Socio-economic Profile of Rice Farmers: A Study of West Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh

Social Science

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ABSTRACT   *The study was conducted to investigate the socioeconomic profiles of rice farmers of the West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh whose economy is mainly driven by agriculture with rice as the major food crop and staple food. Multistage stratified random sampling technique was adopted for selection of the sample with districts as the first stage units, mandals as the second stage units, villages as the third stage units and farm holdings as the final and ultimate stage units. An analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of the sample farmers viz., age, size and type of family, educational profile, experience in rice cultivation, sources of irrigation and occupational structure was carried out. The average age, education and experience of the sample farmers was 47.08, 8.36 and 23.36 years. The major source of irrigation of rice crop for sample farmers was found to be canals. Agriculture was the primary occupation of sample rice farmers.*

INTRODUCTION

The study was conducted in the West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh which is popularly known as the Granary of India since it contributes about 50% of rice production. The economy of the district is mainly driven by agriculture with rice as the major food crop and staple food. Hence the socioeconomic profile of rice farmers in the district was examined to have a clear-cut comprehensive idea about the composition of the respondents in the study area which will be useful to derive valid conclusions to suggest better location-specific feasible solutions for the improvement of efficiency in the study area. The mandal map of the West Godavari district is depicted in fig.1.

Generally the socioeconomic analysis focuses on identifying the adaptive capacity of individuals or communities based on their internal characteristics such as age, education etc. In this study the socio-economic characteristics of the sample farmers included age, family size, type of the family, educational profile, experience in rice cultivation, sources of irrigation and occupational structure.

Fig.1 Mandal/Tehsil map of West Godavari district.

METHODOLOGY

Multistage stratified random sampling technique was adopted for selection of the sample with district as the first stage units, mandals/tehsils as the second stage units (2 from each district), six villages (3 from each mandal) as the third stage units and 120 farm holdings (twenty from each village) as the final and ultimate stage units.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Age of the sample farmers

Age has a bearing on the farmers' risk taking attitude and innovativeness in adopting new technologies. The results revealed that 65.83% of the farmers were middle aged. The average age of the sample farmers was 47.08 years indicating that majority of the farmers in the study area were middle aged, agile and were actively taking part in rice cultivation.

Family size and type of family

Family size also has a great role to play in provision of family labour in agricultural sector. 60%, 34.17% and 5.83% of the farmers had small, medium and large sized families. Thus majority (94.17%) of the farmers owned small and medium sized families.

A study of the type of family indicated that majority of the farmers (76.67%) followed nuclear family system which showed the general inclination among the sample farmers towards having nuclear family where decision making would be quick and easier compared to joint family.

Educational profile

Farmers need a basic level of education to understand and read relevant news, rules and notices which can affect productivity significantly. (Alam *et al.*, 2011).

The average years of schooling for sample farmers were 8.36 years. Majority of the farmers (43.33%) were educated up to SSC to intermediate level followed by those with primary education (33.33%). Percentage of illiterates was 12.50% whereas the percentage of graduates was 10.83% as seen in Table 1.

Experience in rice cultivation (in years)

In order to have efficiency in crop management it is essential that farmers have experience in raising a particular crop. (Onumadu and Osahan, 2014). The average level of experience of sam-

ple rice farmers was 23.36 years. About 46.67% and 30.83% of the farmers had an experience of 21 to 30 years and 11 to 20 years respectively in raising rice crop respectively.

Table 1. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF SAMPLE RICE FARMERS

S.No.	Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age	Young (<30)	2	1.67
		Middle (30-50)	79	68.53
		Old (>50)	39	32.50
2.	Family size	Small (1-4)	72	60.00
		Medium (5-7)	41	34.17
		Large (>8)	7	5.83
3.	Type of Family	Nuclear	92	76.67
		Joint	28	23.33
4.	Education	Illiterate	15	12.50
		Below SSC	40	33.33
		SSC to Intermediate	52	43.33
		Graduate & above	13	10.83
5.	Experience in rice cultivation	Up to 10	15	12.50
		11 to 20	37	30.83
		21 to 30	56	46.67
		>30	12	10.00
6.	Sources of irrigation	Canal	78	65.00
		Canal + Bore well	25	20.83
		Bore well	17	14.17
7.	Primary occupation	Agriculture	120	100.00
8.	Secondary occupation	Fish/shrimp tanks	16	13.33

Sources of irrigation for rice crop

The major source of irrigation of rice crop for sample farmers was found to be canals (65%) followed by combination of canal and bore well (20.83%), bore well (14.17%).This may be due to the fact that the sample farms were close to the canal irrigation systems. The major sources of canal irrigation in the study area were Eluru canal and Tadipudi canals. These results are in line with the results of Anjaneyulu (2015) who indicated that there has been a decline in the tank irrigation and a steep rise in bore well irrigation particularly after the 1980s with the arrival of submersible pump sets and completion of rural electrification.

Occupational structure

Agriculture was the primary occupation of 100% of sample rice farmers. Thus the economy of the district was found to be predominantly agriculture-based. 13.33% of the farmers had fish or shrimp culture as secondary occupation which might be because West Godavari Delta was favourable for fish farming and hence many areas under rice cultivation also were being converted to lucrative fish and shrimp tanks which is an increasing threat to rice cultivation.

CONCLUSION

The average age of the sample farmers was 47.08 years indicating that majority of the farmers in the study area were middle aged, agile and were actively taking part in paddy cultivation. Majority (94.17%) of the farmers were found to own small and medium sized families. The results showed the general inclination among the sample farmers towards having nuclear family. The average years of schooling for sample farmers were 8.36 years. The average level of experience of sample rice farmers was 23.36 years.

The major source of irrigation of rice crop for sample farmers was found to be canals followed by combination of canal and bore well and bore well. Agriculture was the primary occupation of sample rice farmers. Most of the farmers had fish or shrimp culture as secondary occupation which might be because West Godavari Delta was favourable for fish farming and hence many areas under rice cultivation also were being converted to lucrative fish and shrimp tanks which is an increasing threat to rice cultivation.

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