



An Analytical Condition of the Peasant Production in the District Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan

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To Cite This Article: Shabbir Ahmad. An Analytical Condition of the Peasant Production in the District Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. Am J Biomed Sci & Res. 2019 - 3(2). AJBSR.MS.ID.000647. DOI: [10.34297/AJBSR.2019.03.000647](https://doi.org/10.34297/AJBSR.2019.03.000647)

Received: May 24, 2019 | Published: May 28, 2019

Abstract

This article tries to explore the condition of the peasant production in district Faisalabad of the Punjab province, Pakistan; based on the theoretical approach which is called empiricism. The peasant production of small, medium, and large land holders has been critically analyzed keeping in view the technological trends and the situation of market, condition of land, family composition, labor force, trends of migration, the industrial expansion of the city, and the role of government interventions regarding the improvement of the farming community particularly living in the rustic societies. I hope that after reading this article, the reader will be able to develop an understanding about the peasant production of district Faisalabad and further be able to generalize this situation about the Punjab Province.

Keywords: Sociology of agriculture; Labor force; Externalization; Skill oriented technology; Family / Community/ Culture; Scientific knowledge system; Markets; Nested markets; Migration; Technology

Introduction

Pakistan is situated in the "South Asian" region of the Asian Continent. It is consisted in five provinces: the Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit Baltistan and some of the federally administered areas such as Islamabad and Azad Kashmir. The Punjab and Sindh provinces of Pakistan are the basic units of agricultural sector. the major crops which are cultivated include wheat, rice, sugar cane, cotton, maize, potatoes, pulses, vegetables, fruits and much more. The Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Gilgit Baltistan are famous for fruit and dry fruit production. The country enjoys at least five seasons throughout the year such as Winter, Summer, Autumn, Spring, and the Rainy season. It is believed that the worlds finest irrigation system is Pakistan. The agriculture sector is mainly responsible for the production of crops, fruits, vegetables, poultry, and livestock for the requirement of the natives as well exports these products to the neighboring countries around the globe. The economy of Pakistan is mainly depending on agriculture. Agriculture sector contributes 21 % of the total GDP [1] of the country and 45% of the total labor force [2] most of them are residing in the rural, semi-rural, and peri-urban areas.

The agriculture sector of Pakistan is the mixture of technological interventions and the traditional approaches devised by the farmers themselves. The government of Pakistan is trying her level best to acquaint the farmers/ peasants with the modern agricultural machinery and the innovative agricultural practices

ranging from tunnel farming to intercropping and the breeding of cows and buffaloes for milk productions. The Agricultural Extension Department of the country is busy in educating the farmers far and wide in the country. The progressive farmers are engaged in control shed poultry production along with rearing of animals including goats, sheep, cows, bulls, camels etc. for meat production. In fact, the farmers are involved in extensive agricultural production to meet the requirements of the ever-growing population of the country. The region I have selected for discussion here is a district "Faisalabad" situated in the central region of the Punjab province of Pakistan. The topography is excellent for the agricultural production such as major crops, poultry, and livestock. The land is approximately fertile suitable for the production of wheat, cotton, sugar cane, and vegetables.

The farmers mostly irrigate their crops with the help of canal water, tube well, and in most of the peri-urban areas wastewater is also utilized for the irrigation of crops. The farming community is very fragmented and there are big landowners, middle land holders, and the small land holders. In the rural areas the people rent in or tent out their land for cultivation. The big land holders have "tenants" in the lower Punjab, who cultivate their fields and are the liability of the landlords. They provide them the means of sustenance such as shelter, food, and clothing. The land distribution is not uniform, it is scattered far and wide, the farmers face a lot

of difficulties in the application of heavy agricultural machinery. Due to industrialization, most of the farmers are migrating towards the urban settlements renting out their farms and investing in industries. To describe the peasant production, I will utilize the following key concepts:

Agricultural Sociology in the Punjab Province

Agricultural sociology is the branch of Sociology which deals with the rural farming community, their way of farming, their patterns of cultivation, their problems in the agricultural sector, and tries to investigate the solutions of their problems by launching intensive research projects. The rural sociologists in Pakistan are working to analyse the problems of the farming community and putting forward their valuable suggestions about how to address these problems. The agricultural extension department along with the rural sociologists are working for the social, economic, and political uplift of the farming community. The government of Pakistan is providing subsidy to the farming community in the range of fertilizers, electricity, pesticides, insecticides, and herbicides. The NGOs such as National Rural Support program, Punjab Rural Support Program, and Agha Khan Rural Support Program, and many other are working for the uplift of the rural community by providing them micro-credit facilities. They are also educating the farming communities regarding the new innovations in the farming sector and working for the uplift of the rural women by promoting cottage industries. The NGOs are also working to empower women by imparting them trainings about sewing, knitting, about domestic poultry, and Tunnel farming. To sum up the discussion we can say that agricultural sociology is the hallmark of the Sociology which has focused its attention to understand the agriculture sector and to mitigate the problems of the rural community.

