

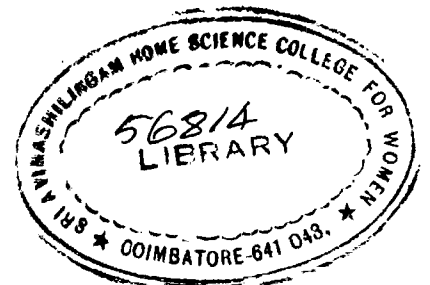
**PROFILE OF AGRICULTURAL WOMEN LABOURERS IN
COIMBATORE DISTRICT**

By

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS
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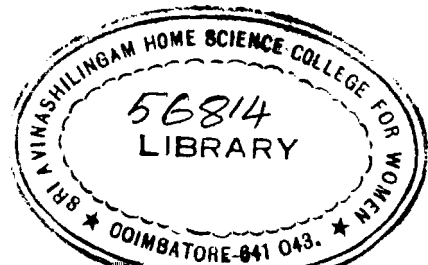
A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture has been termed the mother of all industries and the maintainer of human life, heading all sciences and arts, leading to civilization and progress. In India nearly half of the national income is derived from agriculture thus it constitutes the very base of our national economy, (Shankar, 1982).

Agriculture provides employment and work for living to an overwhelming majority of the Indian masses. Almost every Indian is employed directly or indirectly in agriculture with 72.5 per cent of the working population being engaged in agriculture (Agrawal, 1978).

The Census of India describes an agricultural labourer as a person who works in another persons land only as a labourer for wages in cash, kind or share without exercising any supervision or direction in cultivation, (Sankaran, 1981). The National Commission on Labour regards agricultural labourer as one who is basically unskilled and unorganised and has nothing but physical labour to contribute. As such, the major part of the income of such a worker is derived from wages

for work on land. The 'Casual labourers' are those who are generally employed on the daily wages (Lakhani, 1961 and Agrawal, 1978).

Between 1971 and 1981 there has been a fall in the proportion of agricultural labourers in the population which is offset to a considerable degree by the increase in the proportion of other workers. In the case of female workers the proportion of agricultural labourers in the population increased from 7.39 per cent to 8.17 per cent between 1971 and 1981 and there has been an increase among female workers classified as other workers, (Census of India, 1981 and Achanta, 1982).

The Rural Labour Enquiry (RLE) conducted in 1974-75 estimated that there were about 25 million rural labour households in the country, of which about 21 million were agricultural labour households. Over 50 per cent of the agricultural labourers did not have any land base (Vyas and Namboodiri, 1981).

Women constitute half the world's population, perform nearly two-third of its work hours, receive one-tenth of world's income and own less than one hundredth of the world's property (United Nation's Report, 1980).

Women's rôle in agriculture is not less important than men's. Women are generally exempted from doing certain jobs such as ploughing, cutting and falling of trees, etc. But in tribal societies, women generally do most of these jobs too (Saikia, 1981). Among backward rural communities from which agricultural labourers are drawn it is common for adult women in a household to work for wages out of sheer economic activity (Sachdeva, 1961). Communitywise, women's participation in agriculture is the highest among the tribes and then among the scheduled castes (Mazumdar, 1975).

Since the community consists of family as units, the standard of living of the community depends on the level of living attained by each family. This level is determined by the way the woman who runs the home, the type of food she prepares, the degree of knowledge, skill and care she brings to bring upon her duties and responsibilities as the mistress of the family. The most significant role which the woman plays is as wife and mother. Secondly, the village woman is not only a member of her family but also the village community. Thirdly, in the village community, particularly in an agricultural community, the village woman is also a producer and a wage earner. Lastly, a woman is

an individual in her own right (Lam, 1972). Farm women are almost always consulted in making decisions with regard to various farm operations like getting new seeds, selecting crops, getting fertilizers and pesticides, appointing labourers (Devadas, et al, 1972).

The problem of agricultural labour has assumed great urgency in India. These landless agricultural labourers have been working in subhuman conditions for centuries and they have always been exploited and ill-treated by the landed gentry (Sankaran, 1981). During the period 1972-73 to 1977-78, the number of days for which employment was available for rural labourers in India declined by 10 per cent for men, 7.5 per cent for women and 5 per cent for children (Vyas and Namboodiri, 1981).

In order to find out the living conditions, economic conditions and status of agricultural women labourers, this study on 'the profile of agricultural women labourers' was taken up by the investigator with the following objectives: To

1. analyse the profile of agricultural women labourers in terms of socio-personal and economic characters associated with them,

ii. find out the seasonal/off seasonal farm activities and household activities of agricultural women labourer,

and iii. assess the time expenditure pattern of agricultural women labourers on household work and gainful employment.

II REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature of the study is done on the following headings:

- A. Agriculture in the national economy
- B. Women as agricultural labourers, and
- C. Programmes for agricultural labourers.

A. Agriculture in the National Economy

Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy and prosperity of agriculture can also largely stand for her prosperity (Datt and Sundaram, 1982). A publication of Manrama (1980) states that agriculture which accounts for about 48 per cent of the national income in the kingpin of the national economy. Sain (1980) indicates that while taking an overall view of performance of agriculture, it appears that crop production has barely managed to keep abreast of the rate of growth of population.

In India, the total food grains production rose from around 61 million tonnes in 1949-50 to 125.6 million tonnes in 1977-78. Production of cereals rose from around 51 million tonnes in 1949-50 to 113.3 million tonnes in 1977-78. Such large increases in India were due to both area increases as well as to higher yields per unit area,

the latter almost solely, the function of the Green Revolution, (Rath, 1979). Singh (1980) reveals that, modern technology variant is observed to be primarily responsible for changes in agricultural productivity while traditional technology variant is mainly associated with changes in resource structure.

Francis (1980) holds that development of many developing countries has been retarded due to the low rate of productive assets. Main factors responsible for the level of capital formation in agriculture in the low income countries are: low levels of income and savings, small size of land holdings, the existing system of land tenure, risk and uncertainties, technological obstacles and ineffective institutional facilities. Kaneda (1980) expresses that the experience of India's economy in recent years has demonstrated quite convincingly that a stable and buoyant agricultural growth is the sine quanon of a strong performance in other sector of the economy.

B. Women as agricultural labourers

Report on 'The Second Agricultural Labour Enquiry' (1951-57) revealed that 'A person was considered as an agricultural labourer if he followed any one or more

of the agricultural operations like farming - including the cultivation and the tillage of the soil, dairy farming, the production, cultivation, growing and harvesting of any horticultural commodity, the raising of livestock - bees or poultry and any practice performed on a farm as incidental to or in conjunction with the farm operations in the capacity of a labourer on hire or on exchange whether paid in cash, in kind or partly in cash or partly in kind.

Sandyopadhyay (1975) reveals that according to Census of India 1971, the number of agricultural labourers was 47-48 million which is 27 per cent of the total population of workers. Luthra (1975) states that in India, by far the largest number of working women are in rural areas engaged in farming operations either as cultivators or as agricultural labour. According to the 1971 census, 28 per cent of the total number of women workers were engaged as cultivators and another 46 per cent as agricultural labourers. Hence they formed 74 per cent of the total working population.

Mazumdar (1975) states that the employment of women in the organised sector of the economy has been increasing at a faster rate than the increase in the total employment.

The number of women agricultural labourers has also been increased steadily from 1.4 crores in 1951 to 1.5 crores in 1971.

Bishnoi (1966) conducted a study of man power utilization in a village in Rajasthan. In his study he found that in about 13.6 per cent of the households and 16.2 per cent of the total population had labour as the main source of their families income. The proportion of males to females among the labourers in the main occupation was 36 to 6. This was mainly because there was less demand for female labour than for male labour and a lesser number of women were willing to offer themselves for wage employment.

Traditionally women were expected to work at home and help her husband, if possible in whatever pursuit he followed for maintaining himself and his family. But there is a shift in the structure of work since the industrial revolution and hence the concept of work has changed (Hate, 1971).

In agrarian societies work is more often regarded as a hardship than as a privilege. It is not true that women in India have always been confined to their

homes. In rural India a substantial number of them work in the fields as agricultural labourers, and their work is invariably of the most onerous and arduous kind. The figures representing the proportion of cultivators and of agricultural labourers in the total agricultural work force show women constitute a large though varying proportion of agricultural labourers in the different parts of the country. Working as an agricultural labourer in a field is very different from working in an office as a secretary or a receptionist. So it is understandable too that among agriculturists a community which seeks to raise its social status should try first and foremost to ensure that its women do not work at jobs which are ill-paid and universally regarded as demeaning (Beteille, 1975).

Gujral (1976) states that more than 80 per cent of Indian women live in rural areas and they work like slaves in their homes and fields yet only 13 per cent are classified as being gainfully employed. Of all the women workers in India, 89 per cent are in rural areas and 11 per cent in urban areas.

Daily time expenditure of woman labourer

According to 1955 estimates from the international labour organization 26.4 per cent of the female population in the work force and 70 per cent of the female population lives and works in the rural area on a typical day in rural India. When translating into women days it means that in a family of six in rural India, one woman day is spent in gathering and sorting fuel, one woman day in cooking and processing food, half a woman day in fetching and transporting water, two women days in farm work in season, one woman day in caring of the well being of the family, half a woman day in craft, kitchen gardening, cleaning and other activities everyday (Srinivasan, 1981).

