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EMPLOYMENT OF AGRICULTURAL LABOUR IN DINDIGUL
TALUK OF MADRAS STATE

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The study has been designed with a view to considering the effects of urbanization, irrigation and the size of holdings on employment of agricultural labour. The region under study is divided into two zones, *i.e.*, urban and rural villages. The villages within a radius of five miles from Dindigul town are classified as urban villages, while villages located beyond ten miles from the town are classified as rural villages. Again, holdings within each village are classified into three sizes, *viz.*, 0—3 acres, 3—6 acres and above 6 acres. Thus nine holdings are obtained from each sample village. The total number of holdings selected thus is 36.

Background Study of the Sample Holdings

The study of the sample holdings shows that while paddy is the only crop grown in the irrigated urban village, groundnut occupies the position of a supplementary crop enterprise with a relative importance of 20 per cent of the gross cropped area in the irrigated rural village. As compared to specialisation of paddy in irrigated villages, there is greater degree of diversification in the non-irrigated villages with groundnut, gingili, *samai* and sorghum. Further, while the intensity of cropping ranged between 167.56 to 200 in the irrigated, it never went up more than 100 in the non-irrigated villages. With regard to non-farm occupations, it may be indicated that the taluk headquarter is a business and industrial centre. It produces leather goods, steel products, copper brass works, horn products, cotton spinning and weaving, match factory, etc. All this is reflected in the pattern and extent of employment in the area.

PATTERN AND EXTENT OF EMPLOYMENT

To study the pattern and extent of employment in the sample villages we have to consider the working force, agricultural and non-agricultural occupations, intensity of cropping, pattern of cropping, irrigational facilities, size of farm and proximity to urban areas. All these will determine the pattern and extent of employment.

Working Strength

Employment of the cultivating family depends on the number of workers in the family and the number of productive days employed by each worker. The differences in earning strength in different size-groups of holdings among the selected four categories of villages are shown in Table I.

TABLE I—NUMBER OF WORKING EARNERS PER ACRE IN DIFFERENT SIZE-GROUPS OF HOLDINGS IN THE FOUR CATEGORIES OF SELECTED VILLAGES

(in man units)

Nature of village	Urban				Rural			
	Size of holdings (acres)				Size of holdings (acres)			
	0—3	3—6	6 and above	Average	0—3	3—6	6 and above	Average
Irrigated	1.37	0.32	0.16	0.74	2.80	0.55	0.31	1.22
Non-irrigated	0.93	0.50	0.22	0.55	1.00	0.55	0.26	0.60

It is observed from the table that the rural villages have greater man unit per acre than the urban villages. It is obvious, therefore, that the pressure of population in agriculture is less in the urban villages. The difference appears to be significant. Similarly, the irrigated villages have a larger number of labour force than the non-irrigated villages irrespective of whether they are urban or rural. Further, there is greater concentration of labour in smaller holdings in all the four types of villages.

Total Days of Employment

Total days of employment depend upon farm and non-farm occupations available in the villages. The differences in the total days of employment of family labour in different size-groups of holdings in the four categories of villages are presented in Table II.

TABLE II—TOTAL NUMBER OF DAYS EMPLOYED PER FAMILY PER YEAR IN DIFFERENT SIZE-GROUPS OF HOLDINGS IN THE FOUR CATEGORIES OF VILLAGES

(in man-days)

Nature of village	Urban				Rural			
	Size of holdings (acres)				Size of holdings (acres)			
	0—3	3—6	6 and above	Average	0—3	3—6	6 and above	Average
Irrigated	664.2 (68.28)	224.0 (44.09)	239.0 (43.66)	383.4 (52.01)	369.0 (48.54)	373.0 (51.22)	399.2 (50.38)	380.4 (50.05)
Non-irrigated	624.2 (76.56)	552.5 (75.47)	367.8 (63.67)	483.8 (71.90)	320.2 (43.97)	348.0 (43.93)	528.2 (72.53)	398.8 (54.50)

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentages to the total available family labour.

Table II provides ample evidence of a significant difference in the effect of urbanization as against intensive agriculture with 200 per cent intensity of cropping. The stable agriculture brought about by irrigation makes the cultivators of irrigated villages more attached to it. Their mobility as a consequence thereof is reduced considerably. On the other hand, agriculture in the non-irrigated villages is much less labour-intensive with less intensity of cropping and subject to a greater degree of risks. In their pursuit of greater and stabler employment opportunities, the cultivators of these villages move to towns. Within the two irrigated villages, employment opportunities are observed to be the same irrespective of their urban and rural character. It is also interesting to note that the extent of employment in the non-irrigated rural villages compares very favourably with both the categories of irrigated villages, even without much of urban influence. It is therefore necessary to further examine this problem.