Labor Force

As far as the labor force in the agricultural sector (wheat production) is concerned, mainly men, women, and youth are involved in the farming activities. Round about 45 % of the rural community is directly or indirectly involved in the farming activities such as sowing, weeding, irrigating, harvesting, and marketing of the agricultural products (wheat) [2]. The share of women in the labor force is approximately half of the total available labor. Women are performing in the agricultural sector along with performance of the domestic chores. The labor force in the past few decades in the rural communities was shared. The people used to help one other in the farming activities. This cooperation is called "Vangar" in the rural communities. The host family used to entertain the people who are for help, with breakfast and lunch. In this way, this activity continues to revolve in the whole village. Now, this trend has almost changed, the labor force is now professional, the farmers are to pay for the work the workers perform. From sowing till transporting the agricultural products to the markets ---the whole process, the farmers are to the labor force.

The old people just take care of the whole farming activity but practically do not perform labor in the fields. Due to the cultural traditions and the normatic patterns of the Muslim communities, it is considered disgrace able for the young people to let the old people work in the fields. In some of the areas, the child labor is also going

on in the livestock production. The children can be seen grazing their cattle in the harvested fields because the concept of meadows is alien to the people of the Punjab province. So, the people usually utilized the harvested fields for the grazing purposes. As a labor force in the grazing of cattle: Women, children and sometimes old people are seen performing these activities.

Externalization in the Agricultural Field

Externalization is the process of by which many other agencies get involved in the farming activities, specially the production of wheat. The farmer is unable to produce all the inputs for him which are to be utilized in the farming activities such as the availability of hybrid seed, fertilizers, pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, the agricultural machinery, and much more. The farming of wheat in my region is also highly externalized because the farming community is unable to provide them all the required inputs. The farmers are purchasing all the required inputs from the markets. The decision-making about the purchase of inputs lies in the hands of the male members of the family or community. The women are not included in the decision-making process regarding the wheat cultivation. The other agencies are utilized by the farming communities who cultivate wheat such as dealers who provide them fertilizers, sprays, hybrid seed, herbicides, and pesticides. Mostly the wheat cultivation community in the rural areas purchases all these commodities on credit. The farmer of small land holding is often forced to sale his commodity to the dealers on cheaper rates. Usually, the wheat is purchased by the government, but this system is not transparent enough. The govt. of Mian Nawaz Sharif had started an initiative to equip the farming community with latest agricultural machines such as land levelers, sprayers, and combined harvesters. But these schemes are usually for the big land holders because the middle and small land holders are unable to afford them. The excessive externalization is on the go in the wheat production in District Faisalabad.

The Skill Oriented Technologies

In the wheat cultivation, there is an acute absence of skill-oriented technologies among the small land holders. Most of the small land holders use traditional methods of cultivation. Due to small size of the farm and the fragmentation of land it is not possible for the farmers to cultivate wheat with the help of machinery. It is also a fact that most of the farmers do not know how to operate this machinery. So, most of the weeding, spraying, and harvesting of crops is done manually. This trend is mainly responsible for the low yield per acre among the small land holders. The technical and vocational institutions are working in most of the districts of the Punjab province to train the farmers about how to use the agri. related machinery. Most of the trained farmers have adopted it as a profession to operate the agricultural machinery in the farm of other land holders to earn their living. They usually plough, weed, spray, and harvest the wheat crop and earn a handsome living. The wheat is cultivated in furrows by using seed drill by the farmers. For harvesting, reapers and combined harvesters are used but most of the small land holders use common threshers. Because, it is not easy for each and every farmer to utilize all these instruments with precision and accuracy.