A study conducted by Bhatnagar (1982) in village Dhinkli, Panchayat Samiti, Badgaon of Udaipur district in Rajasthan state revealed that on an average 9 hours were spent by farm women in completing the household chores daily. Maximum time (3 hours) was spent on cooking and serving food. A considerable time (2 hours) taken away in bringing drinking water, very little time ($\frac{1}{2}$ hour) was given for the care of children. The weekly

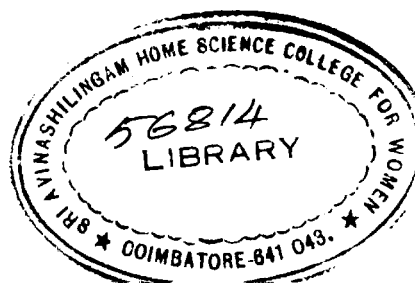
work done included grinding, flours, churning milk and washing clothes. These jobs were done once or twice a week. The average time spent on these activities was 5 hours per week. It had been reported that the work in agriculture was seasonal. During the peak season of sowing and harvesting, the rural women spent 8 to 9 hours in the field and 2 to 3 hours during ordinary days. About 3 hours were spent in irrigation and this was done 4 to 5 times in one season. Apart from these they were taking care of cattle, cleaning of cattle and cattle shed, feeding the cattle, milking etc. The study revealed that maximum time of a rural woman in household was spent in kitchen in preparing and serving food and cleaning the utensils which accounts to 4 hours daily.

Earnings of farm workers

Government of India (1981) reports that according to 1971 census agricultural labourers in India numbered 4.75 crores representing 26.33 per cent of the total work force in the country. The average annual income of an agricultural labour household in India during 1950-51 was Rs.447/- during 1956-57 it fell to Rs.437.47 but increased to Rs.660.19 during 1963-64 and again increased

significantly to Rs.1,671/- during 1974-75. The 25th round of the National Sample Survey has revealed that during the period July 1970 to June 1971, the average earnings as wages per man day for the country as a whole were Rs.2.03 for the landless agricultural labourer.

Singh (1972) conducted a study about "labour utilisation and earnings of farm workers" revealed that in agriculture, the busy seasons are followed by the slack seasons and the labour utilisation in these two seasons differs considerably. The labour days are computed at the rate of 8 man hours a day. The distinction between male and female worker is made because of differences in their labour utilisation. A female worker is engaged in light farm operations such as weeding, transplantation and harvesting of crops. Wages are paid mostly in kind and in some cases in cash. The wage rate for male labourer is higher than that of female labourer. The daily wage rate for casual labour is higher than that of permanent labourers. The female labourers are casual in the sense that they are not attached to certain farms. All kinds of farm labourers get 1.64 kg. of coarse grains including paddy or



1.07 kg. of rice or wheat as daily wage rate. Computed at the village price, the wage rates comes to Rs.2.50 for permanent male labourer and Rs.2.00 for casual male labourer and Rs.1.25 for female labourer. These wage rates apply to all the farm operations except harvesting. The analysis shows that the problem of rural employment is of surplus labour and not of surplus workers while farm labourers get full day work in the busy season, there exists a considerable degree of under utilisation of their labour in the slack season. The under utilisation of labour and low earnings of farm workers are the twin problems of the rural areas. Both the problems canbe tackled by the introduction of new farm technology. The diversification of agricultural activities can also generate additional sources of labour employment and earning for the farm workers.

Problems of agricultural labourers

Nair (1981) indicates that 94 per cent of the women workers in India are engaged in the unorganised sector of the economy. Agricultural labour and cultivation are the main fields of the economic activity of women. The

primary sector provides work to about 83 per cent of women and 51 per cent of them work as agricultural labourers. In agriculture the women labour suffer from sporadic and seasonal employment and also from disparities and discrimination in wages. Women are generally employed in sowing, weeding, transplanting, winnowing, crushing and harvesting, all jobs rated as less skilled. The women workers in India's villages are thus poor, socially insulated, ill-fed, ill-clothed, malnourished, ill-housed, ill-educated, ill-organised and in a state of permanent indebtedness. They are too weak to rebel because of their poverty, ignorance and illiteracy and the employers know how to loop-holes in legislation.

Madan (1981) in his study states that the economic and social status of millions of agricultural labourers continues to be poor. The fact that majority of them are still drawn from the weaker sections of the community and are perhaps among the poorest in the company is evident from the revelations of the Rural Labour Enquiry Report (1974-75) regarding average earnings of wages per man day for agricultural labour households.

Chauhan (1981) conducted a study in District Ghaziabad (U.P.) "Indebtedness among agricultural

labourers" stated that about 58 per cent of the total agricultural labour households were under debt. Average debt per family and per indebted family were Rs.893.73 and Rs.1,540.69 respectively. About 55 per cent of the total debts were owed to professional money lenders while the share in the total debts of other non-institutional agencies was about 25 per cent. It was found that about 85 per cent of the total debts incurred by the agricultural labour households were for meeting their consumption needs and socio-religious obligations. About 70 per cent of the indebted households were indebted upto 3 years period and the maximum indebted families were within the debt range of Rs.500 to 1000.

Indian Council of Social Science Research (1979) conducted a study on 'The conditions of Agricultural Labourer in Tamil Nadu' finds that, higher agricultural production does not necessarily ensure better socio-economic environment for agricultural labourers. The wet and dry nature of agricultural land may not have any impact whatever on the level of employment and wages of agricultural labourers. The presence or absence of

unionization will have truly great impact on wages and working conditions of agricultural labourers. The study revealed clearly the severe under employment position of agricultural labourers of the total 854 workers 75.1 per cent were severely under employed. Those who were having work for less than 208 days was 96 among women and 54 among men. For certain operations like harvesting, wages were paid only in kind. It was found that cash wages were higher than wages in kind. In the case of female workers, there was in fact no difference between cash wages and kind wages. Hence, evolving a proper wage structure based exclusively on either cash wage or kind wage was immaterial.

Sharma, Singh and Gangwar (1974) conducted a study on employment, wages and mobility of rural labour of Haryana. It was revealed that majority of the labour force was employed for less than 120 days during the 6 months under reference. About 35 per cent and 60 per cent of agricultural workers were under employed in Karnal and Mahendragar districts respectively.

Sharma and Ratan Singh (1970) shows that rural women participate in larger proportions in four farm

operations i.e. seed storages, winnowing, care of animals and harvesting in comparing to others. It has been found that women belonging to middle age group, having no formal education, belonging to lower caste, having frequent urban contacts, possessing small land holdings participated in farm operations in larger proportions than others. Types of family and extent of social participation do not affect participation in farm operations.

Horowitz, and Kishwar (1982) conducted a study on 'The unequal deal-women's conditions and family life among Agricultural Labourers and Small Farmers' in a Punjab village. It was observed that both the peasant cultivator and the agricultural labour are better off than their counterparts in most other areas. And yet most of them live in poverty and many of the agricultural labourers remain heavily indebted to the landlords. But the poverty is clearly more severe for the women of the family. Women eat much less than men, and they eat last in the family. Employment opportunities for them in the midst of increasing agricultural production continue to be severely limited instead of expanding. When they get work it is on far more

disadvantageous terms than for men. The women are not even to decide for themselves when and with whom they can seek paid employment. The women from both these groups put in 15 to 16 hours of arduous work a day. But they receive less than adequate nourishment and care. This seems to have a rather disastrous effect on their health, especially during periods of pregnancy and breast feeding.

Minimum wages

Rama Rao (1980) in his analysis on 'Minimum wages', Legislation for Agricultural Labourers in Andhra Pradesh' reveals that the provisions of minimum wages legislation for agricultural labourers remained dead letter. The minimum wages in force are invariably found to be lower than the prevailing market wages. The reasons for this are to be found in delays in initiating measures by the Government to revise the minimum wages periodically. Often the relative bargaining strength of the representatives of the employers and workers influences the levels of wages fixed. The administrative machinery set up for enforcement of the legislation is found inadequate to the task. Lack of effective organisation of labourers does not embolden them to prefer claims against the powerful employer community.

Alexander (1980) in his study on 'Fixing maximum wage for farm labourers stated that, a better strategy suggested is to link the minimum wages with an employment guarantee and rural development programme, assuring jobs at the minimum wages to willing workers as is attempted to be done in Maharashtra. Once the demand for labour at minimum wage is assured, it can be expected that the prevailing wage rates in the surrounding areas will not fall below it. This requires the integration of the implementation of the minimum wages programme with a plan for rural development.

The article from Kurukshetra (1980) about bonded labour reports that the surveys conducted by the Gandhi Peace Foundation in collaboration with National Institute of Labour and the other by the National Sample Survey organisation on the Department of Statistics, Government of India (1980) suggested a number of necessary steps for the rehabilitation of the bonded labour. They are: Immediate rehabilitation within a time bound plan, allotment of house site, distribution of land for cultivation, marginal lands and reserve forest to group beneficiaries, where land cannot be allotted, some other

work for livelihood be provided. An employment guarantee scheme be adopted by the State Governments, bonded labour be introduced to modernization in agriculture, bonded labour rehabilitation schemes should suit their conditions and aptitudes and training of bonded labour for skill improvement.

