



SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF FARMERS IN THANJAVUR DISTRICT – A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Government schemes to improve the standard of living of the citizens has had an impact on the socio economic status of the farmers. Increase in the industrial and service sector activities has changed the demand for employment in the urban and semi-urban areas. agricultural sector and agro based industries have received a setback due to lack of labour forces. This study tries to understand the socio economic status of the farmers post privatization policy of the government of India two decades ago.

Key words: Farmers, social status, health care, education, job, lifestyle.

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1. INTRODUCTION

With the concept of Liberalization-Privatization-Globalization (LPG) policy of the government, quarter of a century ago, agricultural activities have taken a setback. India once a predominately a nation dependent mainly on farming, has started showing a downswing towards it. The free market policy has enabled people to find easy jobs, thus abandoning agricultural activities- which are primarily dependent on monsoon.

With this as the background, a study was undertaken to assess the socio economic status of farmers living in the rain bowl of Tamil Nadu- Thanjavur. Fondly known as the Delta region, a large amount of fertile land is available in this region and has been cultivating and supply rice all over India. The world famous Rice institute is too set up here. Today the agricultural activities have received such a pathetic setback the even the Rice Institute is struggling for existence, along with the closure of many sugar mill and rice mills.

The downfall of agricultural can also be attributed to the growth of education, availability of semi-skilled overseas jobs and demand for land real estate. A decade ago many of the farmers opted for the easy way of income generating, failing to look at the long term impact. Added to this the unstable political scenario and failure of monsoon change the socio economic condition of the farmers.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Socioeconomic status (SES) is a composite measure of an individual's economic and sociological standing. It is a complex assessment measured in a variety of ways that account for a person's work experience and economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation. Socioeconomic status has been a powerful determinant of health; as a general rule, wealthy people tend to be in better health than people of poorer status (Erreygers, 2013)

Surabhi Mittal, Mamta Mehar (2016) claims that providing of basic amenities such as Information plays a key role in a farmer's life by enhancing their knowledge and strengthening their decision making ability. Farmers use multiple sources of information as no one source is sufficient in itself. This is feasible by the new generation farmers due to their education and hygienic living conditions.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objective of the Study

- To analyse the perception of the farmers on the changes in the basic facilities and services provided by the government
- To analyse the association between the economical development and the socio economic status of farmers

Research Design

This study addresses the socio economic status of the delta region farmers of Tamil Nadu. A quantitative analysis was carried out by collecting primary data through a well structured schedule.

Sample Size

A pilot study was carried out among 50 farmers living in Thanjavur district

Tools used

Likert Scaling, Frequency distribution

Scope of the Study

The study tries to analyse the impact of Liberalization-Privatization-Globalization policy on the socio economic status of farmers.

Limitation of the study

The farmers' answers were influenced by the response of the panchayat leaders. Time also was a limited constrain for the researcher.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1

Table showing the Standard of Living index of income, expenditure and savings						
Income	Rs ('000)	<10k	10k-20k	20k-30k	>30k	Total
	Response	12	15	11	12	50
	%	24	30	22	24	100
Expenditure	Rs ('000)	<5k	5k-10k	10k-15k	>15	
	Response	9	15	23	3	50
	%	18	30	46	6	100
Savings	Rs ('000)	<2.5k	2.5k -5k	5k-7.5k	7.5k-10k	
	Response	36	11	0	3	50
	%	72	22	0	6	100

Interpretation: Table 1 analysis the standard of living based on the income earned, expenditures incurred and the savings of the farmers. The findings are

- Income- 30% of the respondents income per month is between Rs.10,000/- to Rs.20,000/-, 24% of the respondents each earn less than Rs.10,000/- and more than Rs.30,000/- respectively and 20% of the respondents earn an income of between Rs.20,000/- to Rs.30,000/-
- Expenditure- 46% of the respondents spend between Rs. 10,000/- to Rs.15,000/- per month, 30% spend between Rs.5,000/- to Rs. 10,000/- , 18% spend less than Rs.5,000/- and 6% of the respondents spend more than Rs.15,000/- per month
- Savings- 72% of the respondents save less than Rs.2,500/- per month, 22% of them save between Rs.2,500/- to Rs.5,000/-, 6% of the respondents save between Rs.7,500/- to Rs.10,000/- .

Table 2

	Perception on the Socio Economic Status index of healthcare, education and employment	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Likert reading	Level of Significance	Inference
1	Easy accessibility to healthcare	35	12	3	0	0	232	4.64	Strongly Agree
2	Affordability of health facilities	16	12	10	9	3	179	3.58	Agree
3	Easy accessibility to education	34	13	3	0	0	231	4.62	Agree
4	Affordability of education	14	12	9	9	6	169	3.38	Neutral
5	Education improves family status	14	21	0	12	3	181	3.62	Agree
6	Education has provided good job	11	14	7	15	3	165	3.3	Neutral
7	Availability of jobs for all	11	21	0	12	3	166	3.32	Neutral
8	Standard of living has improved	14	21	0	12	3	181	3.62	Agree
9	Cost of modern lifestyle is affordable	0	6	3	35	6	109	2.18	Disagree

Interpretation: Table 2 shows that the respondents strongly agree that they have easy access to healthcare and also agree that they get affordable health facilities.

Regarding education the respondents agree that they have easy access to education, they were neutral regarding the affordability of education, they had agree that education improves family status and they are neutral with the thought that education has provided good job.

Regarding availability of jobs for all they neither agree nor disagree, they agree that their standard of living has improved and disagree that cost of modern lifestyle is affordable.

5. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

The study reveals that the standard of living has improved with the intervention of government supports in providing basic necessities in the field of health care, education and health and hygiene. The political environment too support in providing better standard of living so as to earn more vote banks.

The study also reveals that although standard of living has improved, there seems to be no or very less improvement in the socio economic status of the farmers. In the past they depended on the wealthy land lords, now they are looking upon the politicians and bureaucrats to support in their day to day living.

Most of the respondents in this study are between the age group of 45 to 55 years, they have seen the transformation in the Indian economical condition over that past 2 decades. Further their children are the first generation to be benefitted through the social development schemes of the government. Hence the new generation descendents of the farmers have grown up to be educated and healthy adults. Their lifestyle could bring about a change in the socio economic status of the farmers in the near future.

6. CONCLUSION

Many positive signs are being seen in the field of agriculture. Few significant among them being the market demand for organic agricultural produce has made many people to invest in farming, hence the agricultural sector is reforming to have a professional outlook as in the western countries.

Also many first generation graduates of farmers after pursuing career in an industrial or service sector are reverting back to farming; hence they are too contributing in reviving the socio economic status of the rural area, with their lifestyle.

Finally technology has penetrated to every nook and corner of the earth, that it has shrunk the world into a global village, this factor too will elevate the status of the farmers soon.

With a paradigm shift expected in the socio economic status of the farmers in the near future, the government should provide the needed financial and agricultural support to the new generation farmers so as to sustain the agricultural sector.

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