

Income and consumption pattern of marginal and small farmers in Punjab: An analysis from livelihood security perspective

A.S. BHULLAR, MANDEEP SINGH AND INDERPREET KAUR

ABSTRACT

The present study has examined the role of various factors, especially of off-farm income and farm business income from dairy, towards the livelihood security of marginal and small farmers along with the analysis of their income and expenditure pattern in Punjab. It has been found that dairy and off-farm income were the major players in the economy of the marginal and small farmers. The contribution of dairy towards growth in farm business income was more in comparison to contribution of crop production. It has been witnessed that the dairy enterprise not only compensated the decline in employment in crop production but also ensured the net gain in employment on marginal and small farms. As far as nutritional security of these farmers is concerned, it was found that the marginal and small farmers' families were experiencing a shortfall in the consumption levels of fruits, vegetables, pulses and fats and oils while they were consuming milk over and above the recommended levels. The study has suggested that in order to ensure livelihood security of marginal and small farmers, all efforts should be made to promote dairy farming and create off-farm employment opportunities. Besides, these farmers must produce fruits, vegetables and pulses at their own farm in order to have an economic access to balanced food.

KEY WORDS : Farmers, Farm income, Livelihood

Bhullar, A.S., Singh, Mandeep and Kaur, Inderpreet (2010). Income and consumption pattern of marginal and small farmers in Punjab: An analysis from livelihood security perspective, *Adv. Res. J. Soc. Sci.*, 1 (2) : 77-82.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture continues to hold the prime place in Indian economy since time immemorial. It is well known that farming in India, is the major occupation supporting 67 per cent of the population for their livelihood and about 17 per cent of gross national product is derived from this sector of the economy in 2008 (National Accounts Statistics, 2009). The rapid increase in population, subdivision and fragmentation of land holdings and the changed family system from joint to nuclear families in rural India has made the size of holdings smaller and smaller. The small and marginal farmers account for nearly 82 per cent of the total operational holdings in the country, cultivating about 39 per cent of the total area (Government of Punjab, 2009). This group is mainly embroiled in the vicious cycle of low savings and even dissavings, low investments and low returns. Besides this, the major problems of this group are surplus family labour, both under nutrition and

malnutrition and the possession of un-economic size of farm holdings, which keep them in the state of poverty (Pandey and Kaushal, 1980). Punjab is one of the most progressive states of India and is having a similar type of land distribution though much better than the Indian situation. Out of 9.97 lakh total holdings, as per the agricultural census of 2000-01, the number of small and marginal holdings was 1.73 lakh (17.4%) and 1.23 lakh (12.3%), respectively.

It has been noticed in Punjab that living in nearly the same socio-economic environment, some of the marginal and small farmers have been able to achieve livelihood security while others have failed to do so. There are multiple factors responsible for this. Broadly, the likely factors are education level of the farmers, family size, farm size, fixed investment, off-farm income, domestic expenditure and the productivity of crops. Earlier studies conducted by Pandey and Kaushal (1980), Vaidya (1993) and Singla

Correspondence to:

MANDEEP SINGH, Department of Economics and Sociology, Punjab Agricultural University, LUDHIANA (PUNJAB) INDIA
E.mail : ms_fass@yahoo.co.in

Authors' affiliations:

A.S. BHULLAR AND INDERPREET KAUR, Department of Economics and Sociology, Punjab Agricultural University, LUDHIANA (PUNJAB) INDIA