The Tamil Nadu Government has revised the minimum wages of agricultural labourers in the State with effect from April 5, 1983. The wages have been revised on the basis of the recommendations of the Hari Bhaskar Committee, which submitted its report on January 10, 1983. The revised wages of agricultural labourers are given below:

S.No.	Class of employee	Revised wages/day	Old wages/day
1.	Employees engaged in ploughing with bullocks and ploughs supplied by him.	Rs.18/-	Rs.12/-
2.	Employees engaged in ploughing without bullocks and ploughs not supplied to him	Rs.11/-	Rs.7/-
3.	Employees engaged in harvest of paddy (reaping, carrying to threshing, winnowing, measuring and bagging)	Rs.11/- or cash value of the workers' share in one eighth of the gross yield of produce whichever is higher	Rs.7/- or cash value of the workers' share in one eighth of the gross yield of produce whichever is higher
4.	Employees engaged in harvest of crops other than paddy	Rs.11/-	Rs.7/-
5.	Employees engaged in sowing, plucking of seedlings, replanting of seedlings or weeding	Rs.8/-	Rs.5/-
6.	Employees engaged in other agricultural operations (including trimming bunds and fields, bee-keeping, poultry farming, dairy farming and climbing trees)	Rs.10/-	Rs.7/-

The Government has also fixed the number of working hours for agricultural labourers except those engaged in ploughing is seven hours and for those engaged in ploughing, it is five hours. Besides for the first time, the Government has fixed monthly wage for attached labourers/resident labourers (pannaiyal) at Rs.210/- per month (Indian Express, 1983).

C. Programmes for agricultural labourers

Barnala (1979) indicates that the new approach of Integrated Rural Development has to be geared to fulfil the commitment of the present Government to provide full employment within the next ten years. Roy (1979) says that as part of the overall strategy of helping weaker sections of population through special programmes, agricultural labourers were given special assistance.

Rao (1977) suggested that landless labourers should be placed in a position where their wages would give them an income that brings them above the poverty line instead of keeping their number at a level which keeps them perpetually below the poverty line which is defined as the mid point of the monthly per capita expenditure of Rs.75/- in rural areas and Rs.88/-

in urban areas. For dealing with surplus agricultural labourers we devise programmes of full employment or self-employment activity in the non-agricultural field that would speed up the process of industrialisation and give a more balanced structure to the Indian Economy.

Minimum Wages Act of 1948 for agricultural workers have been fixed in all the States and Union Territories, where such wages have so far been fixed in some specified areas (Ghosh, 1970). A better strategy suggested is to link the minimum wages with an employment guarantee and rural development programmes assuring jobs at the minimum wages to willing worker as is attempted to be done. This requires the integration of the implementation of the minimum wage programme with a plan for rural development (Alexander, 1980).

During the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74), 46 Small Farmers' Development Agencies (SFDA) and 41 Marginal Farmers' and Agricultural Labourers' (MFAL) Projects were initiated in the year 1970, to improve the economic conditions of the weaker sections and generate better self-employment opportunities. In the Fifth Plan all the SFDA/MFAL projects were made composite and each

agency was required to assist small and marginal farmers and agricultural labourers in its area of operation. The number of agencies had increased to 168 in the Fifth Plan (India, 1980).

A study conducted in Tiruchirappalli District by Mariaraj and Sebastian (1981) revealed that, since February 1975 upto March 1978, 82,590 marginal farmers, 62,260 small farmers and 8,584 agricultural labourers totalling 1,53,434 people have been identified under the SFDA/MFAL programme in Tiruchirappalli District. The study also inferred that in two years viz. 1975-76, 1977-78, the identified small and marginal farmers are actually benefitted. In 1978-79, only 334 agricultural labourers are reported to have benefitted.

Sreedharan (1978) opines that the SFDA Project during the past 6 years had been able to cover nearly 11,100 small and marginal farmers and 8,000 agricultural labourers under various schemes. As regards the extension of benefits to the schedule caste people, maximum effort had been made to take the fruits of these developmental schemes to them. Out of 11,000 small/marginal farmers nearly 1,780 (10 per cent) belong to the schedule castes. Similarly among the participants of 8,000 agricultural labourers 1,600 (20 per cent) belong to schedule castes.

Crash Scheme for Rural Employment in 1973-74

spent Rs.43.31 crores in the generation of 1,025.19 lakhs man days of employment. The Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Project (PIREP) in 1972-73 spent Rs.1.18 crores which resulted in the generation of 33.70 lakhs man days of employment. In the year 1973-74 Rs.2.18 crores were spent, resulting in generation of 50.14 lakhs man days of employment (India, 1980).

Food for Work Programme (FWP) during 1979-80 would generate total additional employment to the tune of nearly 100 crores man days. The scheme offers employment to the seasonal unemployed agricultural labour force, helps in securing minimum wages and thereby improve their income s. The programme has proved helpful in reducing the exodus of landless labourers from rural areas to cities in search of livelihood, specially during periods of drought etc. (India, 1980). Now it is called as National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) which has not only made available employment to the villagers in their spare time but, as a result of this durable assets in rural areas have also been created. As a result of this programme, employment of 2133.77 lakh man days could be provided. It is estimated

that this programme would enable the creation of employment of 50 crore man-days per annum (Ram, 1981).

A National Scheme of Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM) is being implemented with effort from August 15, 1979. The main thrust of the scheme is in equipping rural youth belonging to families living below the poverty line. Every year 600 poor families will be provided to term in order to cross poverty line. For 1979-80 an amount of Rs.3.50 crores was provided (Sharma, 1980).

The Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) of the Government of Maharashtra (1979) aimed at substantial increase in employment of the rural unemployed and under-employed. The striking feature noticed in the selected sample study villages under Employment Guarantee Scheme indicated that the employment position of agricultural labourers constituted only 21 per cent of the labour force in E.G.S. works (Tripathy, 1981).

Singh (1981) is of the view that the approach of Integrated Rural Development Programme is to create non-farm employment opportunities to supplement the farmer's income. The core of the programme is creation of additional income and employment with emphasis on the weakest section of the population.

Agrawal (1978) expresses that Intensive Agricultural and Multiple Cropping are expected to generate employment opportunities for a vast section of the rural community while intensive agriculture could generate employment opportunities for the landless to provide employment to all unemployed and underemployed persons within the time frame.

III PROCEDURE

The steps followed to study the profile of agricultural women labourers were:

- A. Selection of the area
- B. Selection of the sample
- C. Selection of the method
- D. Collection and analysis of the data

A. Selection of the Area

The villages selected for the study were Ramanathapuram, Pannimadai and Palanigoundenpudur of Perianaickenpalayam Panchayat Union and Udayampalayam of Sarkarsamakulam Panchayat Union, Coimbatore District. These villages were selected as they were agrarian in nature and for their easy accessibility by public transport. Further, the college had already established good rapport with these villages.

B. Selection of the Sample

The sample selected for this study were belonging to schedule caste (Harijans), since they were mainly involved in agricultural labour. Twenty five agricultural labourers were randomly selected from each village and a

total of hundred samples were surveyed for this study.

However, for in depth case studies over a period of six weeks, only thirty women labourers were selected.

C. Selection of the Methods

According to Sukhia et al (1976) interview is relatively more flexible a tool than any written inquiry form and permits explanation, adjustment and variation according to the situation. Having this in view and because of the problem of illiteracy, the interview method was chosen by the investigator to collect data from the agricultural labourers. An interview schedule was prepared so as to call for information on the family background, income and expenditure pattern, education of the children and the details regarding the occupation and wage structure of agricultural women labourers (Appendix I).

A time schedule was prepared in Tamil so as to elicit information about the time disposition of the respondents for household work and farm work from dawn to dusk (Appendix II).

Both interview schedule and time schedule were prepared and their suitability to elicit the required information

were pretested by administering them to a small group of women agricultural labourers. Based on the results of pretest, the required modifications were effected in the schedules and they were finalised.

D. Collection and Analysis of the Data

The interview schedule was administered to the women agricultural labourers after establishing good rapport with the respondents and explaining the purpose of the study.

Based on the rapport developed during the interview, the time schedule was administered to the selected women in three phases (seasons)

- i. weeding in food crops (Cholam and ragi)
- ii. harvesting food crops and
- iii. weeding in the annual crop (sugarcane)

in order to know the variations in time expenditure during the three phases (seasons). It was significant to mention in one of the villages, Palanigoundenpudur, flower plucking was also available during the first phase of the

study. The data was collected for two consecutive weeks in each of the three phases. The schedules were given in the beginning of the week and collected at the end of each week for all six weeks (2 weeks in one phase).

The data collected were analysed and interpreted in the following Chapter.

IV RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study are discussed under the following headings:

- A. Profile of the selected agricultural labour families.
- and B. Case studies on selected women labourers on the farm and in the home.

A. Profile of the selected agricultural labour families

The profile of the families includes,

- 1. Family details
- 2. Occupational details
- 3. Income and expenditure pattern

1. Family details

Type of family

Among the selected agricultural labourers, 15 per cent belonged to joint families. The rest of the 85 per cent were nuclear type.

Size of the family

Table I depicts the size of the selected families.

TABLE I
SIZE OF THE SELECTED FAMILIES

S.No.	Number of members	Percentage of respondents
1.	Two members	13
2.	Three members	20
3.	Four members	21
4.	Five members	21
5.	Six members	16
6.	Seven and more members	9

A majority of the families (54 per cent) consisted of 2 to 4 members.

Educational status

Table II shows the educational status of the respondents.

TABLE II
EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE RESPONDENTS

S.No.	Educational Status	Percentage of respondents
1.	Elementary School ..	28
2.	Middle School ..	5.5
3.	High School ..	0.4
4.	Illiterate ..	66.1

A majority of 66.1 per cent of the respondents were illiterates. Among the educated 28 per cent had only upto elementary education as the highest level of education.

