



RESEARCH ARTICLE

STUDY OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF FARMERS IN DROUGHT PRONE REGIONS OF MAHARASHTRA, INDIA- A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Background: Socioeconomic status of farmers plays a key role in agriculture. It is observed that eventually with time there has been a significant change in the overall life style of the farmers. Further the farmers are trying to increase their income level by investing more in agriculture activities.

Purpose: The research work focuses on systematic assessment of socioeconomic status of the farmers from drought prone region of Maharashtra, India.

Methodology: The area selected for the study was Khatav Taluka, a semi-arid region of Satara district of Maharashtra. Three villages were selected randomly from this area. The average annual rainfall varies from 250 to 300 mm and thus it is categorized as a drought affected region. Stratified random sampling method was employed for the collection of socio-economic data. Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used for analysis of the data.

Findings: A survey of 59 farmers was made from several villages of Satara district. Number of family members, debt, loan recovery capacity, number of animals, cultivated crops, source of income and source of irrigation were some of the common terms taken from the literature for the discussion on the socio-economic status of the farmers.

Research Implications / Limitations: Similar studies can be carried out to all the other drought prone tehsils of Vidharba region of Maharashtra.

Originality: The study may be useful to formulate the policies to improve upon the socio-economic status of the farmers in Maharashtra.

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture plays an important role in India's Economy. Agriculture and its allied sectors are the principal sources of livelihood for more than 58% of the population in India. It plays a significant role in the overall socio-economic development of India (Anonymous, 2013). As per estimates by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), the agriculture and allied sectors contribute 16.1% of the Gross Value Added (GVA) during 2014-15 at 2011-12 prices. During the first quarter for Year 2016, agriculture and allied sectors grew 1.9 per cent year-on-year and contributed 14.2 per cent of GVA (Anonymous, 2016).

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Socio-economic status of the farmers plays an important role in agriculture in India. The socioeconomic, psychosocial, situational factors are the major causes of suicides of farmers in India (Kale et al., 2014, Mohanty, 2016). From the literature we have found that there has a lot of research being done on Indian farmers however the socio economic status has been explored in few research papers indicating the economic status of our farmers. The results of the survey conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi throughout India showed that, 72% farmers like farming and out of them 60% of them traditional occupation is agriculture. At the same time 36% farmers feel that agriculture does not give a good income (Anonymous, 2016). Land holdings of the farmers have strong association with economic motivation of the farmers (Singh et al., 2009). Kar and Dhar in their study have reported that the socio economic status of the farmers are

determined by several factors like below poverty line, literacy level of the farmers and loan requirements. They explored the study that a large number of farmers who have more family members are below poverty line. This is due to the fact that the farmers are unable to meet their requirements of the members with the income gained from farming. With low economic status and literacy level they have been suffering from several disorders like back pain, leg pain and muscular disorder due to bending for a long time during farming practices. Babatunde *et al.*, 2007 also studied the drivers of socio economic status and found that the food security, farm size, household income, household size, education level and credit systems are some of the important drivers for the socio economic status of the farmers. Abraham, 2008 reported in his study that employment of farmers is the most important factor for meeting the requirements of all the members of the family. Many farmers apart from farming have gone for entrepreneurship and some shops to increase their annual income. Mohan, 2004 have studied that agriculture credit system supports the farmers for the supply of inputs like seeds, fertilizers and irrigation. This has led farmers to survive at the times of need and increase their socio economic status. Current Study focuses on systematic study of socioeconomic status of farmers from semiarid region of Maharashtra.

Study Area: Area selected for the study is Khatav Taluka is a semi-arid region of Satara district in the Indian state of Maharashtra. The average annual rainfall varies from 250mm to 300mm and thus it is categorized as a drought affected region. The major crops cultivated in the region are Sorghum, Bajara and Groundnut. Table 1 shows the profile of the farmers for the study area.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The stratified random sample method was used for collection of socioeconomic data. Three villages were selected randomly for the same. Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used for analysis of the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A survey of 59 farmers was made from several villages of Satara district. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select the farmers. The reliability and validity was checked through cronbach alpha and the normality of data was checked. The data was found to be normally distributed and reliable for research.

