

An Analysis of Socioeconomic Profile of Rural Sugarcane Farmers in District Muzaffar Garh, Pakistan

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Abstract

The study was conducted in district Muzaffar Garh of Pakistan during 2013 to investigate the socioeconomic profiles of rural sugarcane farmers. To this end, primary data was collected through structured questionnaire using a sample size of eighty respondents from two tehsils selected purposively, each comprising three villages selected on the basis of proportional sampling technique. Sugarcane farmers were found associated with agriculture sector. An income and, consumption pattern was found imperfect. Major occupations were farming, teaching and daily wage earners. Most of the sugarcane farmers were found uneducated and small farmers. Men commonly made decisions. Villagers used to derive their food provisions from their own farm products. Cattle, buffalo, cow and poultry were the major livestock. The major source of income was farm income. The major heads of expenditures were food such as clothing, education, health and electricity activities. The total expenditures recorded were Rs. 13800 per month. They were found engaged in subsistence level of farming. The Govt. should take steps to improve their standard of living.

Keywords: Socioeconomic; Rural; Profile; Muzaffar Garh; Pakistan

Introduction

Sugarcane is one of the major and ranked third largest crop in terms of area among 13 crops being cultivated in Pakistan (Qureshi, 2004).

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Being an important cash crop its share in value added agriculture and GDP is 3.4 % and 0.7 %, respectively (GoP, 2009). Pakistan ranks at the fifth position in production of sugarcane with 5.47 million tonnes (mt) after Brazil (51.4 mt), India (35.5 mt), China (10.63 mt) and Thailand (6.43 mt) (FAO, 2009).

Sugarcane is a popular crop of district Muzaffar Garh. It occupied a pivotal place in Muzaffar Garh's domestic livelihood security system. Most of the farmers were either directly or indirectly related with it. According to 1998 census, District Muzaffar Garh has a total population of about 2635903 of which approximately 1373036 are male while the remaining 69594 are female (NIPS, 2002). The total area of the district is 8249 square kilometer having population density 319.5 persons per square kilometer in 1998 (District Census Report, 1998). Different groups of the community have different socioeconomic profiles. Education, association, land ownership, cattle production, hired labor and machinery characterized larger producers. Pandey and Sanamongkhoun, (1998) studied households features covered: demographic characteristics and land use patterns; rice production practices, input use and economics; household income and expenditure; marketing of outputs; gender roles; sources and types of technology and information; agricultural credit; and economics of technology adoption. The present study has been designed to investigate the socioeconomic profiles of rural sugarcane farmers in district Muzaffar Garh.

Materials and Methods

District Muzaffar Garh was the universe of the study. Two Tehsils of district Muzaffar Garh (Muzaffar Garh and Kot Addu) were selected on the basis of purposive sampling technique. Three villages from each Tehsil have been selected on the basis of proportional sampling technique. For the analysis primary data was used. A sample of eighty farmers was used. Primary data was personally collected from the respondents through structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was based on both closed and open ended form questions.

The data was usually collected in the farmer's fields, homes or in community centers (deera/bethak). Simple averages, classification and tabulation were applied for the analysis of the data.

Results and Discussion

The study provided the following information regarding the socioeconomic profiles of rural sugarcane farmers of district Muzaffar Garh:

Occupation and Family Size

Agricultural sector was the main stay of the population and most of inhabitants were related either directly or indirectly with it. The economy of the district was mainly agriculture-based. Other occupations in the district included teaching and daily wage earners but these activities also supported farming. It was also observed that people engaged in those activities only after they had finished their cyclic farming duties, so we will not count up those activities as prime occupations. The average family size was found 7 per household. They used to live in joint family structure. According to population census 1998 in district Muzaffar Garh the average household size was 7.4 (District Census Report, 1998).

Health and Nutrition

The necessary health facilities were not found adequate for the rural communities of district Muzaffar Garh. There should be at least one dispensary in every village. There were two big hospitals i.e. District Hospital Muzaffar Garh and Government Civil Hospital Kot Addu but at village level there were no adequate medical facilities and these hospital were quite away from villages and they were also not fully equipped. They were found referring the patients to Multan hospitals. Some private clinics were found in villages where the dispensers used to exploit the poor peoples.