There is another reason that why the farming community related to wheat cultivation do not afford the latest instruments? The obvious reason is that there is no concept of corporate farming in Pakistan. The farmers did not like to pool their resources to purchase agri. related instruments. The old farmers are adept in using old ways of cultivation. They scatter the wheat seeds with hands, do manual weeding, and manual harvesting. The old people do not like the mechanization of the agriculture sector. But after the green revolution in 1960, Pakistan underwent intensive mechanization of the agricultural sector. But the big land holders adopted the modern means of wheat cultivation. The middle and the small land holders mainly use the rented tools or rely on the traditional methods of cultivation.

Family /Community /Culture

In the rural areas of district Faisalabad, the people usually live in joint family system. Most of the labor is managed from the family that is why an average family has 6-7 children and the male children are preferred over the female children. In an average joint family contain grandparents their children and the children of their children. Most of the family members are involved in farming and livestock management. Some of the male members of the family after the cultivation of wheat crop usually get employment in the mills and factories in the cities and return at the time of harvesting. After harvesting they again return to their jobs. As you know that Faisalabad is called the Manchester of Pakistan for its textile industry that is why it attracts the surplus labor force from the rural areas to work in the power loom industry. The hosiery industry has indulged most of the male and female labor force and the dependence of the farmers on technological interventions has increased to a great extent. At the community level, the people like to share the happiness and grief of one another. The people used to sit in the "Baithak" similar to a drawing room to discuss about the crops, weathers, and the market trends.

The peasant culture involves simple living, traditional outlook towards life, family fighting leading to legislation, religious outlook towards life, and usually get amusement by participation in the local fairs. The male members usually get involved in the arduous agricultural tasks such as ploughing, sowing, spraying the crops, and harvesting. The males are most of the time responsible to transport their goods to the markets. As far as the participation of women in the agriculture sector is concerned, usually the women of lower social strata participate in the agricultural activities such as the women of drum beaters, cobblers, barbers, carpenters, blacksmith, potters, and other menial classes. The women of middle class and the large landowners usually do not participate in the agricultural activities because it is considered beneath the dignity and according to the people of these classes it brings bad name for the family. It is the women of lower classes who are seen working in the fields shoulder to shoulder with men in the scorching sunshine. The major labor force usually comes from the lower strata of the society in the rural areas of Punjab, Sindh, and other provinces of Pakistan.

These families usually do not own land and live from hand to mouth generally depending on the seasonal work. The concept of

women empowerment has brought no considerable change in the lives of the rural areas who belong to the lower strata of society. They usually do not own means of production such as land, access to resources, education, and other paraphernalia which is usually responsible to strengthen the concept of women empowerment. Many women, children, and old people work on daily wages in the fields and are not compensated if they get injury while working with agricultural tools. The situation of the tenant families is very drastic because they are considered sometimes the property of the land lord and are given a very meager share from the out put for the year. The children of such families are kept poor knowingly because it is considered that if they get education, they will move towards cities for better jobs leaving the fields without cheap labor force the land lord is enjoying. Often the land lords are the members of the provincial, national, and senate assemblies and they wield undue influence on the tenant families. The tenants are responsible to caste their vote in the favor of these landlords and these landlords in return exploits them as much as they can.

Scientific Knowledge System

The rural people in Faisalabad are mostly illiterate (now, they are getting their children educated, a positive change is developing in the rural people about the importance of education, but unfortunately, they are job centered not entrepreneurial) and they depend on traditional methods of cultivation. The age of bullocks has gone, they are using mechanical tools to cultivate their fields. Mostly, the people believe in the techniques utilized by their forefathers because the role of Agricultural Extension Department is not so impressive in imparting scientist knowledge to the farming communities. The policies of the governments contained usually landlord and sometimes urban bias which most of the time deprive the rural people from getting advantages. The government usually grant subsidy in the range of electricity, fertilizers, bio-chemical fertilizers, and in the purchase of agricultural tools. Most of the time the small landholders do have access to the means of production such as land and other paraphernalia. The large land holders and middle landholders are somewhat technology centered and they utilize the scientific knowledge system to get more yield from their crops.

