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ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN CHINNAGOTTIGALU MANDAL OF CHITTOOR DISTRICT



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ABSTRACT:

The study of human resources-their quality, problems and remedies- is of immense use in planning in both developing as well as developed economies. Since human beings constitute the workforce, knowledge relating to them is of immense necessity. Those people were included under the category of agricultural workers who possessed some land or were rural artisans but who worked 50 per cent or more days on the land of others against payment of wages. The committee also defined an agricultural labour household. In the opinion of the

committee, if the head of the household or 50 per cent or more of the earners report agricultural labour as their main occupation, that family should be classified as an agricultural labour household. The second agricultural labour enquiry committee (1956-1957) took a broad view of agricultural activities to include those workers who were also engaged in allied activities like animal husbandry, dairy, poultry, piggery etc. The literacy rate is more in marginal farmers than agricultural labours. Similarly males are educated well than females in both categories of households. The majority of agricultural labour households (63 per cent) did not own TV sets or other items. But comparatively more marginal farm households owned TV sets and fans. NREGP, the income of 73 per cent of agricultural labour households belongs to the poverty level of income, i.e., Rs.24000 and below. But if NREGP income is included, the number of poor households has come down to 59 per cent.

KEYWORDS

agricultural labours, marginal farmers, small farmers, households.

INTRODUCTION

Human resources constitute a significant input in the production process of goods and services of an economy. The study of human resources-their quality, problems and remedies- is of immense use in planning in both developing as well as developed economies. Since human beings constitute the workforce, knowledge relating to them is of immense necessity. The progress of a country depends upon the welfare of the workforce. The structure of the work force reflects the nature of economic activities of the population from time to time. Since India is living in villages naturally majority of the population is depending on agriculture and allied activities mainly as farmers and agricultural labours. The farmers have comparatively better living conditions than agricultural labour though their level of income is fluctuating from year to year depending on nature.

A study starting from V.M. Dandekar and N.Rath (1971) denotes that the incidence of poverty among agricultural labours has been the highest in India among different categories of workforce.

2.DEFINATION OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR

Unlike industrial labour, agricultural labour is difficult to define'. The reason is that unless capitalism develops fully in agriculture a separate class of workers depending wholly on wages does not come up. Since the capitalist relations are in an underdeveloped state in India, such crystal clear class of agricultural workers has not yet been evolved. Difficulties in defining agricultural labour are compounded by the fact that many small and marginal farmers also work partly on the farms of others to supplement their income.

Accordingly, the first agricultural labour enquiry committee laid down that those people should be regarded as agricultural workers who worked for 50 per cent or more days on payment of wages. Therefore, even those people were included under the category of agricultural workers who possessed some land or were rural artisans but who worked 50 per cent or more days on the land of others against payment of wages. The committee also defined an agricultural labour house hold. In the opinion of the committee, if the head of the house hold or 50 per cent or more of the earners report agricultural labour as their main occupation, that family should be classified as an agricultural labour household. The second agricultural labour enquiry committee (1956-1957) took a broad view of agricultural activities to include those workers who were also engaged in allied activities like animal husbandry, dairy, poultry, piggery etc. The second committee submitted that to know whether a household is an agricultural labour household by examining its main source of income. If 50 per cent or more of its income is derived as wages for work rendered in agriculture, only then it could be classified as agricultural labour household.

According to the National Labour Commission, a major portion of income of agricultural workers in the form of wages is obtained as a result of working on land. These workers have nothing except their labour to earn livelihood. They are generally unskilled and unorganised. In the census of India 1961, all those workers were included in the category of agricultural workers who worked on the farms of others and received payment either in money or kind (or both). The 1971 census excluded those people from agricultural labourers for whom working on the farms of others was a secondary occupation.

3. OBJECTIVE

The present study has set the following objectives

- 1.To study the agro-economic features of Chinnagottigallu mandal in relation to Chittoor district.
- 2.To analyse the socio-economic conditions of agricultural labours in relation to marginal farmers in Chinnagottigallu mandal.
- 3.To assess the impact of NREGP programme in the reduction of poverty of marginal farmers and agricultural labours in Chinngottigallu mandal.