Education Level

In district Muzaffar Garh the number of male Primary and Middle schools are 542 and 72 respectively.

The female Primary and Middle Schools are 437 and 77 respectively (District Report, 2009). Among the seventy farmers 27% were found educated while the remaining 73% were uneducated which illustrated high degree of illiteracy level (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of sample farmers by level of education

Village	Educated	Uneducated	Total
Munhaan	4	12	15
Ehsan pur	6	4	10
Sheikh Umer	3	11	15
Mehmood kot	5	10	15
Basti Khara Niazi Wala	2	8	10
Khara Nawa	2	13	15
Total	22	58	80

Source: Field Survey, 2013

Size of Land Holding

Households possessed different sizes of land ownership. In the field survey it was observed that most of the farmers were small farmers. In the research area 60%, 24% and 16 % were found small, medium and large farmers respectively (Table 2).

Table 2: Farmer type

Farmers Type	Frequency	Percent
Small farmer (≤ 5 acres)	48	60.00
Medium farmers (between 5 and 12.5 acres)	19	23.75
Large farmers (≥ 12.5 acres)	13	16.25
Total	80	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2013

Variety Wise Distribution of Sample Farmers

HSF-240 was dominated sugarcane variety of the district and its growers were 39% of the total sugarcane farmers. The share of SPS-34 sugarcane is 34%. Similarly, the share of CPF-243 is 15% and 13% farmers were unaware of the variety name. Choice of variety depended on high yielding and quality (Table 3).

Table 3: Variety wise distribution

Variety	Frequency	Percent
CPF-243	12	15.00
SPS-34	27	33.75
HSF-240	31	38.75
DK	10	12.50
Total	80	100

Source: Field Survey, 2013

Labour Distribution within the Villages

The distribution of labour in the district depends upon the nature of occupation and skill. Some people performed their services on permanent Govt. jobs. Some were working on daily wages basis. Some workers were found working together in groups' forms. The head of the group was responsible mainly for coordination and mobilization of laborers. The head of the group served as a conduit for the transfer of information, in addition to arranging and selecting people who were suitable for working in accordance with the criterion and requirements of the work. In the process of sugarcane production it was seen at transplanting and harvesting stage by groups of laborers. The villagers already have strong local traditions of cooperation and mutual help, which have served them for centuries. For example, whenever a resident has a large task to undertake and requires assistance, many other villagers contribute their help.

Labour Opportunities and Decision Making in the Households

Agriculture was the primary employer of the research area. Women here had less opportunity than men did to pursue an education due to traditional limitations and family requirements. Women in the most ethnic group engaged in craft production for family use and sometimes for sale. Beyond that, Sraiki women generally hold principal responsibilities for household maintenance and childcare. Though, female children and grand parents may help with these tasks as well as those of gathering and collecting activities. Child labor was also common there. Men were considered the undisputed heads of the family and thus made all the important decisions. Women make the decisions when it comes to saving money, but men make decisions about expenditure.

Agriculture

Agriculture was the largest sector of the district economy and was the main source of livelihood of the rural population. Most of the people in the villages were farmers. The main agricultural practices there were crop cultivation and animal husbandry, which were also the main sources of income in the villages (Table 4).

Table 4. Production of main crops

Crops	Production (000 M.TONS)					
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Sugarcane	1312	1740	2425	3367	4566	6022
Wheat	770	844	688	685	644	603
Cotton (000 Bales)	846	713	742	663	611	559

Source: Directorate of Agriculture, Crop Reporting Service, Punjab.

Food Availability

Most of the villagers used to derive their food sustenance from their own farm products. However, some families lived mainly on food obtained from other occupations. They were thus dependent on nature for their livelihood. Primary food supplies such as wheat, rice, onion or vegetables were in short supply there. However, the staple diet of the people was "roti" made of wheat flour. The people were fond of daal. The milk tea was very popular in the district.

Cropping Pattern

The major crops cultivated in the villages were sugarcane, wheat, cotton, onion, and cauliflower. This district is also famous for mango, dates and citrus production in the country. Sugarcane was normally cultivated in November and December as a whole year crop.

Livestock

Animal husbandry was another subsidiary income for the villagers and also provided a good source of the family's dietary needs. Cattle, buffalo, cow and poultry were the major livestock there. Those animals were occasionally sold but rarely consumed by the villagers. Poultry were more consumed than sold. It was common practice for villagers to feed their livestock by producing grass on their lands. During the sugarcane harvesting season sugarcane residual was fed to the animals (Table 5).

