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Lastly, a word about agricultural wages. Periodical censuses of rural wages were taken at irregular intervals in Bihar in 1911, 1916, 1924 and 1932. The daily rates of wages of certain categories of workers such as ploughmen, gharamies, etc. were collected from a dozen representative villages in each sub-division. Since April 1948 fortnightly wage statistics of agricultural labour are being collected regularly. One village in each district has been selected as a representative unit and money wages and cash equivalent of wages in kind are being collected by the staff of the Superintendent of Agricultural Statistics from (a) field labourers, (b) herdsmen and (c) other agricultural labourers on the 15th and last day of each month, and the wages of men, women and children are shown separately.

### POSITION OF FARM LABOUR IN CONTAI

by

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and

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A survey was conducted by the authors in the middle of October 1945 in five villages which were badly affected during the Flood and the Famine of 1943. Five villages\* were fully covered by the survey and included 167 families in all. Among other points of enquiry about the economic condition of these families certain data were obtained regarding the demand and supply of farm labour and the cattle in the villages concerned. In this article the position in the villages regarding farm labour will be discussed.

Before going into the position of farm labour it is necessary to find out the nature of the organisation of farming (whether in small or medium or big holdings) in the area. Table (I) gives the number of families classified by the acreage cultivated by them in 1945 and the mean area owned by such groups.

TABLE 1

Acreage Cultivated	No. of families in 1945	P.C. of families.	Mean area owned per family.
0	41	24.5	0.33
Up to 1 acre .. ..	30	17.9	0.44
Up to 2 acres. .. ..	21	12.5	0.45
Up to 3 acres. .. ..	24	14.2	0.74
Up to 4 acres. .. ..	17	10.1	1.10
Up to 5 acres. .. ..	14	8.3	1.24
5 to 10 acres. .. ..	16	9.5	5.34
Above 10 acres. .. ..	4	2.4	3.22
Total .. ..	167	100.0	1.13

\*The five villages covered in the survey are (1) Patapukuria, (2) Kaltolia, (3) Hatiberya, (4) South Patapukuria and (5) Kushbani, all within a range of 10 miles from Contai town.

It may be noted that only 2.4 percent of the families cultivated holdings about 10 acres and only 11.9 percent holdings above 5 acres. Further in most groups mean area owned is quite small compared to the area cultivated by such groups. Obviously, therefore, all the five villages have been hard hit during the famine and flood and reduced to poverty stricken existence. A further idea of the economic position of these families can be had from the number of earners per family and the number of cattle. After land obviously these two items are the most important index to the productive abilities of a family.

TABLE 2

Acreage Cultivated	No. of families	Mean number per family	
		Earners	Cattle
0	41	0.88	—
0 to 1.0	30	1.13	0.23
1 to 2.0	21	1.14	0.52
2 to 3.0	24	1.12	0.75
3 to 4.0	17	1.47	1.35
4 to 5.0	14	1.36	1.57
5 to 10.0	16	2.00	2.25
10 to ....	4	3.00	3.25
Total ..	167	1.25	0.78

It will be seen that both the number of earners as also cattle show an increasing trend with the increase in the size of cultivated holding. Further very few families in the groups cultivating up to 5 acres own a pair of bullocks. Hiring cattle for cultivation is, therefore, a very frequent need for cultivation in most of the families. The table below shows the proportion of families in each group who were forced to hire cattle for cultivation.

TABLE 3

Area Cultivated. acres.	No. of families.	P.C. hiring cattle.
0	41	—
1	30	64.6
2	21	84.6
3	24	68.8
4	17	41.3
5	14	42.6
10	16	31.5
Above 10	4	50.0
Total ..	167	43.7

The poorer the family the worse off is its position regarding cattle. Excluding the group above 10, where the samples are too small, cattle hire is much more frequent in the groups which are cultivating comparatively smaller holdings. Naturally such families can ill-afford the extra expense as their own holdings are also quite small.

As regards the next item, viz., available man power for cultivation, the following figures give an idea of the labour-days hired per family in different groups.

TABLE 4

Acreage cultivated.	No. of families.	No. of hired man-days per acre.	No. of earners per family.
0	41	—	0.88
1	30	2.7	1.13
2	21	1.3	1.14
3	24	10.0	1.12
4	17	7.8	1.47
5	14	8.7	1.36
10	16	14.1	2.00
Above 10	4	1.6	3.00

An interesting feature to be noted is that the families cultivating above 10 acres having a larger man power employed almost an insignificant proportion of hired labour in the field. But all the other groups, specially those tilling above 2 acres had to employ some hired labour on the field during the busy periods because of lack of sufficient man power. Only the group 5-10 acres seems to be somewhat better off with 2 earners per family, although there also considerable amount of outside labour was hired. The farmers in the small group with holdings above 10 acres are very industrious but poor as their own holding was only 3.22 acres per family as seen earlier.

Let us now turn to the broader aspect of the problem—the question of the proportions of domestic labour offered on hire and that actually required on the farms. The following figures give the percentage of families who offer labour on hire and the percentage who need it in the different groups.

TABLE 5

Acreage Cultivated	No. of families	Percentage of families offering hired labour.	Percentage of families requiring hired labour.
0	41	57.2	—
1	30	51.0	13.6
2	21	70.5	4.7
3	24	15.6	38.7
4	17	41.3	29.5
5	14	42.6	42.6
10	16	25.2	63.0
above 10	4	75.0	50.0
Total ..	167	50.0	22.0

It will be seen that there is a keen competition in the labour market by families offering hired labour from practically all the groups. Out of 167 families 50 percent are trying to seek employment as farm labourers. But the requirement is comparatively much smaller. This brings out the acute economic conditions of these fa-

milies as also the unemployment or underemployment prevalent in practically all the families in the village.

Thus we saw that due to the cyclone and famine the economic position of most of the families have deteriorated. In particular, there is an acute shortage of cattle felt by poorer families. A large number of families have been forced to compete in the labour market for either livelihood or for supplementing the income from agriculture. But as the locality could not absorb all the labour there arose unemployment or underemployment which in turn reduced wages.

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## OBSTACLES TO GROW MORE FOOD

by

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This enquiry was undertaken by the Agricultural Economics Section of the University School of Economics and Sociology, Bombay, in collaboration with the Rural Economics Research Section of the Reserve Bank of India with a view to finding out the obstacles to the Grow More Food Campaign. Field investigations were made in 3 Districts of the Bombay Province by the School of Economics and in 2 by the Reserve Bank. (West Khandesh, Dharwar, Surat; Ahmednagar, Thana.) Regions were selected with varying economic and agricultural conditions, particularly those in which the food crops experienced competition from commercial crops like groundnuts and/or cotton. Ten villages were selected from one Taluka in each District and 10 to 15 farmers in each of the selected villages were intensively examined.

### *Acreage and Production.*

In all the areas investigated there has been a substantial increase in the acreage under foodgrains, but production as judged by the official figures is either stagnant or shows a decline.

The increase in acreage is achieved mainly through diversion of land under cotton and to some small extent the increase in the double-cropped area. Strangely, however, no inroads have been made in the "current fallow", which in some districts like Dharwar form a significant percentage of the "cultivable" land. That these lands should not come under the plough inspite of such chronic shortages and high prices is a phenomenon which is hard to explain. Our investigation revealed that some of these lands were actually under cultivation only a few years back. In some districts detail classification of "current fallows" is available and not a small portion of these is classed fallow *due to neglect*. Such a situation takes away much sense from the Central Government's Land Reclamation Projects. While large areas