4. STUDY AREA

The Chinnagottigallu mandal is one of the 34 mandals of western region of Chittoor district. In this mandal there are 10 revenue villages with a population 25,006. Out of these 10 revenue villages, 3 villages-Thippireddygaripalle, Digavoor and Chittecherla are selected randomly for the present study. The list of marginal farmers and agricultural labours of these villages is prepared basing on records of concerned Village Administrative Officers . From this list 10 per cent of agricultural labours and 10 per cent of marginal farmers are selected for detailed study. The sample accounts for 68 agricultural labour households and 32 marginal farmer households. Thus, for this study, 100 sample households are selected basing on multi-stage random sampling method.

5. CATEGORIES OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

The first agricultural labour enquiry committee has classified agricultural workers into two categories,viz.

- 1.Attached labourers and
- 2.Casual labourers

In the Indian context, this is the basic classification. Attached labourers are attached to some cultivator household on the basis of a written or oral agreement. Their employment is permanent and regular. Accordingly whenever the master wishes, they are ready to work on his land. Normally they are not free to work at any other place. In many instances attached labourers also do the task of domestic servants in addition to working on land. The hours of work are very lengthy and in some cases, attached agricultural labourers have to work from dawn to dusk in the houses and farms of their employers.

There such as are broadly three types of casual agricultural workers in India,

- 1.Small farmers who have very small holdings and are thus forced to work on the farms of others to make both ends meet.
- 2.Tenants who work on leased land but this is not their main source of income.
- 3.Share croppers who besides sharing the produce of land cultivated by them, also work as labourers on other land.

6. CHARACTERISTICS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURS

The main characteristics of agricultural labourers are:

- 1.The agricultural labours are highly migratory in nature
- 2.The agricultural workers are basically unskilled and consequently their bargaining power is low. Thus the supply is highly elastic.
- 3.Agricultural labours are widely scattered unorganised and unable to make strong union.
- 4.The agricultural labours are difficult to be covered by any rules and regulations adopted by the government such as minimum wage cut.
- 5.The employer of agricultural labour himself may not be a person of high means.
- 6.Most of the labourers belong to backward classes like harijans, tribal people etc.

Agricultural labour in Indian rural economy stood in the bottom rung of the ladder both in socio economic aspects, irrespective of regions or state. Various studies also confirm the fact that agricultural labours are surviving in a miserable condition where incidence of the poverty is higher in agricultural labours with compared to other sections of the rural society. Further, most of them belong to socially weaker sections of the society. However the socio-economic condition as well as the magnitude of their problem is subject to vary from district to district or even mandal to mandal. To analyse facts of agricultural labour problems, micro level studies are more relevant and essential.

In view of this, in this paper socio-economic conditions of agricultural labours are analysed in general and compared to their next counterpart in rural segment, i.e., marginal farmers. The economic conditions of different social groups are evaluated to have a further sight in the problem of agricultural labours, for example access to NREGP programme, incidence of poverty among different social groups etc.

7. HEAD OF THE HOUSEHOLDS PARTICULARS

Head of the nation in national economy, in household economy head of the household play a key role in mobilisation as well as allocation of economic as well as other resources in a productive manner. The enlighten head of the household can take appropriate decisions to promote and protect the interest of the entire family with forthright. This type of decision making requires education and knowledge about various related aspects like opportunities available etc.

The aged heads of the households are compared to younger generation. Among agricultural labours, 71 per cent of persons are literates whose age is below 50 years. But in case of age group 50 and above, the literacy rate is only 24 per cent with margin.

The table 1 denotes that more than 90 per cent of the households in both categories are headed by male persons. Similarly majority of their age is below fifty years. In case of agricultural labours 66 per cent of household's age is below 50 years and with respect to marginal farmers 82 per cent households head age is fifty years and less. Fact is that there is a positive effect on household economy.

The noted fact is the literacy is less among the aged heads of the household compared to younger generation. Among agricultural labours, 71 per cent of persons are illiterates whose age is below 50 years. But in case of group 50 and above, the literacy rate is only 24 per cent. The literacy rate is 82 per cent among marginal farmers whose age is below 50 years. Similarly the illiteracy is in older generation comparatively, literacy is somewhat more among marginal farmers.