They usually utilize the services of the extension department. They can read agri. related information which is published in the newspapers, books, pamphlets, posters, and cards. The tunnel farming is one of the excellent examples of the effective utilization of the scientific knowledge system. The Agriculture University, Faisalabad, off and on conducts agricultural exhibitions to make the people aware of the modern practices which has been followed in the world to get more yield from the fields, livestock, and poultry. Such type of agricultural exhibitions is launched by the Agricultural extension Department, fertilizer, and biochemical agencies to make the farmers aware of the modern practices which are going on in the world. Such type of exhibitions is very helpful for the farming community. Most of the time, the small land holder does not participate in them because they are illiterate and not innovative in their agricultural approaches. They even show resistance in the

adoption of the modern means of cultivation. Another problem is that the agricultural land is very much fragmented, and it is not possible for the farmers to apply mechanical means of cultivation to a great extent. Most of the training workshops which are conducted by the agricultural department go unnoticed by the farming community and they are mostly participated by the researchers of Academia. Most of the TV channels broadcast informative programs related to agriculture but the farming community do not take interest in them.

Markets

Though market access is available but most the farmers who have small land holders usually are exploited by the money lenders. They took most of the agricultural inputs from the dealers on credit and forced to sell their agricultural produce to these money lenders and the dealers on cheaper rate as compared to the market rates. It has become very difficult for the small holders to break the vicious circle of poverty because as long as the farmers have no direct access to the market, they will not be able to get their due income to invest in the purchase their own agricultural tools. The small and middle holders as long as have enough income from their land, they will not be able to get due benefit from their crops. Another trend which is dangerous from the farming community is the imitation of other farmers related to the cropping patterns. This trend is highly responsible for the low price they get from their output from the fields. The small landholders have no access to the credit facilities from the commercial banks because they have nothing to offer to the banks in return as a guarantee. Some of the NGOs like Punjab Rural Support Program and National Rural Support Program are working in the agriculture sector and provide micro-credit facilities to the farmers especially the women-folk to indulge them in the initiation of small cottage industries but such types of credits go in other activities and the small holders get into much trouble because they are now to pay this money in installments along with interest.

This further burdened them from the economical point of view. The market is very congenial for the large landowners. They have proper access to the commercial banks and they wield their political influence some time when they are not able to pay back the loans. These large owners have multiple investment in different sectors such as in dairy farming, tunnel farming, livestock sector, and investment in the industrial sector in the urban areas. Most of the time they provide credit facilities to the small holder and when they are not able to pay back to them, they confiscate their land and other valuables. This gives rise to the acceleration of rural poverty. The prices of the cash crops such as wheat, sugar cane etc., is determined by the government and rest of the crops, fruits, vegetables are determined by the markets. The market work on the socialistic principals and the market price control committees work to regulate the prices. The large land owners usually stock their agri. related products and produces artificial scarcity of products in the market to force the price control committees to raise the price. But the small holder can not force the market to settle the prices according to their choices.

The big landowners usually purchase the products from the small holder less than the market price on hard cash or on promise

to deliver them inputs for the next cultivation. The small holder is forced because they are to pay to the dealers from whom they have purchased the inputs such as seed, fertilizers, bio-chemical and other inputs. Though the government has price regulatory committees and fixed price of the cash crops, but it is manipulated by the dealers, money lenders, and large land owners according to their choices. All this situation is heartrending for the small holders and the tenants and due to fact that market has obvious a landlord bias, many of the tenants are forced to leave cultivation and forced to work in the nearby factories and mills which are in abundance along the Faisalabad to Lahore road. Many of the tenants and small holders are now living near the urban settlements which are usually slums and ghettos selling their land to real state enterprisers who are very rapidly converting their fertile agrarian land into residentials and commercial usage without realizing that it will create problems of food security in the near future.

Nested Markets

The concept of nested market is alien to the farmers of the District of Faisalabad. They even hardly know the terms that "What is nested market? And how it works?". The farmers usually are to bear the burnt off by taking their goods to the market and get what may offer to them without any terms and conditions. The bidders are the supreme rulers in the market. Also, the price fluctuations in the market affect the farmers' output. If they had known the concept of nested market and its obvious advantages of securing good prices of their goods, they would have not suffered the obvious loss. In the collectivized agriculture, there is an obvious advantage for the farming community. The concept of nested markets is put forward by Jan Douwe van der Ploeg who defined it as: markets that have less to do with globalized systems of exchange, and more with exchanges in real meeting places. Van der Ploeg has long studied the phenomenon, coining the concept of "nested" markets. In Pakistan this concept widely alien to the farmers because of the capitalistic market economy where the product goes from the hands of many people and become expensive by further value addition in it.

