



Research Paper

Temporal shifts in employment pattern of rural landless in Punjab

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ABSTRACT : With the advent of the green revolution after mid sixties, the share of agriculture in Punjab shifted upwards up to 1994-95 and declined thereafter. The decline in employment elasticity of agriculture resulted in fall in demand of human labour over time. The increasing dependence of rural people on agriculture and its inability to absorb any further labour gainfully helped to move labour from agriculture to the non-farm sources of employment. The present study is an attempt at studying the pattern of shift in employment of rural landless labour from that of their ancestral or past occupation. A sample of 120 rural landless workers was selected from the central zone of Punjab using multi-stage random sampling technique to obtain information on occupation, nature and extent of employment and sources of income of the rural landless for the year 2006-07. It was found that rural landless workers shifted their employment from their paternal occupation in the industry of Agriculture to the industries of CSP services, Trade, Construction, and TSC services. Over time, there was negative employment in Agriculture in the casual and regular worker status. In the casual worker status, however, there was a preference for the industry of Construction and Trade. In the regular worker status, there was a preference for the industry of Manufacturing, CSP services, Trade and TSC services. And, in the own account worker category, there was a preference for the industry of Trade, CSP services and TSC services. The main reason for leaving the past employment can be attributed to lower wage and higher drudgery in agriculture. This may be attributed to the low educational base of these people. The provision of appropriate vocational training, creation of non-farm employment opportunities and providing sufficient credit facilities in the rural area may help encourage individual enterprise and self-help groups to raise small scale units in the field of manufacturing, trade and construction.

KEY WORDS : Temporal shifts, labour, Elasticity

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INTRODUCTION

Agricultural development in the agrarian state of Punjab has been most spectacular, particularly after mid sixties, with the advent of the green revolution in the country. The share of agriculture in the Punjab economy shifted upward up to 46.28 per cent in 1994-95 and declined thereafter (Central Statistical Organisation 2004). The average size of holding increased from 3.6 hectares in 1990-91 to 4 hectares in 2000-01 (Govt. of Punjab) and the number of landless households in Punjab increased by 29.37 per cent from 1991 to 2001 (Statistical Abstract of Punjab, 2007). The slow gain in labour productivity in agriculture was a reflection of the inability of the agriculture sector to absorb any further labour gainfully and the slow

transfer of labour from agriculture reflected the inability of the non-agriculture sector to create employment rapidly enough (Bhaduri, 1996).

Decline in employment elasticity of agriculture has resulted in fall in demand of human labour from 479.32 million mandays in 1983-84 to 421.93 million mandays in 2000-01 (Sidhu and Singh, 2004). The section of the people that is most likely to hit hard by this crisis is rural landless households. Sinha (2007) observed that people come to work in the non-farm sector because they get better income than the farm sector and income was one of the pull factors responsible for shift of the households from farm to non-farm sector. The developmental factors like modernization of agriculture and its commercialization, increased demand for non-agricultural