

Land Fragmentation and Consolidation in Dry Semi-Arid Tropics of India

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In this paper several aspects of land fragmentation and consolidation such as (a) incidence and changes of land fragmentation within and between generations (b) cost of land fragmentation and (c) scope for institutional transfer of consolidation programme for the semi-arid tropics of India are examined. The main data source on which this study is based is from ICRISAT village study programme of five agroclimatic regions of semi-arid tropics of India. In addition to the panel data collected by ICRISAT village study programme the study relies on data collected in special survey on inheritance, land division and transactions since inheritance.

Empirical results in five study region suggest that land fragmentation, measured independently of farm size, is not an important problem in the dry semi-arid tropics of India. Incidence of land fragmentation is much less in semi-arid tropics of India than other areas. The evidence was clear from the detailed longitudinal plot and household data that fragmentation was not an economic liability at prevailing levels of technology. However, from the perspective of watershed based development a somewhat different picture emerges, increasing number of holdings within a watershed mean increased transaction cost of collective action. Based on our results it is unlikely that procedure of consolidation has much to do with the failure consolidation programme in dry semi-arid areas. Institutional transfer, in terms of programme design and procedure of consolidation from north west India might not make consolidation programme a success in dry semi-arid area. We recommend, therefore, to the extent land fragmentation is a problem it should be tackled at source. Comparative research on ways to increase the cost of plot division at inheritance should be assigned a high priority on the consolidation research agenda.