2. Occupational details

Coolie (agricultural labour) was the family occupation of all the selected families.

Involvement of members in family occupation

Table III gives the number of family members involved in the family occupation.

TABLE III
INVOLVEMENT OF MEMBERS IN FAMILY OCCUPATION

S.No.	Number of members	Percentage of respondents
1.	One member ..	14
2.	Two members ..	34
3.	Three members ..	29
4.	Four members ..	14
5.	Five and more members ..	9

In 52 per cent of the families three or more members were agricultural labourers, pointing out the perpetuation of agricultural labour as the family occupation.

Reasons for taking up the occupation

Table IV gives the reasons for taking up the occupation.

TABLE IV

REASONS FOR TAKING UP THE OCCUPATION

S.No.	Reasons	Percentage of respondents
1.	Not getting any other job ..	80
2.	Illiteracy ..	72
3.	Hereditary/traditional ..	69
4.	Low Standard of living ..	42

Eighty per cent of the labourers had given the reason that not getting any other job was the main reason for them for being an agricultural labourer and 72 per cent of them had given the reason as illiteracy. (Figure-1). The fact that heredity or tradition plays a vital role needs further probe in the context of improving the quality of living of the rural masses.

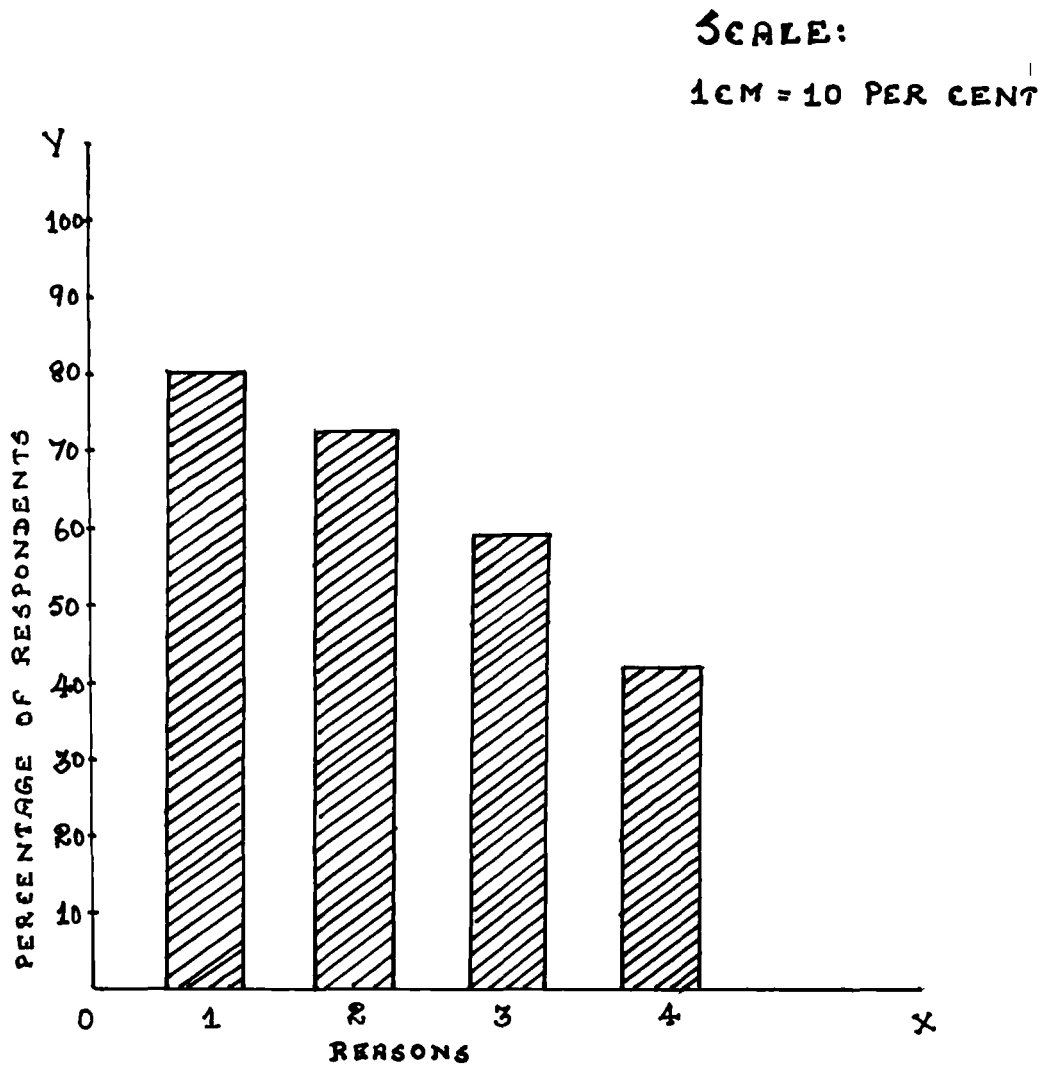


FIGURE:1

REASONS FOR TAKING UP THE OCCUPATION

KEY:

1. NOT GETTING ANY
OTHER JOB

2. ILLITERACY

3. HEREDITARY / TRADITIONAL

4. LOW STANDARD OF
LIVING

Activities of women agricultural labourers

The activities of women agricultural labourer as given by the respondents are in Table V.

TABLE V

ACTIVITIES OF WOMEN AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

S.No.	Activities	Percentage of respondents
1.	Sowing	100
2.	Weeding	100
3.	Transplanting	100
4.	Harvesting	100
5.	Winnowing	100
6.	Processing	100
7.	Applying fertilizers	72
8.	Storage	68
9.	Care of Cattles	61
10.	Irrigation	59
11.	Threshing	51
12.	Picking flowers	25
13.	Spraying pesticides	20

The main activities of women agricultural labourers were sowing, weeding, transplanting, harvesting, winnowing and processing. Besides they were also performing other jobs such as like applying fertilizers, storage, care of cattle, irrigation, threshing, picking flowers and spraying pesticides.

Job availability

Table VI gives information about the average number of days in a week, the labourers getting jobs.

TABLE VI

DAYS OF WORK IN A WEEK

S.No.	Number of working days in a week	Percentage of respondents
1.	Five days	12
2.	Four days	23
3.	Three days	3
4.	Inconsistent (Whenever get the work)	62

For a majority of the labourers farm work was not available throughout, it was seasonal and intermittent. Twenty six per cent of the labourers obtained work only for three or four days per week.

The farm work demanded seven or eight hours of time every day.

Seasonwise availability of work for the labourers

Table VII gives details about the reasons giving more work for the women labourers.

TABLE VII

SEASONWISE AVAILABILITY OF FARM WORK

S.No.	Seasons	Percentage of respondents
1.	Sowing	100
2.	Harvesting	100
3.	Transplanting	34
4.	Weeding	8

Sowing and harvesting were the seasons occupying the labourers fully.

Details of activities when there is no work in the farm

Table VIII gives the details about their activities when there was no work in the farm.

TABLE VIII

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN WHEN THERE IS NO WORK IN THE FARM

S.No.	Activities	Percentage of respondents
1.	Idling time ..	76
2.	Collecting firewood ..	50
3.	Attending to household work ..	49
4.	Taking up building/construction work ..	34

A majority of the labourers were idling time when they had no work in the farm. Fifty per cent were collecting firewood, 49 per cent attended to household duties and 34 per cent of them were taking up building/construction work.

All the respondents interviewed were not satisfied with the number of days they got work, since the income derived from the limited number of days was not sufficient to meet the expenses for the off seasons as well as for days they did not get work.

Only six per cent of the labourers were sticking on to one farm exclusively for their work. Even among this six per cent, only two per cent got the work throughout the year. The remaining were staying at home while they had no work in the farm. Other 94 per cent of the labourers were changing the farms according to the availability of work and demands for labour.

Sources of information about the availability of labour

The sources through which the women labourers get information about the availability of job in the different farms are given in Table IX.

TABLE IX

INFORMATION ABOUT THE AVAILABILITY OF FARM WORK

S.No.	Sources	Percentage of respondents
1.	Farm owners ..	83
2.	Pannaiyal* ..	54
3.	Other labourers ..	33

*Pannaiyal is the term denoting the permanent worker who usually resides in the farm itself and is incharge of the day to day farm operations and helping the farm owners.

To 83 per cent of the labourers, information about the availability of labour was available through the farm owners themselves; 54 per cent of them got the information through 'pannaiyal' and 33 per cent of them got the information through other labourers.

The distance between the farm and the homes ranged from half to three kilo metres, which the labourers reached only by walk. Among the selected women agricultural labourers, 75 per cent were confined to farm work in their

native villages only. Out of this group 55 per cent were not willing to go to other villages and 20 per cent of them were not able to walk to distant farms.

Only 25 per cent of the respondents going to other villages for their job. Among these 19 per cent were going to far off villages because they would be getting more wages compared to that in their own village and the rest 6 per cent were going since they were getting the wages in terms of food materials. The labourers who were going to far off villages were not however staying there.

The time of starting the farm work ranged from 7.00 A.M. to 9.00 A.M. The time of return ranged from 3.00 P.M. to 6.30 P.M. This depended on the time taken for lunch and rest in the afternoon. None reported of staying in the farm itself for late hours even during heavy work in the farm.

For the household work 59 per cent of the labourers spent 5 hours a day and 41 per cent of them spent 4 to 5 hours. The labourers were getting the assistance of their children for their household work. The case studies conducted with selected farm women would throw more light on the time expenditure by the women labourers in the farm and in the home.

