

UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT OF PERMANENT FARM WORKERS

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IN India, agriculture is predominantly organized in family farms where work is carried on by family labour with the help of hired labour. The hiring of labour is on permanent or casual basis. Thus, there are two criteria for classification of farm labour: (1) family or hired; and (2) permanent or casual. The second classification cuts across the first. Permanent farm workers comprise family farm workers and permanent farm servants (attached workers). A permanent farm worker¹ is the most important part of the farm labour-force. Its proportion to the total farm labour-force varies in different parts of the country.² This proportion is highest in the Punjab, because the majority of farms are operated by peasant-proprietors, and there is a general practice of engaging labour on a permanent basis.

This paper seeks to study the unemployment and underemployment of P.F.W. in the Punjab.³ The data for this purpose have been drawn from the farm management report of the two districts of the State — Amritsar and Ferozepur — for the year 1954-55.⁴ This study formed a part of the larger scheme of farm management research conducted in six different agricultural regions of the country.⁵

¹ He is referred to, hereafter, as P.F.W.

² *Agricultural Labour Enquiry, Report or Intensive Survey of Agricultural Labour : All-India, Vol. I., 1954.*

³ It may be argued that permanent farm servant, being a wage-earner, cannot be said to be underemployed. But there is an overwhelming evidence on overstaffing in all lines in the under-developed areas. Over-staffing in agriculture in these areas is quite common. "There might be work to be done every day over the period for which the attached labourer is engaged but the amount of work per day might be for a few hours only. For such work a man must be at hand and yet he cannot be employed all the time. Here the employer has to employ a man even though half-a-man-worth work is all that he can give him." (Sovani N. V., 'Underemployment Micro and Macro and Development Planning', *The Indian Economic Journal*, Vol. II, April 1955, p. 303.)

⁴ Ajaib Singh and others : *Studies in Economics of Farm Management in the Punjab; Report for the year 1954-55*, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, 1957.

⁵ The regions were from the former states of Bombay and Madhya Pradesh, and from Madras, the Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. The study was initiated and co-ordinated by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics with the financial grant from the R.P.C. of the Planning Commission. The work at various centres was done under the general guidance of the Committee of Direction appointed by the Ministry.