



## PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR IN INDIA

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### INTRODUCTION

In today's world the agricultural sector employs half of the world's labour force with an estimated 1.3 billion workers active in agricultural production worldwide. The majority of agricultural workers are found in developing countries. A great majority are small scale farmers. They have been more often victims rather than beneficiaries of the green revolution, the technological development and the globalization trends which characterized the 20th century.

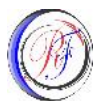
Agriculture is one of the three most hazardous sectors of activity, both in industrialized and developing countries. According to estimates from the International Labour Office (ILO), some 170,000 agricultural workers are killed each year. This means that workers in agriculture run at least twice the risk of dying on the job as compared with workers in other sectors. Agricultural mortality rates have remained consistently high in the last decade as compared with other sectors, where fatal accident rates have decreased. Millions of agricultural workers are seriously injured in workplace accidents with agricultural machinery or poisoned by pesticides and other agrochemicals. Furthermore, due to the widespread under-reporting of deaths, injuries and occupational diseases in agriculture, the real picture of the occupational health and safety of farm workers is likely to be worse than what official statistics indicate.

### **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. According to the National Commission on Labour "an agricultural labourer is one who is basically unskilled and unorganised and has little for its livelihood, other than personal labour." Thus, persons whose main source of income is wage, employment fall in this category. Mishra and Puri have stated that "All those persons who derive a major part of their income as payment for work performed on the farms of others can be designated as agricultural workers. For a major part of the year they should work on the land of the others on wages."<sup>1</sup>

### **Information Sources, Precaution and Handling of Pesticides:**

It was observed that retail shop owners/ agricultural marketing agents were the key source of information regarding usage of pesticides (55 per cent). However, 43 per cent of labourers consulted with fellow labourers about the use of pesticide and only 21 per cent of labourers considered government officials (agricultural extension workers) as their source of information. This highlights the need for redesigning and refocusing the training and extension programme targeting the agricultural labourers.

**Table 1: Information Sources About Proper Pesticide Usage**

Sr.No.	Sources of Information	Yes	No	Total
1	The retail shop owners	55	45	100
2	Agricultural marketing agents	55	45	100
3	Fellow labourers	43	57	100
4	Govt./agricultural officials	21	79	100
5	Land owner	9	81	100

**Protective Measures During Pesticides Use; the Precaution and Handling of Pesticides:**

Handling of concentrated pesticide formulation and application of diluted formulation requires use of appropriate personal protection equipment as a precaution against pesticide exposure. This would include the use of gloves, masks, protective clothes, personal hygiene, appropriate footwear, head gear etc., as indicated in the respective pesticide labels.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 2: Protective Measures During Pesticides Use**

Sr. No.	Protective measures	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Did you take any personal protective Precautions while using pesticides?	12	88
2	Did you cocktail of different kinds of pesticides	58	42
3	Did you use scarf/mask during pesticide spraying?	30	70
4	Did you use bare hands to mix pesticides?	27	73
5	5 Did you use gloves while using pesticides?	3	97
6	Did you chew tobacco /gutkha or smoke while spraying pesticides?	60	40

**CONCLUSION:**

- 1) The present review found that illiteracy, poverty, capitalistic relationship of production, lack of awareness and training often force agricultural labourers to use heavy doses of pesticides in agriculture.
- 2) The agricultural labourers are majorly unskilled so they should be trained and “skilled ” by government agricultural department, Manufacturers of fertilizers and pesticides, NGOs etc.
- 3) The medical camps for agricultural labourers should be organised periodically.
- 4) They should have proper and in time payments, ONLINE Payments would be the best mode.

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