Details of wage

Only five per cent of the women labourers were getting their wage as kind and cash, and others were getting the wage only as cash.

The women labourers were obtaining Rs.5/- per day. Wherever wages were given in kind, they were getting 2½ kg. of any cereals cultivated.

All the selected labourers were not satisfied with the wage given, because they were not getting enough income for their day to day living.

Facilities provided for the labourers by the farm owners

Table X gives the facilities provided for the labourers by the farm owners.

TABLE X

FACILITIES PROVIDED FOR THE LABOURERS BY THE FARM OWNERS

S.No.	Facilities	Percentage of respondents
1.	Food materials and clothes during festivals	50
2.	Providing loan	22
3.	Wages in advance	7

Fifty per cent of the labourers expressed that they were getting food materials and clothes from the farm owners as free gift. Personal loans and wages in advance were the other facilities offered.

Awareness about the facilities provided for the labourers by the Government.

Table XI gives the awareness about the facilities provided for the labourers by the Government.

TABLE XI

AWARENESS ABOUT THE FACILITIES PROVIDED FOR THE LABOURERS
BY THE GOVERNMENT

S.No.	Facilities	Percentage of respondents
1.	Free Noon Meal for the children	100
2.	Free education	42
3.	Loan facilities	39

The selected labourers were aware of free noon meal for their children by Government, 42 per cent were aware of free education and 39 per cent were aware of loan facilities to buy cattles by the Government.

Working condition of the women labourers

All the labourers possessed the implements of their own, which include the spade, knife and basket, the value of the items ranging from Rs.15/- to Rs.30/-.

Problems of the agricultural labourers as expressed by the selected women are given in Table XII.

TABLE XII

PROBLEMS OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

S.No.	Problems	Percentage of respondents
1.	Inadequate wage	100
2.	Seasonal nature of the employment	100
3.	Lack of facilities	41
4.	Inability to get other jobs	39
5.	Inability to give proper education to children	23

Inadequate wage and seasonal employment were the problems expressed by all. The fact that 23 per cent reported that they could not provide proper education to children, points out their aspirations (Figure - 2).

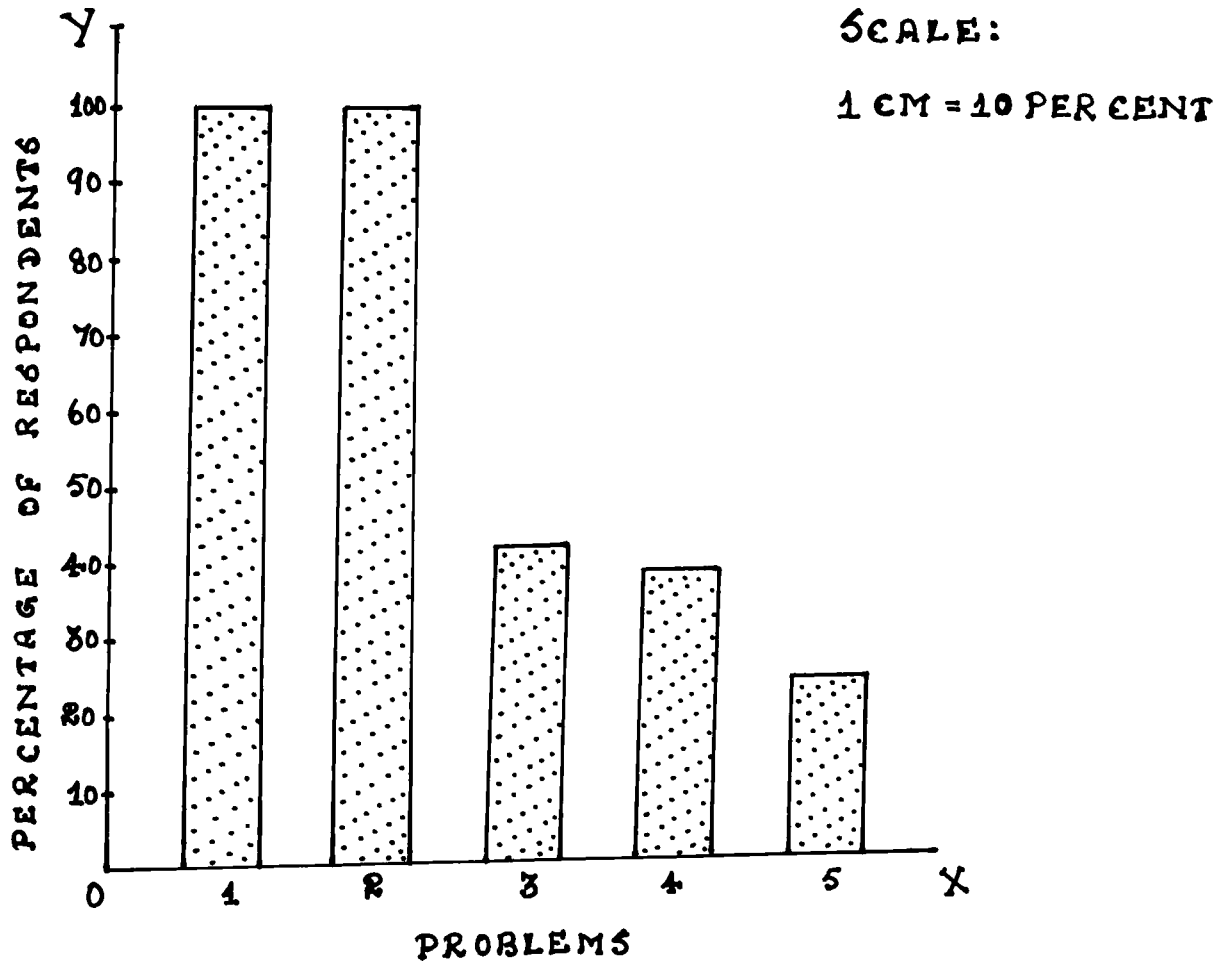


FIGURE : 2 PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

KEY:

1. INADEQUATE WAGE
2. SEASONAL NATURE OF THE EMPLOYMENT
3. LACK OF FACILITIES
4. INABILITY TO GET OTHER JOBS
5. INABILITY TO GIVE PROPER EDUCATION TO CHILDREN

All the women labourers interviewed were giving the suggestions for their improvement like providing regular work and more wage. Only 35 per cent of the labourers were suggesting to provide subsidiary occupation to improve their living conditions.

There was no awareness about or membership reported in any organised effort such as trade union.

Future ambitions of the mothers regarding their children

Table XIII depicts the future ambitions of the mothers regarding their children.

TABLE XIII

FUTURE AMBITIONS OF THE MOTHERS REGARDING THEIR CHILDREN

S.No.	Ambitions	Percentage of respondents
1.	To make them do farm work ..	34
2.	To educate ..	26
3.	No idea ..	24
4.	To get a job ..	20
5.	To rear cattle ..	7

That 41 per cent of the labourers wished their children too to do farm work, or rear cattle pointed out the low level of aspirations of this farming community, which is already downtrodden and contribute a major share of the population living below the poverty line. It is significant to mention that 46 per cent were ambitions to educate their children and to get a job for their future, life; 24 per cent had no idea at all depicting their total ignorance (Figure 3).

SCALE:

1CM = 5 PER CENT

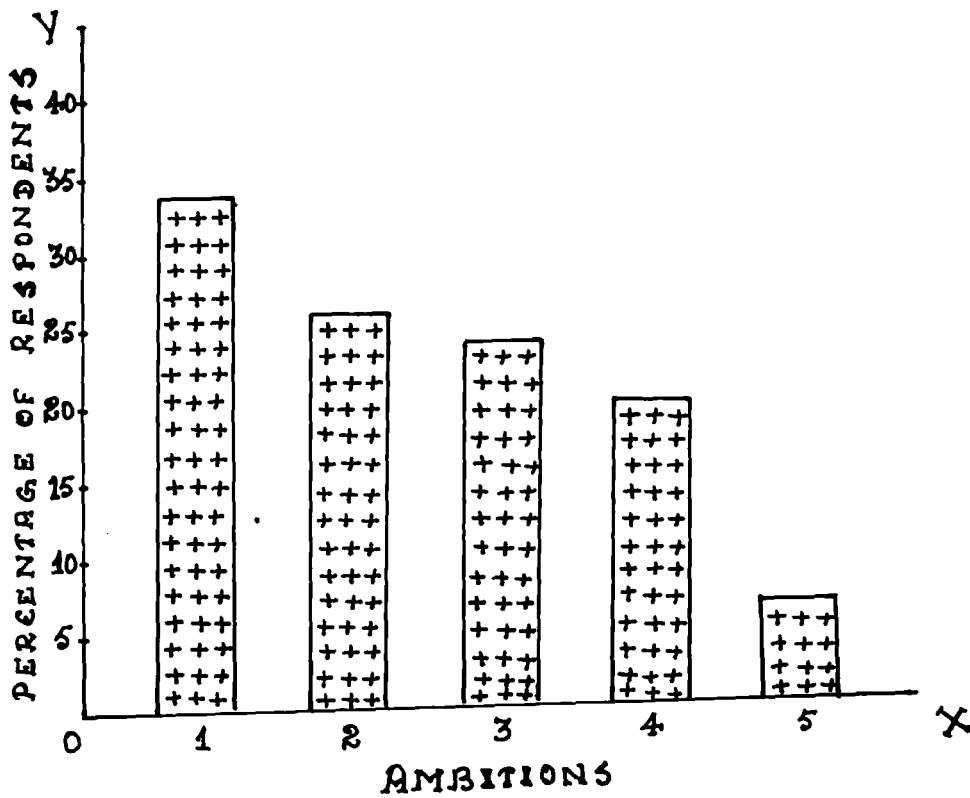


FIGURE:3 FUTURE AMBITIONS OF MOTHERS ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN

KEY:

- 1. TO MAKE THEM DO FARM WORK
- 2. TO EDUCATE
- 3. NO IDEA
- 4. TO GET A JOB
- 5. TO REAR CATTLE

3. Income and expenditure pattern

The income expenditure pattern includes the annual income of the selected families, expenditure on different items, place and mode of purchase of food items and other details.