The nested market can do a lot for the farmers, in this way they will be able to get real income for their products without being exploited by the market personnel's. It is the need of the hour that the farmers should pool their resources to create a nested market to get benefit from their efforts. Another reasons of the absence of nested markets in Faisalabad is that there are many earning hands in the family and the city provides diverse opportunities for the people to get employment in the nearby factories and textile mills. That is why the farmers are not so much concerned and they only try to cultivate cash crops such as wheat, sugarcane, and maize because they take a lot of time. The fallow periods are very less, and the farmers continue to grow the whole year round. Near the city, in the peri-urban areas the farmers like to cultivate vegetables and they take it to the nearby markets so sell it on the price the bidders will offer. The merchants in the market store it in the cold storage to create artificial shortage and earn a lot of profit. This trend is heart rendering for the farming community because they get very menial price of their goods as compared to the traders who earn more.

Condition of Peasants / Farmers

The farming community generally reside in the rural areas of the Punjab, Pakistan. The Punjab is divided in to three parts and the subjective area which is under discussion is located in the central region. The conditions of the farmers are far better as compared to the farmers who are residing in the lower region. The district Faisalabad is well known all over the Asia for its industrialization. The opportunities of getting jobs in the off seasons are numerous. The educational facilities are also in the reach of the farming communities. The condition of transportation and telecommunication is present in advanced farm. Well-equipped hospitals are in the range of the farming community, though they are to travel from the rural areas to the urban settlements in order to utilize the benefits from these paraphernalia. The large landowners usually reside in the urban areas and are more interested to invest in the industrial sector as compared to invest in the industrial sectors. They usually rent out their land to the middle land owners or lease their land to the entrepreneurial sector. The trend of capitalistic mode of farming has also been identified among the large land owners who have skilled labor force and who have sense of the application of modern means of cultivations.

The presence of the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad is a very strong stimulus for the farming community to adopt modern means of cultivations not only to improve their living standard but the economical situation of the country as well. The middle and small land owners usually reside in the rural settlements and they are selling out their land to the real state enterprise to earn money and subsequently indulging in the business entrepreneurs or spending this money on the marriage of their daughters or on the education of their children. As being a major city of the Punjab, Province (Faisalabad) is under massive urbanization, the fertile land near the city is very rapidly being converted into slums, ghettos, and peri-urban areas. This massive urbanization in future will definitely impact the food security. The small land owners have generally had more labor force and the usually work as tenants in the far and wide in the suburbs in the district Faisalabad. A majority of the family members of the small holders are working in the working as laborers in the power loom industry, in the hosiery manufacturing units, on the construction sites, in the markets, and as sharecroppers in some of the areas of Faisalabad. Crop failures, if any, do not have any significant impact on the farmers because they reserved labor force in the industrial sector which can substitute

the loss. Overall, the condition of the farmers is significantly better than the farmers of the lower Punjab.

Migration Trends

It will be interesting to note that the people who migrated from the Indian Punjab at the time of independence usually settled in the rural areas of the Punjab province. The government of Pakistan allotted land and continued farming. But, as the time passed, the slowly and gradually started migrating to the urban settlements to start their business and getting their children well educated. Consequently, they either rented out their farms or sold them to the local community. As Faisalabad is the industrial city and it provides diverse opportunities of education, health, and job opportunities to the people, the trend of migration is very common in the middle and small farmers because of the presence of diverse employment opportunities. Most of the peoples have settled in the urban areas with the passage of time by selling their agricultural land either to the middle or large or to the real state enterprise. The government has nothing to do with the rapid urbanization of the cities and even not concerned with the lingering issue of the food security and food safety issues.

Conclusion

This article concluded that the peasant condition in Faisalabad included all the requisite elements of modern and traditional approaches. Most of the people in this locality are engaged directly and indirectly in the agriculture sectors to sustain their living along with providing raw material to the industrial sector. As we claim that the agriculture is the backbone of the economy of Pakistan, so it is the need of the hour that the government should provide maximum facilities in the form of the provision of subsidies to the farming communities so that they continue working in the fields. The trends of migration (which is very common among the small and middle land holders) can be minimized when the govt. will try to provide basic necessities like education, health, employment opportunities, telecommunication, and transportation in the rural areas. Otherwise, the rural community will continue to migrate by selling their land to the large land owners or to the real state enterprisers risking the country to face the issue of food security.

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