

Changing Occupational structure and Economic Condition of Farm labourers in India: A Study

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Abstract

The present study analyses the changing occupational structure and the condition of farm labourers in India. Rapid growth of agriculture is essential not only to achieve self-reliance at national level but also for household food security and bring about equity in distribution of income and wealth resulting in rapid reduction in poverty levels. Indian agriculture has, since independence, made rapid strides. In taking the annual food grains production from 51 million tons in early fifties to 206 million tonnes at the turn of the century, it has contributed significantly in achieving self-sufficiency in food and in avoiding food shortages. Over 200 million Indian farmers and farm workers have been the backbone of India's agriculture. Despite having achieved nation food security the well being concern for planners and policy makers. The establishment of an agrarian economy which ensures food and nutrition to India's billion people, raw materials for its expanding industrial base and surpluses for exports, and a fair and equitable reward system for the farming community for the services they provide to the society, will be the mainstay of reforms in the agriculture sector. Changing profile of GDP in India during 1950-51 to 2001-02-over a period of 51 years data reveal that GDP from the primary sector (viz., agriculture and allied entities like forestry and fishing)declined from 59 per cent in 1950-51 to 46 per cent in 1970-71 and thereafter, sharply declined to 16.1 per cent in 2011-12. This was partially neutralized by an increase in the share of secondary sector from 13 per cent in 1950-51 to about 22 per cent in 1970-71 and further increase to about 24.3 per cent in 2011-12. But the biggest hike in GDP share occurred in case of services from about 27 per cent in 1950-51 to 32 per cent in 1970-71 to 59.0 per cent in 2011-12. The emerging structural change in GDP shares witnessed a big decline in the share of agriculture, coupled with a modest increase in the share of industry and a much sharper increase in the share of services which now account for nearly half of the total GDP. Agriculture labour force contribution to GDP is low in India, so their wage rate is also very low even though more population is dependent on agriculture. In India our industrial sector is not capable to absorb excess supply of labour in agriculture. The services sector is booming, but it cannot help much to absorb the growing low- and unskilled labour force. India needs to take benefit of the advancement in IT sector to modernize its informal economy for increasing its productivity and to create more jobs for maintaining the fast growth of economy.