Annual income of the selected families from main occupation

The level of annual income through agricultural labour, which is the main occupation of the selected families is as given in Table XIV.

TABLE XIV

ANNUAL INCOME OF THE SELECTED FAMILIES FROM MAIN OCCUPATION

S.No.	Annual income in Rupees	Percentage of respondents
1.	Below 2500	19
2.	2501 to 5000	62
3.	5001 to 7500	19

A large majority of 62 per cent had their annual income between Rs.2,501 to 5,000. On further analysis it was found that a majority (77 per cent) of the labourers were below the poverty line*.

Goat rearing was taken up as a subsidiary occupation by 24 per cent of the families who got an annual income of Rs.100/- to Rs.300/-; only 3 per cent had dairy as the supplementary occupation, getting Rs.300/- per annum.

Expenditure on different items

Table XV gives the details of the expenditure in terms of percentage of income spent on various items.

* Source: Government of India, Planning Commission,
Sixth Five Year Plan, 1980-85, p.18

TABLE XV

PERCENTAGE OF INCOME SPENT ON DIFFERENT ITEMS

S.No.	Items	Percentage of income spent	Percentage of respondents
1.	Food	50 to 75	35
		Above 75	65
2.	Clothing	Upto 5	88
		6 to 10	12
3.	Shelter	Upto 5	87
		6 to 10	2
		No expense	11
4.	Education	Upto 5	30
		No expense	70
5.	Health	Upto 5	60
		No expense	40
6.	Transport	Upto 5	98
		No expense	2
7.	Recreation	Upto 5	66
		No expense	34
8.	Festivals	Upto 5	80
		6 to 11	20
9.	Miscellaneous	Upto 5	90
		6 to 11	10
10.	Savings	No savings	100

Majority of families had spent 76 to 100 per cent on food. For other things they had spent only upto five per cent of their income. No expenses were incurred by 11 per cent on shelter, 70 per cent on education and 40 per cent on health, owing to the fact that free services were available. None of them had savings.

Place of purchase of food items

The information about the place of purchase of food items is given in Table XVI.

TABLE XVI

PLACE OF PURCHASE OF FOOD ITEMS

S.No.	Place of purchase	Percentage of respondents
1.	Local shop	100
2.	Market	90
3.	Ration shop	65
4.	Shandy	45
5.	Farms	24

All labourers were purchasing food items from the local shop, 90 per cent of them were purchasing vegetables, fruits, onions and dried chillies from the market, 65 per cent of them purchased food items from the local ration shop and 45 per cent of them purchased from shandy and 24 per cent received food items from the farm itself (Vegetables and cereals grown in their farms).

Purchasing habits

All the labourers were purchasing cereals and pulses daily on cash payment only just prior to cooking, 21 per cent of them got cereals and pulses as wages from their employees.

Ten per cent of the labourers purchased vegetables daily and 90 per cent of them purchased weekly from the nearby market. Thirty one per cent of them got the vegetables as kind from the land owners during festivals and harvesting.

They were purchasing oil daily. They used to buy fleshy foods (beef) weekly once. Twenty per cent of the labourers purchased milk once in a month. For the

purchasing of all the food items they were paying the money as a whole and not in instalments. The food expenditure for a majority of 98 per cent of the labourers was greater during festival items.

With regard to clothes, 45 per cent of the labourers purchased clothes during festivals or whenever they got the money and 84 per cent of them purchased clothes only when they got money.

Meal pattern

All the selected harijan families were non-vegetarians. Among them in 14 per cent of the families meals were taken four times in a day and 86 per cent of the families were taking meals three times in a day.

Dosai, idly, rice, rasam and poriyal which are the common menu of the South Indian families are considered as special items for these labour families with 51 to 75 per cent preparing these dishes only during festivals; 24 per cent prepared 'vadai' as special item during festivals.

It is stated by the respondents that 44 per cent of the labourers used to get coconut and 24 per cent of them got vegetables as free food materials from the farm during festivals.

Cinema was the only recreation for the harijan community. Among the labourers interviewed 9 per cent of them were going for cinema weekly once, 18 per cent of them were going once in a month and 23 per cent of them were going twice a month.

B. Case study of activities of women labourers on the farm and in the home

The day for a woman agricultural labourer starts in the early hours of the morning even before the sunrise and she is the last to retire to bed at night. She not only takes care of household work, but at the same time looks after the farm work too. A case study was conducted regarding the activities of women labourers on the farm and in the home and the data are discussed under the following headings.

1. Time expenditure at home
2. Time expenditure on the farm

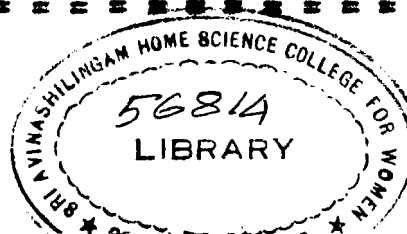
1. Time expenditure at home

Table XVII indicates the time expenditure at home on household activities.

TABLE XVII

TIME EXPENDITURE ON HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES

S.No.	Activities	Time spent in minutes			
		Before going for work	After return- ing	Total	When there is no farm work
1.	Cooking	-	1 to 2 hours	1 to 2 hours	2 hours
2.	Bringing water	30	30	60	30 to 45
3.	Shopping/Marketing	15	30	45	1 to 2 hours
4.	Taking care of children	15	30	45	45
5.	Professing of cereals	15	15	30	30
6.	Cleaning the house	20	-	20	45
7.	Cleaning the vessels	20	-	20	20
8.	Cattle care	15	-	15	30 to 45
9.	Bathing and washing clothes	-	-	-	2 hours
10.	Collecting firewood	-	-	-	45 to 60
11.	Collection of fodder	-	-	-	30
12.	Taking breakfast	5	-	5	5



Usually the women agricultural labourers got up early in the morning at 6.00 A.M. On the household activities they were spending maximum of 1 to 2 hours for cooking. But no cooking was reported to be done in the morning. To bring water they were spending 15 to 30 minutes depending on the distance between their houses and the sources of water and the quantity they needed. Sometimes due to scarcity of water, they had to go to the nearby farms to fetch water. Before going to the farm work they were doing the household activities like bringing water, shopping, taking care of children, processing of cereals, cleaning the house and cleaning the vessels. For these activities they were spending nearly 2 hours in a day. The agricultural women labourers spent only five minutes for their breakfast. They used to mix the left over of the previous days rice, ragi, cholam or kambu kali with water and drink the same. The same was taken for lunch also.

Every day the women were spending 15 minutes for taking care of cattles. For the collection of fodder and firewood they were not spending time separately,

but they were doing these activities while they were returning from the farm. When they had no farm work only they spent separate time for collection of fodder and firewood and spent more time on rearing cattles. Also they were taking more time for cleaning their houses, because only once a week they used to wipe their houses with cow dung. On Mondays their usual weekly holiday, they were spending 1 to 2 hours for going to shandy in a nearby town. Also on Mondays only they used to take headbath and wash their clothes. Cooking special items such as beef was mentioned by all. Thus they were spending more time on household work on Mondays than on the working days. Usually between 8.00 to 9.00 P.M. they were finishing their dinner and between 10.00 to 11.00 P.M. they used to go to sleep.

2. Time expenditure on the farm

Table XVIII depicts the expenditure of time on the farm.

TABLE XVIII

TIME EXPENDITURE ON THE FARM

S.No.	Activities	Average time spent
1.	Walking to the farm	10 to 15 minutes
2.	Farm work before lunch	4 to 5 hours
3.	Lunch and relaxation	1 hour
4.	Farm work after lunch	2 to 3 hours
5.	Collecting firewood	30 minutes
6.	Collection of fodder for cattle	30 minutes

The above table reveals the women labourers' time expenditure on the farm. To reach the farm they had to spent 10 to 15 minutes since the farms were far away from their houses. Before lunch they were doing the farm work for 4 to 5 hours depending on the time of reaching the farm. Those who were going very early in the

morning, say between 7 and 8.00 A.M. were completing their work by 2.00 P.M., spending only 20 minutes time in between for their lunch. Totally they were working 7 to 8 hours in a day on the farm getting Rs.5/- as daily wages. Very few of them were working for 8 hours and they were getting Re.1/- per day as extra wage. During busy seasons like sowing and harvesting they were working for 9 to 10 hours a day depending on the work available on the farm. For this extra work, they received Rs.2.50 per day as extra wage.

A majority of the labourers were not agreeing to do extra work every day, since they feared that this extra work would lead to completion of work quickly and thereby reduction in the number of days labour would be available.

Apart from this farm work women labourers were doing some activities like collecting firewood, rearing cattles and collecting fodder before they returned to their homes.

The time expenditure on cattle rearing varied from individual to individual, since those who had grown up children engaged them in this activity.

From the study it was revealed that, totally women labourers were spending 6 hours for the household activities, 8 hours for the farm work and 10 hours for rest and sleep (Figure 4).

