

## Socio-economics dimensions of poverty among cotton growing farmers in Karnataka

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### ABSTRACT

An attempt has been made to analyze the dimensions of poverty among cotton growing farmers in Northern Karnataka districts of Haveri and Bellary which were purposively selected. A sample of 200 farmers was selected through a stratified random sampling method. The families of the cotton growing farmers were interviewed during the crop year 2007-08 with a pre-tested questionnaire. The results indicated that most of the annual family incomes were below Rs.25,000 and averaged at Rs.1,26,328 while the annual expenses were Rs.1,22,857. The average size of the holdings was 2.88 hectares. The returns from cotton cultivation ranged from Rs. 1,535 to Rs.12, 246/ha., increasing with the size of holding. All respondents were debtors with nearly half of them defaulters to the loans taken while others were repayers to different extents. Loan utilization was mostly to the purpose borrowed which was for raising crops and loan defaults was due to crop failure or low price. Lending sources were mainly banks and money lenders the latter charging twice as much as banks as interest. Owned property was also sold to clear-off old debt repayment, marriage and medical expenses. Migration to seek seasonal jobs was seen among 10 to 22 % of the respondents, which seasonally supplemented their incomes to as much as 10% of their annual income. External factors that were quoted by the farmers as the reasons for their poverty were lack of proper market mechanism for their agricultural produce, inadequate supply of inputs, credit, power etc. for cultivation.

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### INTRODUCTION

Cotton is one of the most important commercial crops playing a major role in economic, political and social affairs of India. In India, cotton industry ranks first in the agro-based industry and engages about 4 to 5 million people. The hybrid cottons and of late, genetically modified Bt. cotton largely dominates the irrigated sector of cotton cultivation.

Karnataka is one of the nine major cotton-growing states in the country. During 2007-08, area under cotton in Karnataka was 3.71 lakh hectares with production of 8 lakh bales (170 kgs/bale) and productivity is 367 kgs per hectare. The main cotton growing districts in Karnataka are Dharwad, Haveri, Mysore, Gadag, Bellary, Belgaum, Raichur, and Gulbarga. There is a fluctuation in cotton area, production and productivity over the years owing to various factors such as weather and price (Anonymous, 2005). Cotton has been in the news in the state for reasons of farmers' distress. Cotton has been projected as the reasons for the insolvency of farmers and even their suicides. The present paper focuses on how farmers progressively degenerate into financial crisis within an environment of public

goods.

### METHODOLOGY

A purposive sampling technique was adopted for the selection of districts, taluks and villages were selected based on the highest area under cotton cultivation and the number of farmer's suicides in the area. Thus, two districts viz., Haveri and Bellary were selected for the study. From each district, two taluks were selected viz., from Haveri district, Haveri and Shiggoan taluks and from Bellary district, Bellary and Siraguppa taluks were selected for the investigation. From each taluk, five villages were selected. From each village, ten farmers, consistently growing cotton were randomly selected; from each district 50 small (<2 ha.) and 50 big (2 to 4 ha.) farmers were selected.

Thus, 100 farmers were totally selected from each district. The total sample size constituted for the study was 200 respondents. The primary data were collected from the sample respondents through personal interview with the help of well structured pre-tested schedule. The study pertained to the crop year 2007-2008. Secondary data were also collected from the State Department of Agriculture. The collected data were analyzed by applying

### Key words :

Cotton, Poverty, migration, Public goods

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