Table 1
Particulars of the Head of the Sample Households

Sl. No.	Age group (years)	Agricultural Labours							Marginal Farmers						
		Male			Female			Grand Total	Male			Female			Grand Total
		L	III	Total	L	III	Total		L	III	Total	L	III	Total	
1	Up to 30	8	1	9 (14.51)	1	0	1 (16.66)	10 (14.71)	2	-	2 (6.67)	-	-	-	2 (6.25)
2	31-50	23	9	32 (51.61)	-	3	3 (50)	35 (51.47)	16	5	21 (70)	-	-	-	21 (65.63)
3	50 and above	4	17	21 (33.88)	-	2	2 (33.34)	23 (33.82)	1	6	7 (23.33)	-	2	2	9 (28.12)
Total		35	27	62 (100)	1	5	6	68 (100)	19	11	30 (100)	-	2	2	32 (100)

Source: Field Data

Note: Figures in parentheses denote percentages to total

7.1 CASTE COMPOSITION

Since caste and socio-economic conditions in the villages are interlinked, agricultural labour, which constitutes the poorest section of the rural hierarchy, mostly belong to socially and economically backward castes. It is observed from the table 2 that 75 per cent of agricultural labour households belong to SC, ST and Backward communities. In case of marginal farmers, STs are absent and SCs accounts only 6.25 per cent. In this mandal 94 per cent of marginal farmers are accounted by Backward castes and other castes only.

Table 2
Caste Composition of Sample Households

Sl.No.	Caste	Agricultural labours		Marginal farmers	
		No. of Households	Percentage	No. of Households	Percentage
1	ST	10	14.71	-	-
2	SC,	16	23.52	2	6.25
3	BC	25	36.77	17	53.12
4	Other Castes	17	25	13	40.63
Total		68	100	32	100

Source: Field data.

7.2 Literacy

Education promotes knowledge and helps the people to increase their productive skills and their standards of living. In other words though providing education human development is possible to a great extent. Hence, government has taken measures to educate even adults though adult literacy

programme.

Table 3 presents the literacy status of the sample households. The illiteracy rate is 37 per cent in agricultural labours and it is 32 per cent in marginal farmers. Similarly in each category illiteracy is more among females than males. For example, in agricultural labours, 28 per cent of males 47 per cent females, 18 per cent of marginal farmers but only 5 per cent of agricultural labourers possessed higher education. In brief the literacy rate is more in marginal farmers than agricultural labours. Similarly males educated well than females in both categories of households.

Table 3
Literacy Status of the Sample Households Population

S1.No.	Education	Agricultural Labour			Marginal Farmer		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	Illiteracy	38 (28)	60 (47)	98 (37)	16 (23)	25 (42)	41 (31)
2	Primary Education	48 (36)	38 (29)	86 (33)	21 (30)	15 (25)	36 (28)
3	Secondary Education	36 (27)	29 (22)	65 (25)	20 (28)	10 (17)	30 (23)
4	Higher Education	12 (9)	2 (2)	14 (5)	14 (19)	9 (16)	23 (18)
Total		134 (100)	129 (100)	263 (100)	71 (100)	59 (100)	130 (100)

Source: Field data

Note: Figure in parentheses denote percentage to total

7.3 NATURE OF HOUSES OWNED

As shown in table 4, in the mandal rural people are accommodated in three types of houses namely thatched, pucca and stone slab and the stone slab houses are traditional in Western mandal of the district. Thatched houses are constructed by the poor as well as middle class people. Now, under government housing programs like Indiramma gruham, poor people owned mostly pucca houses. In the mandal 75 per cent of agricultural labours and 94 per cent of marginal farmers owned pucca houses, of which 86 per cent of the pucca houses of agricultural labours are constructed with government assistance.

Whereas only 60 per cent of pucca houses of marginal farmers are constructed with government assistance. This tendency reveals that comparatively the poor agricultural of labours benefited more under government housing scheme.

Table 4
Types of Houses owned by sample households

Agricultural Labours					Marginal Farmers		
Sl.No.	House of the Type	Own	Govt.	Total	Own	Govt.	Total
1	Thatched	12	-	12 (17.65)	-	-	-
2	Pucca	7	44	51 (75)	12	18	30 (93.75)
3	Stones slab	3	2	(7.35)		1	2 (6.25)
Total		22	46	68 (100)	13	19	32 (100)

Source: Field data

Note: Figures in parenthesis denote percentage to total

7.4 CROPPING PATTERNS

Cropping pattern is determined in general by agro-climate conditions, type of irrigation and size of land holding. In this mandal sample households are growing paddy, groundnut, sugarcane and mangoes depending on irrigation facilities and size of land holding. Under tanks, naturally farmers grow paddy and under wells sugarcane is grown. The land holding agricultural labours used 43 per cent of their land to groundnut cultivation and 33 per cent for mango crop. With available little irrigation facilities they are growing paddy in 17 per cent of their land and remaining 6 per cent land is used for sugarcane.