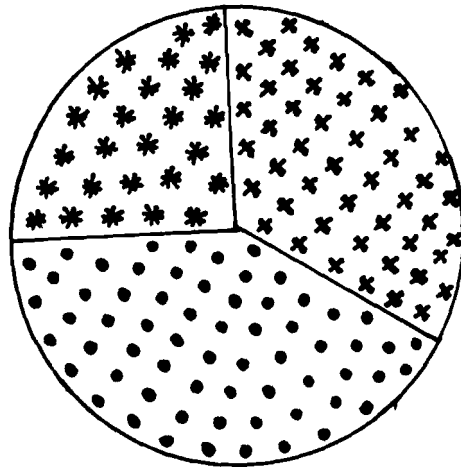
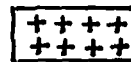


FIGURE:4
TIME EXPENDITURE AT
HOME AND FARM

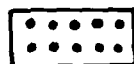
KEY:



TIME EXPENDITURE
FOR THE HOUSEHOLD
WORK



TIME EXPENDITURE
FOR THE FARM WORK



REST AND SLEEP

Difference in time disposition during the three
phases of observation

Time disposition did not vary much between the three selected phases (seasons) namely weeding in food crops, harvesting of food crops and weeding in sugarcane (Figure 5). Harvesting season demanded more time for the women and required them to stay upto 6 to 7 P.M. on the farm. During harvesting season, on an average 23 per cent of the labourers had gone for work on all the days including Mondays and they were working for nearly 8½ hours in a day. They were unable to find leisure time during harvesting. Adjustments were made in household work including taking care of children, to find more time for farm work during harvesting.

On an average, during both the weeding seasons (weeding in food crops and sugarcane) women were getting work only for 3 to 4 days in a week. But, in one of the three selected villages (Palanigoundenpudur), 25 per cent of the selected women were at work throughout the first phase (15 days) of the indepth study, due to the

availability of work in flower garden namely plucking flowers. This was possible in only one village where there was the possibility for the women to be employed in this specific localised job, which they did between 7.00 A.M. and 9.00 A.M. everyday. After this work in the flower garden, they were getting agricultural labour (weeding in food crops) as in the other villages, i.e. 3 to 4 days in a week.

SCALE:

1CM = 1 HOUR

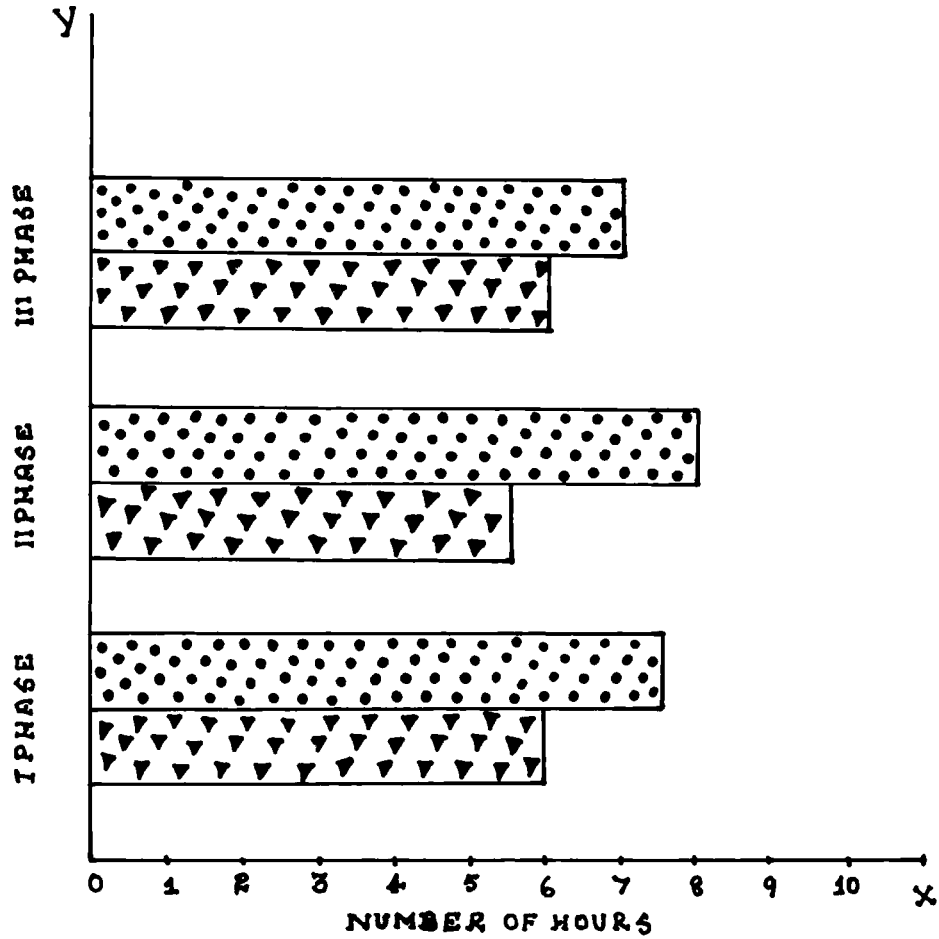


FIGURE:5

DIFFERENCE IN TIME DISPOSITION DURING
THREE PHASES OF OBSERVATION

KEY:



HOUSEHOLD WORK



FARM WORK

I PHASE: WEEDING IN
FOOD CROPS

II PHASE: HARVESTING IN
FOOD CROPS

III PHASE: WEEDING IN
SUGARCANE

V SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study on the profile of women agricultural labourers was undertaken to assess the socio economic status and job satisfaction of the agricultural women labourers. The study was focussed specially on women agricultural labourers to find out their involvement in household and farm activities.

The salient outcomes of the study are given below:

1. It was found that a majority of the labour families belonged to nuclear type consisting of 2 to 4 members. Illiteracy was very high which was the main factor hindering their socio-economic development.
2. Coolie (agricultural labour) was the family occupation and in 52 per cent families there were more than three members engaged in this occupation. The main reasons for them taking to agricultural labour as the main occupation were not getting any other job, illiteracy and hereditary/traditional nature of the job.

3. The women labourers were mainly involved in the agricultural operations such as sowing, weeding, transplanting, harvesting, winnowing and processing. Therefore, their participation is very important in every aspect of agricultural operations.
4. It was found that a majority of the labourers were not specific about the number of days they were working in a week. The farm work was not available throughout, it was seasonal and intermittent. On an average they worked for nearly two hundred and thirty five days in a year. They were doing the farm work nearly eight hours a day. Sowing and harvesting were the busy seasons occupying the labourers fully. In these seasons they were getting work almost on all the days in a week. During the off-season, a majority were idling at home or collecting firewood. If building/ construction work was available, they would go for that work also.
5. The labourers felt that they were not fully employed, to get sufficient income for their day to day living. Majority of the labourers were not sticking to one farm, and they were

changing the farms depending on the work available. The availability of labour was known to them through farm owners, pannaiyal (permanent farm worker) or other labourers. Majority of the labourers confined to farm work in their native villages only. Few of them were going to other villages to get more wages and to get wages in kind.

6. The farm work was started between 7 to 9 A.M. and completed by 6 P.M. They did not work continuously but took rest during the lunch time. Also they were not used to stay in the farm itself for late hours, even during heavy work on the farm.
7. On an average they were spending 5 hours for the household work, getting assistance from their children.
8. Majority of the labourers were obtaining wages of Rs.5/- per day, a very few of them were obtaining wages in kind i.e. 2½ kg. of any cereals cultivated.
9. The major problems of agricultural labourers were inadequate wage and seasonal nature of the employment. They expressed the need for providing regular work and more wages, for their improvement.

10. There was no awareness about or membership reported in any organised effort such as trade unions.
11. The labourers were getting facilities like materials and clothes during festivals, loan and wages in advance from their land owners. From the Government they were getting facilities like free noon meal for the children, free education and loan facilities.
12. The agricultural labourers were possessing implements like spade, knives and baskets of their own, the value of the items ranging from Rs.15/- to Rs.30/-.
13. Forty six per cent of the labourers wished to educate their children and to get a job, while 41 per cent wished their children too to do farm work or rear cattle which pointed out the low level of aspirations of this farming community, which is already downtrodden and contributes a major share of the population living below the poverty line.

14. Regarding the income pattern it was found that majority of them were having annual income of Rs.2,500/- to Rs.5,000/-. Only very few of them were taking goat rearing as their subsidiary occupation. A major portion of their income was spent for their food, for other things they had spent only upto 10 per cent of their income. They were mainly dependent on local shops, shandy and ration shops for the purchase of food items. Twenty four per cent of them received food items from the farm as wages. They used to buy pulses, cereals and oil daily, while vegetables, onion and chillies and fleshy foods they used to buy once in a week. Regarding clothes they used to buy only during festivals or whenever they got the money. For all their purchase they used to pay the amount as a whole and not in instalments.
15. A three meal pattern was observed in general. During festivals some of them were getting food materials like cocenut and vegetables free from the farm. A majority of them were

spending more money on food during festivals. They used to prepare idly, dosai, vadai, rice, rasam and poriyal as special items for the festivals.