Total Farm Employment

Since agriculture is more intensive in the irrigated villages, it is naturally expected that the level of farm employment will be higher in these villages than in the non-irrigated villages. Table III proves this hypothesis.

TABLE III—TOTAL FAMILY LABOUR EMPLOYMENT IN DIFFERENT SIZE-GROUPS OF HOLDINGS IN THE FOUR TYPES OF VILLAGES

(in man-days)

Nature of village	Urban				Rural			
	Size of holdings (acres)				Size of holdings (acres)			
	0—3	3—6	6 and above	Average	0—3	3—6	6 and above	Average
Irrigated	344.5 (51.87)	224.0 (90.65)	239.0 (100.0)	269.2 (80.54)	171.8 (46.48)	306.3 (82.12)	212.5 (53.23)	230.2 (60.61)
Non-irrigated	232.5 (28.34)	181.5 (32.85)	154.8 (14.91)	189.9 (25.40)	82.2 (25.40)	155.3 (25.32)	182.5 (44.60)	140.1 (34.80)

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentages to the total family labour employment.

The table clearly brings out the fact that provision of irrigation has increased family labour employment in agriculture both in absolute number and as a percentage to the total in both the villages irrespective of their rural or urban character. This is obviously due to greater intensity of cropping and labour intensive crops adopted in these villages. Between the non-irrigated villages, the rural village, in the absence of quick accessibility to urban area, depends more on agriculture for employment than the urban non-irrigated village. The table also reveals that there is a general tendency for increased employment opportunities along with the increase in the size of holdings.

EMPLOYMENT OUTSIDE THE FARM

The nature of occupation outside the farm may be classed as (i) agricultural wage income, (ii) non-agricultural wage income, and (iii) income from non-agri-

cultural enterprises. Table IV illustrates the distribution and relative importance of family labour occupation outside the farm in various categories of villages according to different size-groups of holdings.

TABLE IV—TOTAL EMPLOYMENT OF FAMILY LABOUR OUTSIDE THE FARM IN DIFFERENT SIZE-GROUPS OF HOLDINGS IN THE FOUR TYPES OF VILLAGES

(in man-days)

Nature of village	Urban				Rural			
	Size of holdings (acres)				Size of holdings (acres)			
	0—3	3—6	6 and above	Average	0—3	3—6	6 and above	Average
Irrigated	319.7 (48.13)	20.0 (9.35)	— (—)	113.2 (19.16)	197.5 (53.52)	66.7 (17.88)	186.7 (46.77)	150.3 (39.39)
Non-irrigated	381.7 (71.66)	371.0 (67.15)	313.0 (85.09)	355.2 (74.63)	238.0 (74.68)	192.6 (55.40)	345.7 (65.51)	258.8 (65.20)

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentages to the total employment of family labour outside the farm.

It is obvious that the percentage of family labour employed in occupations outside the farm in the irrigated village is much less than in the non-irrigated village. Between the two non-irrigated villages, the percentage of employment in non-farm occupation is greater in the urban village than in the rural due to greater availability of non-farm occupations in the urban area. In regard to holdings, it is found that there is greater concentration of labour in smaller holdings causing them to move outside the farm for seeking employment. This tendency is visible in all categories of villages except the non-irrigated urban village where cultivators of different sizes move freely in search of non-farm occupations due to proximity of urban area.

Employment in Agricultural Wage Occupation

Adoption of relatively more labour intensive crop and high intensity of cropping increases the opportunity of employment in agricultural occupation in the irrigated villages as may be seen from Table V.

TABLE V—EXTENT OF EMPLOYMENT PER HOLDING IN THE AGRICULTURAL WAGE OCCUPATION IN THE FOUR TYPES OF VILLAGES ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT SIZE-GROUPS OF HOLDINGS

(percentage of total employment outside the farm)

Nature of village	Urban				Rural			
	Size of holdings (acres)				Size of holdings (acres)			
	0—3	3—6	6 and above	Average	0—3	3—6	6 and above	Average
Irrigated	16.9	42.4	—	19.6	43.8	12.3	—	18.7
Non-irrigated	15.2	10.0	2.6	9.3	29.7	43.8	8.5	27.6

Owing to the absence of employment possibility elsewhere as also in their own holdings due to extensive nature of crops cultivated in the non-irrigated rural village, the cultivators seek employment in agricultural occupations in other's holdings. This source of employment, though not relatively important, is more conspicuous in smaller holdings.

Non-agricultural Wage Occupation

The various non-agricultural wage occupations include (i) Government services, (ii) construction of roads and buildings, and (iii) private services like industries, commerce and trade, etc. Table VI specifies the relative importance of this source of employment among the four categories of villages.