Though agricultural labour and marginal farmers allotted one third of their land for mango gardens, there is considerable difference in case of other crops as shown in table 5. For example, marginal farmers are growing sugarcane and paddy in 26 per cent and 23 per cent of their land respectively. The allotment of land for the two above crops is quite less in case of agricultural labour.

Table 5
Cropping pattern among sample agricultural labours and marginal Farmer

Agricultural labours				Marginal farmers	
Sl. No.	Crop	Gross cropped area	Percentage	Gross cropped area	Percentage
1	Paddy	6.05	17.28	14.90	22.33
2	Groundnut	15	42.86	11.55	17.31
3	Sugarcane	2.20	6.28	17.25	25.87
4	Mangoes	11.75	33.58	23	34.49
Total		35	100	66.7	100

Source: Field data

7.5 PARTICULARS OF HOUSEHOLD ASSETS

The possession of household assets by a family indicates the level of its economic and cultural advancement as well as social status. Earlier even fan, scooter became luxury items in rural areas. But when standards of living increase cultural advancement proceeds and all these become basic necessities. Basing on the list of items owned by a household and its value, one can judge ones socio-economic status.

As shown in table, 6 in 37 per cent have T.V sets and 51 per cent have fans. The negligible households have cycles or scooters which are more need for transport. The average value of household assets accounts to only Rs.2981. Whereas the marginal farmers are concerned, two-third have T.V. sets, 88 per cent have fans and 6 per cent have scooters. The average household asset value of marginal farmer is Rs.3 155. None have land/cell phones among these two categories of households. However marginal farmers owned more valuables than agricultural labours.

The table further reveals that majority of agricultural labour households (63 per cent) did not own TV sets or other items. But comparatively more marginal form households owned TV sets and fans.

Table 6
Particulars of Household Assets of sample Agricultural labour and Marginal farmer Households

Agricultural Labours			Marginal Farmers	
Name of Asset	No.of House holds	Average value (Rs.)	No.of House holds	Average value (Rs.)
TV	25 (37)	5140	21 (66)	6956.39
Radio	4 (5)	537.5	7 (22)	514.29
Cycle	3 (4)	766.6	10 (31)	770
Fan	35 (51)	591.4	32 (88)	606.5
Scooter	2 (3)	22000	2 (6)	28500
Asset average value	-	(2864.5)	-	3155.

Source: Field Data

Note: Figures parenthesis percentage to sample households.

7.8 INCOME

In rural areas agricultural labours as well as other households earn income from various sources. The sample marginal farmers and agricultural labours, as shown in table 7, are earning income mainly four sources, i.e., wage, live stock, government, NREGP and agriculture. The proposition income of each source varies from one category to the other. The agricultural labours main source of income is wage earnings (61.5%). But the main source of income for marginal farmer is 62 per cent agricultural income. Income from live stock is inproportions to livestock holdings. Marginal farmer have more access to rare livestock than agricultural labours. Thus agricultural labours earn only 13 per cent of their income from livestock, whereas marginal farmers earn 28 per cent. Government employment programme is more

useful to agricultural labours since they are earning 24 per cent of their income under this scheme where marginal farmers are earning only 3 per cent in the same scheme. Thus the composition of income is quite different from marginal farmers to agricultural labours among sample households in Chinnagottigallu mandal. The average household income of the agricultural labours is Rs.25,672 which is considerably lower than marginal farmers income of Rs.34,198. The table further shows that economic conditions of marginal farmers are somewhat better than agricultural labours.

Table 7
Income composition of sample Agricultural labour and Marginal farmers
(Annual income in Rs)

Agricultural Labours			Marginal Farmers
Solano	Source of Income	Income	Income
1	Livestock	2,27,500(13.03)	3,08,900(28.22)
2	Wage Income	9,52,630(54.60)	67,400(6.15)
3	Govt. NREGP	4,14,700(23.76)	39,500(3.60)
4	Agriculture	1,50,900(8.64)	6,78,550(62.01)
Total		1745730 (100)	1094350 (100)

Source: Field data

8. Income distribution among sample householders

Though sample households are earning broadly from four sources as shown in earlier table 8 i.e., livestock, wage income, agricultural income and NREGP income, the NREGP component plays an important role in the lives of poor labour households since it assured definite income for every year irrespective of fluctuations in agricultural employment.

