



A REVIEW PAPER ON AGRICULTURE LABOUR IN INDIA

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Abstract

Agriculture is the backbone of Indian economy and engine of overall development of the country. Skilled and unskilled labour plays an important role in the functioning of this very basic industry of the nation. With this view an attempt has made in this paper to study the overall scenario of the laborers engage in this field. Secondary data obtained from socio economic abstract and census handbook is utilized for the study. The paper concludes that, there is an urgent need to take adequate steps to tackle the problem of agricultural labour shortage.

Key words: Agriculture, Labour, Economy.

INTRODUCTION:

Agriculture provides employment to not only the adult males of households but also to women on the households. Women work extensively in production of major grains and millets, in land preparation, seed selection and seedling production, sowing, applying manure, weeding, transplanting, threshing, winnowing and harvesting. Agriculture plays a significant role in overall socio-economic development. Therefore, fostering rapid, sustained and broad-based growth in agriculture remains key priority for the country. With the decreasing labour force in agriculture, increasing yield or productivity is the key to growth, which has to be accelerated. Shortage of labour and finding solutions thereof should become a major focus. India's crop yields are yet only 30% to 60% of the best crop yields achievable in the farms of developed as well as other developing countries. Improved seed varieties, widespread extension services and farm mechanization remain three critical areas of intervention and focus.

OBJECTIVES:

- To study the agriculture and its importance in the Indian economy.
- The review the state wise and crop wise effect of agriculture labour availability.

AGRICULTURE AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE INDIAN ECONOMY:

The importance of agriculture can never be over-stated. Although the share of agriculture in India's GDP has been declining, yet agriculture and its allied sectors like forestry and fishing (but not including mining and quarrying) contributes nearly 14% to India's GDP, accounts for about 11% of our exports, and supports half of our population's livelihood, besides also being the source of raw material for a large number of industries. Accelerating to a higher agriculture growth rate is critical for a variety of reasons – attaining food security, achieving an overall 8% growth rate in GDP as envisaged in the 12th Five year plan and enhancing rural income, which presently is abysmally low. Irrespective of the relative contribution, the average growth rate in the agriculture sector in the last five years till 2013- 14 (taking into account the advance estimates for 2013-14) has been 4.1%. The Twelfth Five Year Plan also envisages a similar growth rate. Indian agriculture has marked its presence at the global level. India is world's largest producer of milk, pulses and second largest producer of rice, wheat, fruits, vegetables, sugarcane. India's food grain production crossed 250 million tonnes during the year 2011-12. Rice production crossed 100 million tonnes and wheat production crossed 90 million tonnes. As of 2011, India's arable land area of 159.7 million hectares (394.6 million acres) is the second largest in the world, after the United States. Its gross irrigated crop area of 82.6 million hectares (215.6 million acres) is the largest in the world. Despite its declining relative share in GDP, several innovative steps and measures are being undertaken and the sector has done reasonably in the last few years. However, one of the major bottlenecks that has emerged and



can become an insurmountable problem in the foreseeable future is the issue of shortage of agricultural labour.

Agricultural Workforce: An Overview Employment data is generated from the National Sample Survey Organization's (NSSO) Rounds on employment and unemployment. Data used pertains to the 55th Round (1999-2000), 61st Round (2004-05), 66th Round (2009-10), and the 68th Round (2011-12). Data shows that India's overall employment growth since 2004-05 has been anemic. At an average, only around 2 million people were added to the workforce since 2004-05 compared to around 12 million people that were added to the workforce every year as an average between 1999-00 and 2004-05. However, the addition to non-agricultural employment has actually been around 6 million people every year since 2004-05, as the workforce employed in agriculture had started declining in absolute numbers and consistently so, since then. The size of the workforce in agriculture declined by around 30.57 million between 2004-05 and 2011-12, although the size of the total workforce increased. This is the first such period when a reduction in absolute numbers has been reported in agriculture. It has been observed that over time that as economies progress and move towards development, workforce tends to move away from primary sectors of the economy. Consistent with this empirical evidence observed worldwide, even in India, the percentage of people employed in agriculture has been consistently declining, from around 60% in 1999-00 to 49% in 2011-12.

State Wise and Crop Wise effect of Agriculture Labour Availability:

This reduction is a cumulative effect of similar reductions across all major states. Close to 79% of this reduction has been contributed by the five states only - Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal, Bihar and Rajasthan while the remaining states constitute the rest 21%.

An analysis across states shows that for Kerala, Uttarakhand, Karnataka etc, even though the absolute magnitude of reduction is not large, it forms a substantial share of the agricultural workforce these states had in 2004-05. The analysis clearly highlights that between 2004-05 and 2011-12, a large percentage of the agricultural workforce across states moved away from agriculture.

Conclusion:

Key stakeholders like farmers, industry and government need to take adequate steps to tackle the problem of labour shortage. Indian labourers are 4 times more productive in industry and 6 times more productive in services as compared to agriculture.

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