TABLE VI—EXTENT OF EMPLOYMENT PER HOLDING IN NON-AGRICULTURAL WAGE OCCUPATION IN THE FOUR TYPES OF VILLAGES ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT SIZE-GROUPS OF HOLDINGS

(percentage of total employment outside the farm)

Nature of village	Urban				Rural			
	Size of holdings (acres)				Size of holdings (acres)			
	0—3	3—6	6 and above	Average	0—3	3—6	6 and above	Average
Irrigated	75.1	57.6	—	42.2	—	—	100.0	33.3
Non-irrigated	62.9	28.1	33.3	41.4	69.3	55.2	89.5	71.7

The importance of this source of employment is relatively greater in the rural non-irrigated village. The sample cultivators of this village have unlimited scope of getting employed as gangmen. As can be seen from the table, non-agricultural wage occupation provided 71.7 per cent of the total employment in non-farm occupation in this village. Among the non-farm sources of employment this source has the same degree of importance both in the irrigated and non-irrigated villages with urban influence. With regard to its variation among different size-groups of holdings, it is seen that there is a tendency of a larger percentage of smaller holders getting employed in this sector of the economy particularly in urban villages. This is partly due to lack of employment opportunities on their own holdings and partly due to their inability to invest capital for starting independent enterprises.

Employment in Non-agricultural Enterprises

Non-agricultural enterprises are those which are owned and operated by cultivators themselves. They are cattle dealing, agricultural produce dealing,

cottage industries, quarrying, shopkeeping, etc. Table VII illustrates the relative importance of family labour taking to non-agricultural enterprises in different size-groups of holdings in the four types of villages.

TABLE VII—EXTENT OF FAMILY LABOUR EMPLOYMENT PER HOLDING IN THE NON-AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES IN THE FOUR TYPES OF VILLAGES ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT SIZE-GROUPS OF HOLDINGS

(percentage of total employment outside the farm)

Nature of village	Urban				Rural			
	Size of holdings (acres)				Size of holdings (acres)			
	0—3	3—6	6 and above	Average	0—3	3—6	6 and above	Average
Irrigated	8.0	—	—	2.6	56.2	87.7	—	48.3
Non-irrigated	21.9	61.9	66.7	50.2	1.0	1.0	2.0	1.3

The relative importance of employment in the non-agricultural enterprises is obviously greater in the non-irrigated village with urban influence. This source alone provided as much as 50 per cent of the total non-farm employment. This is obviously due to the close proximity of the village to the industrial area and due to lack of employment opportunities in agriculture.

The next type of village which has some importance in this category of employment is the rural irrigated village. Though it provides occupation to roughly about half of the persons employed outside the farm in absolute terms and as a percentage to the total employment, it is much less since a large percentage of the total labour is employed in agriculture. It has importance only in respect of non-farm occupations.

It will be further observed from the above table that out of the two types of villages where this source of occupation has assumed some importance, the larger holdings have greater access to it. The reason is not far to seek. The non-agricultural enterprise calls for some investment fund which can hardly be met by small cultivators.

DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY LABOUR EMPLOYMENT IN THE FARM AND NON-FARM OCCUPATION

After having examined the relative importance of various sources of employment within the farm and outside the farm, it is necessary to make a study of the relative contribution made by each of these sources to total employment to present an overall picture. Table VIII illustrates this.

TABLE VIII—DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY LABOUR BETWEEN DIFFERENT ENTERPRISES
IN VARIOUS CATEGORIES OF VILLAGES

(percentage of total employment)

Source of employment	Urban		Rural	
	Irrigated	Non-irrigated	Irrigated	Non-irrigated
Farm employment				
Crop husbandry	54.1	11.3	40.9	24.2
Animal husbandry	26.7	14.8	21.5	11.8
Total	80.8	26.1	62.9	36.0
Occupation outside the farm				
Agricultural occupation	2.7	1.3	7.8	14.7
Non-agricultural occupation	15.2	26.5	16.6	49.0
Non-agricultural enterprise	1.3	46.1	14.2	0.3
Total	19.2	73.9	38.6	64.0

The conclusion that emerges from the table is that farm employment is more important in the villages which have facilities for irrigation irrespective of whether they are urban or rural. This holds good for crop husbandry and animal husbandry as well. It is also interesting to observe that animal husbandry has greater importance in the non-irrigated village with urban influence than crop husbandry. This can be ascribed to quick availability of market for animal husbandry products in the urban village. Similarly non-farm occupations are found to dominate in the non-irrigated areas due to meagre employment opportunities in agriculture. The only type of village which has considerable scope in non-agricultural enterprises is the non-irrigated village with urban influence. This is mainly due to the market facility.