Table 8
Income distribution among Agricultural Labour and Marginal farmers

Sl. No.	Income (in Rs)	Agricultural Labours		Marginal Farmers	
		Including NREGP No. of house holds	Excluding NREGP No. of households	Including NREGP No. of house holds	Excluding NREGP No. of households
1	0-12000	4 (5.89)	15 (22.05)	2(6.25)	3(9.37)
2	12000-24000	36 (52.95)	35 (51.48)	10 (31.25)	10(31.25)
3	24000-36000	14 (20.58)	8(11.76)	6(18.75)	7(21.88)
4	36000 And Above	14 (20.58)	10(14.71)	14 (43.75)	12(37.5)

Source : Field dada

An attempt is made to analyse the impact of NREGP income on households' income of both agricultural labours and marginal farmers and the results are presented in the table 8. For this number of households at different ranges of income is presented by including NREGP income as well as excluding NREGP income.

This analysis denotes that in absence of NREGP, the income of 73 per cent of agricultural labour households belongs the poverty level of income, i.e., Rs.24000 and below. But if NREGP income is

included, the number of poor households has come down to 59 per cent. This fact indicates the need to further continue the NREGP scheme to protect the poor agricultural labour from the clutches of poverty. NREGP income acts as safety net to keep the poor above poverty line.

The table also reveals the impart of NREGP scheme on marginal farmer households. Since small proportion of marginal farmers is availing NREGP income the impact of NREGP income is not significant.

8. POVERTY AMONG AGRICULTURAL LABOURS AND MARGINAL FARMERS

Government determined poverty line for a family with average 5 members and with the income of Rs.24, 000 per year to identify the poor for different welfare schemes. Accordingly the poverty line for an individual is set as Rs.400 per month. In other words the persons whose income is less than Rs.400 are considered as poor.

Table 9 presents the per capita income distribution between agricultural labour and marginal farmers. It also presents per capita income of individuals and households under two heads, i.e., including NREGP income and excluding NREGP income. The table reveals that with NREGP income 30 per cent of agricultural labours and 15 per cent of marginal farmers are in poverty, with income less than Rs.400. But after excluding NREGP income the numbers of poor among agricultural labours increased from 30 per cent to 57 per cent whereas same 15 per cent of marginal farmers are poor before and after excluding NREGP income.

Table 9

Distribution of monthly per capita income of the sample Agricultural labours and Marginal farmers

Sl. No.	Income Rs.	Agricultural Labours				Marginal Farmers			
		Including NREGP		Excluding NREGP		Including NREGP		Excluding NREGP	
		No. of Households	Pers ons	No. of Households	Pers ons	No. of Households	Pers ons	No. of Households	Pers ons
1	Upto -400	18	80	36	150	6	26	6	26
2	400-800	34	132	23	79	16	66	15	62
3	800-1200	14	46	8	30	8	31	9	35
4	1200 and above	2	5	1	4	2	7	2	7
	Total	68	263	68	263	32	130	39	130

Source: Field data.

CONCLUSION

The caste composition of marginal farmers and agricultural labours are entirely different. Naturally average sizes of land holdings as well as live stock holdings are larger for marginal farmers than agricultural labours. But average value of households' assets of marginal farmers and agricultural labours is almost equal. The marginal farmers work participation is more than agricultural since marginal farmers are engaging more in self employment. Agricultural labours participation in wage employment is lot more than marginal farmers. Agricultural labours are working more days under NREGP program compared to marginal farmers. Similarly there is much variation in income of marginal farmers and agricultural labours. Agricultural labour are earning 54 per cent of their income through agricultural wages and 23 per cent under NREGP. But marginal farmers earn nearly two-thirds of income from agricultural and 28 per cent from livestock. Naturally the average income of marginal farmer household is Rs.8, 526 more than agricultural labour household. Due to this, incidence of poverty among marginal farmers is 15 per cent whereas it is 30 per cent for agricultural labours.

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