

Women labor in agriculture: An economic analysis, in Allahabad district of Uttar Pradesh

¹Ali Ahmad, ²Dr. Dinesh Kumar

¹M.Sc Scholar, Department of Agricultural Economics & Agri-business Management, Allahabad School of Agriculture, Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences, (Formerly Allahabad Agricultural Institute) Deemed-to-be-University, Allahabad-211007, Uttar Pradesh, India

²Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics & Agri-business Management, Allahabad School of Agriculture, Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences, (Formerly Allahabad Agricultural Institute) Deemed-to-be-University, Allahabad-211007, Uttar Pradesh, India

Abstract

The present study on 'Woman labor in agriculture-An economic analysis' was conducted in Chaka block, Allahabad district of Uttar Pradesh state during 2014. A total of 30 women agricultural laborers were selected using multistage random sampling technique from six villages of Chaka block, namely Chak Hiranand, Baswar, Chaka, Barika, Mohabatganj Uparhar and Sandwa Kalan for collecting the required information. The data's were collected from the respondents by personal interview method and it included general information, their season wise employment and unemployment days in agriculture, the pattern and composition of employment, the impact of off season unemployment *etc.* For the purpose of achieving the specific objectives of the study tabular presentation method with averages and percentages was employed. The results of the study showed that the women laborers got maximum employment in agriculture during *kharif* (57.62 days) and *Rabi* season (54.91 days). The women laborers got 122.49 days of employment in agriculture in a year.

The laborers got maximum number of days of employment in weeding (46.28 days) followed by harvesting and post-harvest operations (36.90 days). They received wages in cash for all operations except harvest and post-harvest operations. They worked for 7-8 hours a day. The women laborers had maximum unemployed days in Zaid (110.04 days) as this is the off season for agriculture in the study area. The lack of employment opportunities in agriculture during off season compelled the women laborers to seek alternative employment sources like NREGS activities, domestic work, construction works, tile making *etc.* The seasonal woman unemployment in agriculture has caused a severe impact on the income of laborers, family expenditure, their savings and debt position. It also caused migration of laborers to other activities and other places. The women laborers had some suggestions of their own to overcome the problem of unemployment.

Keywords: Women labor in agriculture, economic, Allahabad

1. Introduction

Labor is one of the primary factors of production. It is considered to be important not only because it is productive but also because it activates other factors and makes them useful for production purposes. The size of labor force in a country is determined by the number of people in the age group of 15-59 years as generally children below 15 years and old people above 59 years do not participate in production activity. India's labor force consists of 498.4 million workers includes child labors (2012), growing at the rate of 2 per cent annually. Out of this 51.1 per cent workers are employed in agriculture as cultivators and laborers (2012). Agricultural laborers, mostly landless constitute the poorest segment of the Indian agricultural population. They belong to the economically backward and oppressed section of the society. They mainly belong to the scheduled castes and other backward communities. They are basically unskilled and unorganized and work in farms of prosperous big farmers as casual workers on wages for a larger part of the year. One of the most disquieting features of the rural economy of India during the past several decades has been its constantly increasing trend in the number of landless laborers. Factors like rapid growth of population, law of inheritance, rise in cost of agricultural inputs and decline in small scale

industries have been responsible for this increase. The phenomenon of under employment, under development and surplus population are simultaneously manifested in the daily lives and living of agricultural laborers.

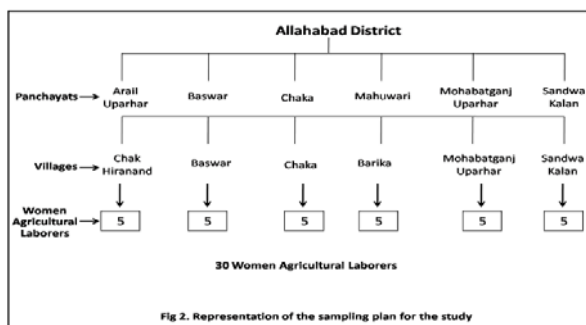
2. Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted in Allahabad district of Uttar Pradesh during 2013-2014.

The methodology followed in conducting this research is furnished under the following headings:

- 1 Description of the study area
- 2 Sampling procedure
- 3 Nature and sources of data
- 4 Analytical techniques employed

Allahabad district was purposively selected for the study as it is the major agricultural district in the state and more than 40 per cent of the total women workforce is employed in agriculture. Chaka block was selected purposively for the study. This block has 49 panchayats and 97 villages in total. Six villages were selected randomly for the study and in each village five women agricultural laborers were selected which in detail they are briefed in the figure as below.



