

# UNDEREMPLOYMENT AMONG INDIAN FARMERS : AN ANALYSIS OF ITS NATURE AND EXTENT BASED ON DATA FOR BIHAR \*

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## I. Introduction

Analysis of underemployment is a relatively new field of study in economics. The advent of the era of planned economic development of underdeveloped countries has brought about an increasing recognition of the importance of the problem of the under-utilized man-power in agriculture in most of these countries. This has led to a number of attempts at the refinement of concepts and their application for measurement purposes. Contributions from economists like Joan Robinson, Ragnar Nurkse, Arthur Lewis, T. W. Schultz, Jacob Viner, P. N. Rosenstein-Rodan, N. V. Sovani, D. Warriner and L. Yates, and from United Nations sources have enriched the bibliography on the subject and provided some thoughtful material to the students.<sup>1</sup> These analyses, however, have served mainly to focus attention on the nature of the problem. Analytical work based on the actual measurement of underemployment in any of the suffering countries is still few and far between, if the indirect and round-about estimates are left out. Italy seems to be a country where considerable progress has recently been made in this direction.

India provides a classic case of rural underemployment, particularly underemployment among the farmers. With the progress of planning in India we are coming more and more not only to recognize the existence

\* The data used in this paper relate to 1957-58 and were collected in the course of the farm management investigations in Bihar. These investigations are being conducted by the Agro-Economic Research Centre for East India in accordance with the scheme for the Second Series of Farm Management Studies sponsored by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Government of India. The basic data can be found in the Report for 1957-58 to be published by the Directorate.

<sup>1</sup> The works of these economists constitute the standard references on the subject and may be noted from N. V. Sovani, "Underemployment — Micro and Macro — and Development Planning", *Indian Economic Journal*, 11, April, 1955, and "Underemployment, Removable Surplus and the Saving Fund", *Artha Vijnana*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Mar. 1959. Citation should also be made of the following paper that has provided the basic methodological framework for the statistical analysis presented here : P. N. Rosentein-Rodan, "Disguised Unemployment and Underemployment in Agriculture", *Monthly Bulletin of Agricultural Economics and Statistics*, (F.A.O., Rome), Vol. VI, No. 7/8, July/August, 1957, pp. 1-7.