there is a wide disparity in the income level of male and female headed families. The female headed families were the poorest among the poor.

Sex-wise Employment of Agricultural Labourers

Both men and female are involved in agricultural operations. The sex-wise distribution of agricultural employment is presented in table 3.

Table: 3 – Sex -wise Employment of Sample Agricultural Labourers

Category	Male	Female	Total
Season I – Paddy	6,273 (40.70)	9,139 (59.30)	15,412 (100.00)
Season II – Paddy	1,299 (44.95)	1,591 (55.05)	2,890 (100.00)
Banana	5,452 (63.56)	3,126 (36.44)	8,578 (100.00)
Dairy Farming	373 (91.87)	33 (8.13)	406 (100.00)
Other Agriculture Related Activities	2,318 (71.72)	914 (28.28)	3,232 (100.00)
Total	15,715 (51.49)	14,803 (48.51)	30,518 (100.00)
Average per household	107.51	100.87	208.38
Average per capita	36.12	34.76	35.45

This is observed from the table 3 that paddy cultivation during the season I provided 6,273 mandays of employment to male agricultural labourers and 9,139 man days of employment to

female agricultural labourers. In other words out of the total employment generated during season I, 59.30 per cent of the work was performed by female agricultural labourers and 40.70 per cent by male labourers. Similarly, during the season II, out of the total employment generated 55.05 per cent of the work was performed by female labourers and 44.95 per cent work done by male workers.

In paddy cultivation, the operations like transplantations and weeding are exclusively performed by female labourers. The operations like ploughing and harvesting which were previously done by male workers are now done by machines. So, the requirement of male labourers in paddy cultivation is less and female labourers is more.

On the other hand the banana cultivation provided 8,578 mandays of employment. Of this 63.56 per cent of the work was performed by male workers and the remaining 36.44 per cent by female workers. In dairy farming and other agricultural activities the domination of male workers is more and they performed 71.72 and 51.49 per cent of work respectively. The reason is that the different operations in banana cultivation, dairy farming and other agricultural activities required hard labour and only male labourers are best suited for this operation. So, male labourers have a better chance of getting employment in these activities.

The distribution of agricultural employment among female and male headed families is given in the following table.

Table: 4 – Agriculture Employment of Agricultural Labourers by Male and Female Headed Families

Category	Male Headed				Female Headed			
	Total Employment	Average per Household	Average per capita	% to Total	Total Employment	Average per Household	Average per capita	% to Total
Paddy Cultivation	7572	105.58	44.36	48.18	10730	123.11	51.60	72.49
Banana Cultivation	5452	70.37	29.57	34.69	3126	90.96	38.13	21.12
Dairy Farming	373	3.96	1.66	2.37	33	1.71	0.72	0.22
Other Agricultural Activities	2318	23.43	9.84	14.75	914	21.47	9.00	6.17
Total	15715	203.34	85.43	100.00	14803	237.25	99.45	100.00

From the above table 4, paddy cultivation provided more employment to female headed families compared to male headed families. On the other hand, banana cultivation provided more employment opportunities to male headed families in the study area.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it is clear that male headed families had higher per capita income than female headed families. Generally it was concluded that, agricultural activities provided 88 per cent of employment to agricultural labourers. Out of the total agricultural employment, nearly 60 per cent of the employment was provided by paddy cultivation only. As far as paddy cultivation is concerned, season II was the main provider of employment. It provided nearly 50 per cent of employment. In paddy cultivation, female labourers got more employment compared to male labourers. The labourers who migrated to other places had employment for more number of days. In short, there was a change in the employment pattern of agricultural activities.

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