3. Results and Discussion

The results obtained are presented in this chapter under the following headings.

1. General characteristics of the women laborers in agriculture.
2. Season wise employment of woman labor in agriculture.
3. The pattern and composition of woman labor employed
4. Extent of women unemployment in agriculture and the alternative sources of Employment.
5. Impact of seasonal woman unemployment in agriculture
6. Suggestions of women laborers to overcome the problem of unemployment during off season.

1. General Characteristics of the Women Laborers in Agriculture

The general characteristic features of the women agricultural laborers are presented in Table 1. The study covered 30 women laborers spread over six villages, five women laborer in each village of Chak Hiranand, Baswar, Chaka, Barika, Mohabatganj and Sandwa Kalan of Allahabad district in Uttar Pradesh state.

Table 1: General characteristics of the women agricultural laborers

N= 30

No.	Category	Women Laborers		
		Frequency	Percentage	
1	Age			
	a. 20-24 years	1	3.3	
	b. 25-34 years	4	13.3	
	c. 35-44 years	15	50	
2	Marital status			
	a. Married	27	90	
	b. unmarried		0	
	d. Divorcee		0	
3	Educational qualification			
	a. Illiterate	24	80	
	b. Lower primary	3	10	
	c. Upper primary	2	6.7	
4	Family type			
	a. Joint family	6	20	
	b. Nuclear family	20	66.7	
	c. Extended family	4	13.3	
	Average family size		7	
5	Head of the Family			
	Male Headed	27	90	
	Female Headed	3	10	
6	Main occupation			
	a. Self-farming and labor	6	20	
	b. Agricultural labor	24	80	
7	Type of labor			
	a. Permanent labor	28	93.3	
	b. Casual labor	2	6.7	
8	Type of work			
	a. Skilled	0	0	
	b. Unskilled	30	100	
9	Average annual family income	44000 Rs		
	a. Average land holding size	0.08 Hac		
	b. Average asset position	107869.79 Rs		
	c. Average debt position	3521 Rs		

2. Season wise employment of woman labor in agriculture

The season wise employment of woman labor in agriculture is given in Table 2. There are three main agricultural seasons in the study area. (*Kharif*), (*Rabi*) and (*Zaid*). Wheat and Rice are

the major crops in the study area and it is mainly grown in *kharif* and *Rabi* seasons. In *Zaid* the fields are left fallow. They worked for 7-8 hours per day.

Table 2: Season wise employment of women laborers in agriculture
Employment days per worker

Kharif	Days	Percentage
		57.62
Rabi	54.91	44.83
Zaid	9.96	8.13
Total	122.49	100

3. Pattern and composition of women labor employment in agriculture

The pattern of employment of women laborers in agriculture is given in the Table 3 in the study area. The women laborers are involved only in crop production activities. There is no preference for age, caste or marital status in any of the crop production activities.

Table 3: Operations carried out by women laborers in crop production

SI No.	Operations	Type of implements	Wage in cash (Rs) or kind	No. of days worked			Total days
				Kharif	Rabi	Zaid	
1	Raising the nursery	Hand	100-120	0.54 (0.94)	0	0	0.54 (0.44)
2	Transplanting	Hand	100-120	15.81 (27.44)	15.77 (28.72)	0	31.58 (25.78)
3	Weeding	Hand/ sickle	100-120	20.99 (36.43)	20.2 (36.79)	5.08 (51.0)	46.27 (37.78)
4	Gap filling	Hand	100-120	1.25 (2.17)	1.07 (1.95)	0	2.32 (1.89)
5	Irrigation	Pot	100-120	0	0	4.88 (49.0)	4.88 (3.99)
6	Harvesting	Sickle	2 paras of paddy per harvest day (20 Kg paddy)	12.71 (22.06)	11.87	0	24.58 (20.06)
7	Threshing	Hand/ Thresher		3.66 (6.35)	3.5	0	7.16 (5.85)
8	Winnowing and sun drying	Hand/winnowing		2.66 (4.62)	2.5	0	5.16 (4.21)
	Total			57.62 (100)	54.91 (100)	9.96 (100)	122.49 (100)

(Figures in parentheses indicates percentages)

4. Extent of Women Unemployment in Agriculture and the Alternative Sources of Employment

The extent of unemployment of women laborers is given in Table 4. The unemployment days were maximum during Zaid season (110 days) which accounted for 45.3 per cent.

4.1. Alternative sources of employment for women laborers in agriculture

Because of absence of irrigation facilities in the study region no crops were raised during Zaid season. It was off season for agricultural activities and women laborers could not find any job in agriculture during this season. As a result the women

laborers had to find alternate sources of employment (Table 4.1)

Table 4: Season wise unemployment of women laborers in agriculture

Season	Unemployment days per worker	
	Days	Percentage
Kharif	64.38	26.55
Rabi	68.09	28.08
Zaid	110.04	45.37
Total	242.51	100

Table 4.1: Alternative sources of employment for women laborers in agriculture

No.	Sources	No. of laborers involved	Months	Average No. of days	Wage rate (Rs. Per day)
1.	Domestic work	10	Feb, Mar, April	20-90	50-60
2.	Construction	12	Feb, March	30-60	120
3.	Fence making	2	Feb	25	100
4.	Harvesting in nearby villages	3	Feb	30	100
	Total	27			
	Labors not moved to other jobs	3			
	Total Laborers	30			

5. Impact of seasonal woman unemployment in agriculture

The impact of seasonal woman unemployment in agriculture on the income of the laborers, their family consumption expenditure, their savings and debt position and their migratory behavior is presented in Table 5.

6. Suggestions of women laborers to overcome the problem of unemployment during off season

The women laborers had some suggestions of their own to overcome the problem of unemployment (Table 6). About 4 laborers did not have any suggestion.

Table 5: Impact of seasonal unemployment of woman labor in agriculture

SL	Variable (Average)	Kharif & Rabi (Rs.)	Zaid (Rs.)	Percentage change No
1	Income (Wage earnings)	11000	4750	-56.8
2	Food Items	8010	7162	-10.58
3	Nonfood Items	5233	4313	-17.58
4	Savings	980	420	-57
5	Debt position	1730	3200	45.9

Table 6: Suggestions of women laborers to overcome the problem of unemployment

No.	Suggestions offering suggestion	No. of laborers	Percentage
1	Employment guarantee programs like NREGS should be implemented properly to assure 100 days of work in a year	5	16.6
2	SHG activities should be enhanced and training for developing entrepreneurial skills should be provided	2	6.6
3	Training should be given for skill improvement in the use of new technologies in agriculture	3	10
4	Wage rate should be increased so as to increase savings and reduce debt	9	30
5	Loan should be provided free of interest to buy poultry and livestock etc.	7	23.3
6	No suggestions	4	13.3

4. Conclusion

1. It is found that the women laborers got employment in agriculture for only one third of the total days in a year. The rest of the days they are unemployed.
2. The women laborers are found to be involved in only specific crops and specific activities in agriculture. They are not involved in any mechanical operations due to their lack of skill and as a result they are not getting employment for more number of days.
3. In the study area Zaid season is the off season in agriculture as the fields are left fallow due to lack of irrigation facilities. Women laborers are unemployed for most of the days. Some laborers were involved in employment guarantee programs and also other nonagricultural activities, but only for a few days.
4. The seasonal unemployment of women laborers has severe negative impact on their income, consumption expenditure and savings. The debt position of the laborers also worsened.
5. The women laborers had many suggestions to overcome the problem of unemployment during off season like proper implementation of employment guarantee programs, higher wages in agriculture, training to improve skill and for starting entrepreneurship activities and provide loans without much formalities.

Suggestions

1. Steps should be taken to impart entrepreneurship training to the laborers in activities like mushroom cultivation, food processing, dairying etc. This should be done with the co-ordinate efforts of government departments, NGOs, SHGs etc. This will help them to gain self-employment and good income.
2. Efforts should be made to impart training for laborers to handle agricultural implements and machineries. For this there is a need to organize the women agricultural laborers and form a labor pool or labor bank at the village level. The farmers in the area, the local authorities and the laborers together should work for this. Thus they can get higher wages and they will feel a status for their work.
3. Steps should be taken to provide nonfarm employment for more number of days. The local authorities should implement the employment guarantee programs in such a way that the prescribed days of employment is assured.
4. To provide sufficient alternative employment sources for the laborers so that they can earn good income during off season.
5. The suggestions are to be considered and suitable policies are to be formulated to provide the women laborers with wages on par with their male counterparts. Loans should be

disbursed quickly and at lower interest rates, sufficient alternative employment sources should be provided in their village itself and skill development programs should be initiated.

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