Table 5. Ownership of animal

Animal	Mean	Standard Deviation
Goats	2.53	1.37
Cattle	1.75	0.98
Buffaloes	0.87	0.15
Sheep	3.34	1.81

Source: Field Survey, 2013

Sources of Income

On average a sugarcane farmer would probably have a cow or two from which he would be able to sell milk and he may keep small stock such as goats, sheep or poultry. A kitchen garden and a small provision farm would yield fresh vegetables for home consumption, and perhaps a small surplus for sale. Some farmers used to enjoy non-agriculture incomes but out of all other sources of income, agriculture was the main source of income of the sugarcane farmers. Some farmers have their own shops in the villages while some were found investing their incomes in animal trade. However some members of the family were found engaged in other occupations. Mostly, they were carpenters, masons, and public school teachers and very few of them were Govt. servants.

Consumption Pattern

Information about the expenditures on food items, clothing, education, health, electricity, house rent, sui-gas and investment activities were obtained. Food items were the major share of expenditures.

Food items included beef, mutton, tea, chicken, sugar, ata, vegetables, eggs, and fruits. The average expenditures on this head were Rs.5000 per month. Clothes were not systematically consumed. However, before Eid they used to buy new clothes for their families. The average consumption was Rs. 600 per month. The share of education expenditures was too low. Most of their children were admitted in government schools rather private schools. Expenditures on education were included on textbooks, uniforms and transportation. The estimated expenditures were Rs. 1500 per month.

Similarly, health expenditures also play a significant role out of the total expenditures. It was not a regular component however average monthly amount spent on this head was observed. Health expenditures included on headache, toothache, cold, fever and stomachache. Total average expenditures were estimated as Rs. 500 per month. Electricity charges were on average Rs. 800 per month. Main electricity items were iron, washing machine, TV, fan, radio and bulbs. Sui-gas (natural gas) was also consumed at the rate of Rs. 400 per month by few numbers of respondents. Total expenditures recorded were Rs. 8800 per month and apart from these expenditure some other expenses were also recorded such as to entertain guest, attending marriage or death ceremonies and celebrating home marriage ceremonies an average sum of Rs. 5000 per month expenditure also had to be spend. Total monthly expenditure was recorded sum of Rs. 13800.

Return and Surplus of Sugarcane

Farmers in district Muzaffar Garh area usually used to produce good quality of sugarcane. The farmer was paid on average Rs.175 per mound for sugarcane factories. Farmers from their fields got different amounts of yield but on average acre⁻¹ sugarcane yield were 550 mounds valued at market price of Rs. 175 per mound. The average revenue from one acre of area was Rs. 96279. On the basis of the costs and yields pointed out, the farmer would be left with a surplus of average Rs. 54459 acre⁻¹ (Table 6).

Table 6. Returns on sugarcane production

Specification	Rs. Acre⁻¹
Cost of production per acre	41819.4
Income per acre	96279.1
Net profit per acre	54459.73

Source: Field Survey, 2013

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the facts and figures it can be observed that Muzaffar Garh sugarcane farmers were characterized by subsistence level of farming.

The average family size was found 7 per household, which was quite lower than population census 1998. Major occupations were teaching, fishing and daily wage earners but these activities also supported agriculture. There was lack of sufficient medical facilities for sugarcane farmers. Most of the sugarcane farmers were found uneducated and small farmers. The average size of land holding was observed as 4.51 acres. HSF-240 was observed as the dominant variety and its growers were 38% of the total sugarcane farmers. There was free mobility of labor from area to area. Men generally made decisions. Agriculture was the primary employer and main source of livelihood of rural area. Villagers used to derive their food sustenance from their own farm products. Cattle, buffalo, cow and poultry were the major livestock. The major source of income was farm incomes. The major heads of expenditures were food items such as clothing, education, health, electricity, and investment activities. The total expenditures recorded were Rs. 13800 per month. The average revenue from one acre of area was Rs 96279, while the farmer would be left with a surplus of average Rs. 54459. Govt. should made efforts to provide basic facilities to the sugarcane farmers of district Muzaffar Garh.

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