Table 1. Type of Farmers for Study Area

Data About	Marginal	Small	Semi-Medium	Medium	Large	Grand Total
Farmers Count	52040	19860	16988	3954	125	21067
Area (in hectors)	27828.67	22144.89	42852.74	18092.59	1729.72	62675.05

(Source: Agriculture Census : 2001)

Table 2. Percentage of farmers below poverty line

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	39	66.1	66.1
	1	20	33.9	100.0
Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Table 3. Status of number of family members, cows, goats, poultry and loan amount taken

Details	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Total Number of Family Members	59	1	14	6.68	3.042
Total Land (In Hect.)	59	0	17	2.33	2.857
Total No. of Cows and Bufflaos	59	0	20	2.71	4.955
Total number of she goats	59	0	15	1.49	3.059
Number of poultry birds	59	0	20	2.90	4.322
Loan Amount Taken from Bank/Any Sources (in Rs)	59	0	200000	26483.05	50744.710

Table 4. Source of Irrigation for the farmers

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	38	64.4	64.4
	Well	20	33.9	98.3
	Other	1	1.7	100.0
Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. Status of farmer's membership in self-help groups

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	NO	43	72.9	72.9
	YES	16	27.1	100.0
Total	59	100.0	100.0	

Below poverty Line

The farmers from study area belonged to either rich or middle class category. Table 2 shows that only 33.9% of the farmers from study area were poor. It has been found from the survey that most of the farmers who have more number of family members are below poverty line. This is due to the fact that the farmers are unable to meet the requirement of their family members. Therefore the children of the farmers go for farming or labour at a very young age to clear the debt of their parents. In the mean time if any of the parent dies then the children have to clear the debts and the chain of slavery continues. The farmers of study area have developed themselves as compared to the past. From the Table 3 we can depict that the maximum number of family members was found to be 14 which was a major cause of poverty. The farmers keep cows, goat, sheep and poultry as a source for milk, egg and other source of income.

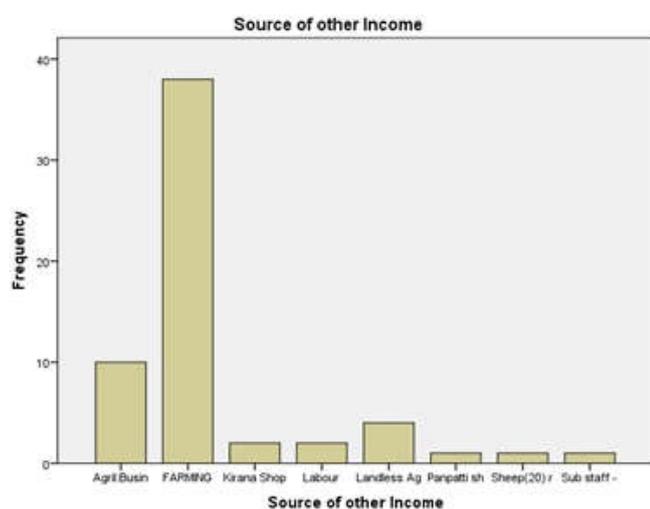


Figure 1. Source of other Income for the farmers

Crop Production: Majority of the farmers grow Bajra as Kharif crop, wheat and Jowar as rabi crops.

Source of Irrigation: The table 4 shows that around 64% of the farmers have no source of irrigation and only 33.9% of farmers go for irrigation through well. The figure says that most of the farmers are dependent upon rainfall as a source of irrigation.

Self- Help Group: The table 5 shows that farmers are moving towards self help groups and it has been found that 27% of the farmers are members of self help groups.

Source of other Income: With increasing awareness farmers are not only dependent to farming as the only source of their income but they have also done agribusiness, kirana shops, sheep rearing, labour and as a worker. The figure 1 clearly depicts that the farmers are also trying to indulge in other activities for the source of income.

Conclusion

The paper has explored the socio economic status of the farmers of the villages of study area. With time and increasing

awareness the farmers have shown a drastic change in their life style. The farmers are aware of the increasing needs and requirements. Survival of farmers in the semiarid region has somewhat improved as compared from the past trends. Several self help groups have helped the farmers to improve their life style. The animals are the assets for the farmers of these regions. With increasing awareness several farmers have made their survival easy by some agribusiness and entrepreneurial activities. Today the farmers are trying to increase their income however the study shows that the tendency of taking loan from the banks by the farmers has to be studied and can be taken as a future research.

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