16. Cinema was their main recreation.

The case study regarding the activities of women labourers on the farm and in the home revealed the following:

1. The agricultural labourers were spending maximum of 1 to 2 hours for cooking. But no cooking was reported to be done in the morning. Majority of the agricultural labourers had no time to have breakfast moreover they used to mix the left overs of the previous days' rice, ragi, cholam or kambukali with water and drank the same as porridge. The same was taking for lunch also. After returning from the farm only they used to cook their food.
2. Before going to the farm work they were doing the household activities like bringing water, shopping, taking care of children, precessing of cereals, cleaning the house

and cleaning the vessels. For these activities they were spending nearly 2 hours in a day.

3. Monday was their usual weekly holiday. On that day only they were taking headbath, and washing their clothes, wiping their houses with cow dung, going to shandy and cooking special items such as beef.
4. For travelling to farm they were spending 10 to 15 minutes, since the farms were away from their houses. The women labourers were working on the farm for 4 to 5 hours before lunch and 2 to 3 hours after lunch. On an average they were working for 8 hours a day. In between nearly one hour was spent for lunch and relaxation. Also they were collecting firewood and fodder in the working farm in which they work or any other place on the way to their homes.
5. Time disposition did not vary much between the three selected phases (seasons) namely weeding in food crops, harvesting of it and weeding in sugarcane. Harvesting season

demanded the highest time from the women labourers. On an average during the weeding seasons women were getting work only for 3 to 4 days per week. The study revealed that in a year the women labourers on an average were getting work for nearly two hundred and thirty five days.

Limitations

1. Since the selected agricultural labourers were illiterate it was difficult to collect the time schedule filled up by the respondents themselves.
2. Since the duration of study was limited and it was not possible for the investigator to get the data on time disposition during various seasons for various crops. Therefore this study was limited to only three phases available during the time of investigation.

Conclusion

Since the selected women agricultural labourers were not aware of any development programmes meant for them, follow up work may be undertaken to educate the woman agricultural labourers on available infrastructure and stimulate them to utilise the same.

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A P P E N D I C E S

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE TO ELICIT THE INFORMATION ON PROFILE OF AGRICULTURAL WOMEN LABOURERS IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT

Name of the interviewer: _____ Date: _____
 Name of the interviewee: _____ Village: _____
 Name of the head of the family: _____ Caste: _____

Address: _____ Religion: _____
 Type of Family: _____
 Joint Nuclear

Occupation

Main:

Subsidiary:

I. Details regarding family background:

S.No.	Name of the family members	Age	Sex	Educational Status			Occupation	Monthly income Rs.
				Study- ing in	Studied upto	Illiter- ate		
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

II Occupation

1. Mention your family occupations:

2. Who are all involved in family occupation?

3. Give reasons for you becoming a labourer:

i) Low Standard of living

ii) Illiteracy

iii) Hereditary/Traditional

iv) Not getting any other job

v) Others, specify

4. Your activities as an agricultural labourer:

1. Sowing

2. Weeding

3. Transplanting

4. Irrigation

5. Threshing

6. Applying fertilizers
and manures

7. Spraying pesticides

8. Harvesting

9. Winnowing

10. Processing

11. Storage

12. Caring of Cattles

13. Others, specify

5. Job availability

1. How many days do you go for the labour work in a week?

All the 7 days

3 days

6 days

2 days

5 days

1 day

4 days

Inconsistent
(Whenever we get
the work)

2. Duration of work

1. In a day hrs.

2. In a month days

3. In what season do you get more work?

4. What will you do when you have no work?

1.

2.

3.

5. Are you satisfied with the duration of the work?

Satisfied	Not satisfied	Reasons

6. Do you stick on to one farm or change the farm?

Stick on to one
farm

Change the farm

a) If you stick on to one farm, do you get work in that farm throughout a year?

Yes

No

If No, what will you do?

b) If you change the farm, how often?

7. Information about the occupation

1. How do you know about the jobs available for the agricultural work?

a.

b.

c.

d.

2. If you come to know about the agricultural work in the far off villages, will you go there?

Yes

No

Reasons:

a) If yes, do you get more wage?

b) Will you stay there continuously for a week or a month?

Yes

No

If yes, will you stay there alone (or) with your family members?

Alone

with family

Reasons:

8. Information about reaching the farm

1. what is the distance from farm to home?

2. At what time do you get up and start from home?

Time of get up Time of Start

3. How much time do you take to reach the farm?

4. Mode of travel to reach the farm:

Mode of travel	Frequency	Cost involved per trip	Who meets the cost?	
			Self	Farm

- 1. Walk
- 2. Cycle
- 3. Tractor
- 4. Bus
- 5. Others

=====

5. Do you face any problems regarding transport to reach the farm?

Yes

No

If yes, what are the problems do you face?

6. Do you work continuously (or) in between you take rest?

Work continuously

Take rest in between

a) If you take rest in between, at what time to take rest?

For lunch time (or) Any other time

7. At what time do you reach home from farm?

8. If you have lot of work are you used to stay in the farm itself?

Yes

No

a) If yes, who will look after your children and others in the family?

b) What will you do for your food?

9. Household work:

S.No.	Activities	Time spent	Remarks	Person assisting
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

10. Wages

1.

Mode of payment	Amount getting
-----------------	----------------

- 1. Kind
- 2. Cash
- 3. Other forms

.....

2. Are you satisfied with the wage given to you?

Yes No

Reasons:

3. Do you face any problem in getting wage from the farm owners?

Yes No

If yes, what are the problems?

10. Facilities from land owner and Govt.

S.No.	Facilities	Government	Farm owners
-------	------------	------------	-------------

.....

11. Implements used in agricultural work

S.No.	Implement	By own expense	Getting money from owners to buy	Rent	Getting from land owners	Total amount for imple- ment Rs.	If debt, mode of repay- ment

12. Mention the problems of being an agricultural labourer?

13. Give suggestions to improve your working condition?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

14. Are you a member of any trade unions?

Yes

No

Reasons:

15. Future ambitions

1. What do you want your children to become?

.....

Name of the child

To be

.....

.....

2. Do you want to change or improve your occupation?

Yes

No

Reasons:

If yes, specify the changes you want to improve?

III. Income and expenditure

1. Income from other sources:

S.No.	Sources	Monthly income in Rs.	Person who does the work
1.	Dairy		
2.	Sheep rearing		
3.	Bee-keeping		
4.	Kitchen garden		
5.	Poultry		
6.	Others		

2. Family expenditure patterns:

S.No.	Items	Amount spent in Rs. per month
1.	Food	
2.	Clothing	
3.	Shelter	
4.	Education	
5.	Health	
6.	Transport	
7.	Recreation	
8.	Festivals	
9.	Savings	
10.	Others specify	

3.

=====

Place of Purchase of
food materials

Reasons

- a. Local shop
- b. Ration shop
- c. Co-operative Societies
- d. Market
- e. Farms
- f. Shandi

=====

4. Purchasing habits:

a) Foods

=====

S.No.	Items	Frequency of purchase			who purchase	Payment			Avail- ble in kind
		D	M	W		Whole	Instal- ment	Debt	

- a. Cereals
- b. Pulses
- c. Vegetables
- d. Fruits
- e. Oil
- f. Milk and milk product
- g. Fleshy foods
- h. Prepared foods
- i. Beverages

=====

b. Others

Frequency of Purchase			Payment		
Monthly	During festi-vals	Whenever get money	Whole	Instal-ment	Debt

5. 1) Meal pattern for 3 days:

Days	Breakfast	Lunch	Tea	Dinner
I day				
II day				
III day				

2. For the festivals do you spend more money on food items?

Yes

No

b) If No, why?

c) If yes, what are all the special items you will prepare?

1.

2.

3.

3. During festivals do you get free food materials from the farm?

Yes

No

Reason:

a) If yes, what food materials do you get?

1.

2.

3.

6. Recreation:

=====

S.No.	Recreational activities	Time spent			Amount spent in Rs.
		Weekly once	Monthly once	Annually	

=====

7. Savings

a) Do you save money?

Yes

No

Reason:

If yes,

=====

S.No.	Methods of savings	Amount saved/ month in Rs.

1. Bank
2. Post Office
3. Hundi
4. Chits
5. Others (specify)

=====

B. Debt:

Do you have any debt?

Yes

No

If yes, give reason:

S.No.	From whom you get the debt	Amount getting	Rate of interest	Whether repaying	Rate of repayment
-------	----------------------------	----------------	------------------	------------------	-------------------

1. Money lenders
2. Neighbours
3. Relatives
4. Bank
5. Others
(specify)

DETAILS ABOUT TIME EXPENDITURE IN THE FARM

TIME SPENT

S.No.	Activities							
		Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| 1. | Reaching time to farm | | | | | | | |
| 2. | Finishing of work
before lunch | | | | | | | |
| 3. | Lunch time | | | | | | | |
| 4. | Relax after lunch | | | | | | | |
| 5. | Starting of work
after lunch | | | | | | | |
| 6. | Finishing of work in the
evening | | | | | | | |
| 7. | <u>Other activities</u> | | | | | | | |
| | a) Collecting firewood | | | | | | | |
| | b) Rearing cattles | | | | | | | |
| | c) Collecting grass | | | | | | | |

DETAILS ABOUT TIME EXPENDITURE AT HOME AFTER RETURNING FROM THE FARM

S.No.	Activities	TIME SPENT						
		Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1.	Reaching time to home							
2.	Bringing water							
3.	Collecting firewood							
4.	Cooking							
5.	<u>Other activities</u>							
	a)							
	b)							
	c)							
	d)							
	e)							
	f)							
6.	Dinner							
7.	Time for sleep							

Did you go for work all the days in the week?

Yes

No

If No, of days not going for work:

date of not going for work:

Reasons: