



Impact of Agricultural Land Holdings on the Occupational Structure of Agricultural Labour Households - Result of a field study in *Taobungkhok* Village of Manipur

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Abstract: The paper attempts to bring out the impact of size of Agricultural Land holdings on the occupational structure of Agricultural Labour Households in Manipur. The paper is based on the result of a field study in a village called *Taobungkhok* in Manipur. The paper tries to show that majority of the agricultural land holders in the surveyed village were of small and marginal holders and as a result, households identified as Agricultural Labour Households in the village did not get adequate employment from farm activities. Therefore, these agricultural labour households had to depend on non-farm activities in order to support their livelihood.

Key Words: On farm, Off-farm, Agricultural Labour, Land Holdings, Village.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The study of land holding structure of a rural society provides an important basis for understanding its Agrarian relations. In the rural societies of India, those who owned land not only maintain a higher standard of living than the landless Agricultural Labour but also exercise a direct control over the livelihood of the later because of their dependency on land (Beteille,2007). This indicates that the structure of rights to land and the land market becomes an important determinant of the overall development of a rural economy (Ray,2005).

The paper analyses the size of operational holdings in a village called *Taobungkhok* in the state of Manipur and its impact on the occupational structure of Agricultural Labour households. By operational Holdings, we mean the land on which farmers operate to produce Agricultural commodities (particularly paddy cultivation here) and Agricultural Labour households referred to those households whose members worked in the field of others to earn wages in order to support their livelihood. The village was mainly chosen to study the impact of agricultural land holdings on the occupational structure of a village strongly integrated with the urban economy during those days.

The state of Manipur lies in the extreme north eastern corner of India. Imphal is the capital city of Manipur. In Manipur, cultivation is almost monocrop, with rice as the major agricultural product and pulses, potatoes, vegetables and other agricultural crops are grown throughout the state. The total population of Manipur according to census 2011 is 28,55,794, out of which the number of male population is 14,38,586 and that of female is 14,17,208(Statistical yearbook,2015).

2. Methodology:

The study is based on the result of a field study conducted in the village of *Taobungkhok* in the year 2007. The village is situated at about eight kilometers away from Imphal and located at the *Patsoi* Assembly constituency of Imphal West District. The entire village is surrounded by paddy fields. The village of *Patsoi* is situated on the west of *Taobungkhok*, *Changangei* on the South, *Ghari* on the East and *Langjing* on the North. The settlement area of the village is divided into three segments viz, *Awang Leikai*, *Mayai Leikai* and *Makha Leikai*. Information was collected in three rounds of survey, the first round of survey was a preliminary type where no structured questionnaires were used. The purpose of the preliminary survey was to get acquainted with the villages so that preparations for the census survey can be done. In the second round of survey, that is, the census survey, each and every household in the village were visited and information was collected on the age and sex distribution of the population in the village, their education level, the



distribution of operational holdings and also to find out the actual agricultural labour households in the village. In the third round of survey, only those sample households identified as Agricultural Labour during the census survey were interviewed. Information was collected on the occupational structure of Agricultural labour households from the sample survey.

The total number of Households in *Taobungkhok* during the surveyed year,in 2007, was 419. The total population of *Taobungkhok* was 2288 with 1176 male(51.4 percent)and 1112(48.6 percent) female population .Literacy rate of *Taobungkhok* excluding children population during the surveyed year is 88.6 per cent including 28 post graduates and one PhD during the surveyed year. A sample of 73 labour households was selected for the purpose of the study.

An ‘Agricultural Labour’ is defined as a person who worked on another person’s land for wages. An Agricultural Labour has no right of lease or contract on the land on which he or she works (Census of India, 1981). The same definition was adopted in 1991, 2001 as well as in 2011. However, in this study, the agricultural labour households were identified in the field study (census survey) on the basis of the respondent’s answer to the questions on their main occupations in terms of time allocation.

3. Findings of the Study:

The result of the field study shows that majority of the operational land holdings are of small and marginal holders. Operational Holdings in Manipur are classified in *sangams* (0.62 acre), *Marak* (2 *sangams* or 1.24 acre) and *paree* etc in village parlance. A hectare is equivalent to a *paree* and a *paree* is divided into four *sangams*. Table 1 shows the Operational holdings in *Taobungkhok* according to size classes. The size classes given in the table have been formulated in order to suit the size categories in Manipur.

Table 1

Operational holdings in Taobungkhok according to size class -

Size class (in acre)	Taobungkhok		Area (in acre)	
	H.H	Pc	Area	Pc
0-1	156	52.7	97.3	19.3
1-1.5	60	20.3	197.16	39.1
1.5-2	43	14.5	60.55	12.0
2-3.5	19	6.4	48.93	9.7
3.5-5	12	4.1	46.81	9.3
5 and above	6	2.0	53.53	10.6
Total	296	100.0	504.01	100.0

Source-census survey

Note: H.H=Households, Pc=percentage

In table 1, there are 156 households operating in the size class of 0-1 acres and in terms of percentages, it is 52.7 per cent of the total cultivating households. In the size class of 1-1.5 acres, there are 60 households and the percentage share to total cultivating households is 20.3 percent. There are 43 households in the size class of 1.5-2 acre and the percentage share is 14.5 per cent. In the size class of 5 and above acre, there are only 6 households and the percentage share to total cultivating households is only 2 per cent. This shows that there are neither large or big landlords nor rich and large commercial farmers in the village reflecting the general characteristics of capital farmers or feudal landlords. Thus, majority of the holdings in the village comprised of small and marginal holders which has significant impact on the nature of occupational diversification in the village. This is because the land holdings being small are generally uneconomic in nature and the demand for agricultural labour is less. Hence, villagers looked in for more diversified occupation to support their livelihoods. This small size of holdings is a result of land being split up from generation to generation in the village and this led to size of holdings becoming smaller and smaller because of inheritance or sale of small parcels over time. Singh in his study on natural resources in Manipur also mentioned that the size of operational holdings in the rural areas of Manipur has been observed to be shrinking with time as the size of the farming community has continuously expanded against a limited agricultural land(Singh,2009). Further, this small size of operational holdings in the villages has a significant implication on the picture of occupational structure in the village.

Table 2 shows the distribution of Employment Availability per labour Households into On farm, Off farm and Self employment within and outside the village of *Taobungkhok* .

By On farm activities, we mean pure agricultural wage labour on one crop of paddy annually. Off farm activities here refers to all sorts of odd jobs ranging from carpentry, masonry, kutch house construction, earth work like bunding,



land leveling, ditch/drain digging, loading and unloading of brick fields, stacking of raw bricks, embroidery, handloom and a host of odd manual jobs in and outside the village.

Self employment essentially means vegiculture on limited homestead land for family consumption.

Table 2

Distribution of Employment Availability per Labour Households into On farm, Off farm and Self employment within and outside the village (*Taobungkhok*)

Category	Male			Female			Total
	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total	
No. of person days per household (On farm)	50.3	0	50.3	80.3	0	80.3	130.6(29.76)
No. of person days per household (Off farm)	70.1	90.2	160.3	36.1	32.1	68.2	228.5(52.07)
No. of person days per household (self employment)	8.7	0	8.7	71.0	0	71.0	79.7(18.16)
Total	129.1	90.2	219.3	187.4	32.1	219.5	438.8

Source-sample survey, Note: Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage

In Table 2, we see that agricultural labour households in *Taobungkhok* during the surveyed year were able to get 438.8 days employment in a year and the percentage distribution of sectoral employment were 29.76, 52.07 and 18.16 for On farm, Off farm and Self employment respectively. This shows that sectoral share of employment for Agricultural Labour households is heavily weighted in favour of off farm activities in *Taobungkhok* that is, 52.07 per cent and the weight for on farm sector (paddy cultivation in particular) is low at 29.76 per cent. It is significant to note that households who revealed that their main occupation is Agricultural Labour during the survey are not even getting adequate employment in farm activities and hence, dependent on non-farm sector for their livelihood.

As a result, factors such as mono cropping resulting from inefficient irrigation systems, smallness of size of holdings in the face of rising population and scarcity of land in the village, non farm sector employment is playing important role in providing livelihoods to these households in the village.

4. Conclusion :

It is evident from the study that majority of the operational land holdings in the village of *Taobungkhok* are of small and marginal holders and this smallness of size of holdings has a significant impact on the occupational structure of the Agricultural labour households. Households identified themselves as Agricultural Labour households do not even get adequate employment in one agricultural season in the farm sector as their demand is limited. This led the farmers to look for more diversified occupation to support their livelihood. Hence, the non farm sector played a significant role to these households in the surveyed village.

**Note: The surveys referred to in this article are part of the field work conducted for submission of doctoral thesis of the author.*

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