

An Analysis of Share Cropping in Rice Cultivation- A Case Study in Karimganj District of Assam

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Abstract

Share cropping is an important age old agrarian phenomenon in Assam. There is still vast scope to boost rice production in the study area through increasing the productivity of crops with the adoption of improved and economic methods of crop cultivation in due space and time on a sustainable basis. Share cropping in the study area is established as supplementary source of farm income to those farmers who undertake share cropping by hiring lands from others. It also act as a complementary source of income and employment for both the group of farmers that is one who undertake share cropping on others lands and others who let their land for share cropping to other farmers. Thus, Share cropping in the study area is found as both supplementary and complementary source of farm income. Of course, in the study area, there is still great scope to make share cropping more profitable as the productivity of rice crop is 481 kg less than the productivity of Punjab and 3202 kg less than the productivity of Egypt which is highest in the world.

Keywords: Share cropping, rice, productivity, farm income and supplementary income

Introduction

Share cropping is an important age old agrarian phenomenon in Assam. It is more prevalent in rice cultivation because rice is a very important agricultural crop in Assam occupying 61.78 per cent of total cropped area of the state (Anonymous, 2012). Present study was conducted in the Karimganj district of Barak Valley Zone (BVZ) of Assam which is one of the agro-climatic zones in the state (Assam is divided into six agro-climatic zones). The total geographical area of the district is 180.9 thousand hectares and fall within 24° 15' to 25° 54' North latitude and 92°

23' to 92°30' East longitude. The average annual rainfall in the district is 3643.5 mm and a total average normal annual rain day is 134 days. Soil in the district is mostly dominated by non-laterised red soil and Laterised red soil (35.89 per cent & 30.04 per cent respectively) followed by old mountain alluvium (23.57 per cent), old riverine alluvium (6.99 per cent) and peat soil (3.48 per cent). The gross cropped area or total cultivated area and net sown area of the district are 96.29 thousand hectares and 68.55 thousand hectares respectively and it has a cropping intensity of 140 per cent which is lower than the state's average cropping intensity of 148 per cent (Anonymous, 2012).

Present study is an attempt to know the extent and pattern of share cropping practiced in crop cultivation in general and in rice cultivation in particular. Among the three districts of BVZ viz. Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj, district Karimganj was selected for the present study because this district has maximum area under rice (76.60 per cent of the total cropped area of the district).

Methodology

The sample for the study was made using Three Stage Random Sampling Design. Block formed the first stage unit while the villages and farm households were the second and ultimate unit of sampling respectively. One block was selected in the district, Karimganj of the Barak Valley Zone of Assam. Survey was conducted on 100 numbers of farm households distributed in ten villages and these villages were selected at random. Later on farm household were stratified into four groups on the basis of their operational or total cultivated land holding as follows:

SI No	Size group	Operational holding
1	Marginal	< 1 ha
2	Small	1-2 ha
3	Medium	2-3ha
4	Large	>3ha

Survey was conducted by using pre-tested and specially designed Interview schedules and collected data were then compiled, tabulated and analyzed for the purpose of report writing and its interpretation.

Results and Discussion

Result from the study showed that 26.49 per cent of the total operational holding area was put under share cropping cultivation in rice cultivation, which varied from 19.65 per cent in marginal farms to 26.86 per cent in large farms (Table 1). Thus, it was found that the extent of share cropping in the sampled area increases with the increase in farm size holdings. Again, it was found that 49 per cent of the farm households were practicing share cropping in rice cultivation as a whole. Percentage of farm households practicing share cropping was highest

in medium farms (64.71 per cent) and lowest in marginal farms (28.57 per cent). Thus, result of the survey revealed that the percentage of farm households having share cropping in rice cultivation also increases with the increase in farm size.

In most of the cases, it was found that share cropping in rice cultivation is surviving on the condition of 50:50 produce sharing between share croppers and land owners who give their land for cultivation to these farmers. In some cases of share cropping, very few land owners gives input to their share croppers. In fact, almost all the famers irrespective of their size of operational holding have 50:50 produce sharing between the share croppers and their land owners. But 12.24 per cent of share cropping practicing farmers have both 50:50 inputs and produce share among them.

Table 1: Characteristics of share cropping and land use pattern in rice cultivation by size group of farms in Karimganj district of Assam

SI No.	Items	Size groups of farms				
		Marginal	Small	Medium	Large	All Farms
1	Farm household (Nos)	28	38	17	17	100
2	Owned land(ha)	25.71	44.08	28.05	80.50	178.34
3	Leased out land(ha)	6.40 (39.43)	0.27 (0.48)	0.27 (0.67)	11.47 (14.57)	18.41 (9.54)
4	Share cropped rice area(ha)	3.19 (19.65)	13.89 (24.83)	12.91 (31.94)	21.14 (26.86)	51.13 (26.49)
5	Farm households having share cropping in rice (Nos)	8 (28.57)	21 (55.26)	11 (64.71)	9 (52.94)	49 (49)
6	Fixed rented land(ha)	0.13 (0.80)	0.27 (0.48)	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)	0.40 (0.21)
7	Total leased in land(ha)	3.32 (20.46)	14.16 (25.31)	12.91 (31.94)	21.14 (26.86)	51.53 (26.69)
8	Total operational holding(ha)	16.23 (100.00)	55.94 (100.00)	40.42 (100.00)	78.70 (100.00)	193.05 (100.00)
9	Average size of holding(ha)	0.58	1.47	2.38	4.63	1.93
10	Farm household having 50:50 produce share in share cropping (Nos)	8 (100.00)	21 (100.00)	21 (100.00)	9 (100.00)	49 (100.00)
11	Farm household having input share in share cropping(Nos)	2 (25.00)	1 (4.76)	2 (18.18)	1 (11.11)	6 (12.24)
12	Human labour created due to share cropping (mandays/farm/year)	13.56	43.04	90.45	141.82	60.09
13	Yield of rice crop(t/ha)	2.17	2.67	2.93	4.15	3.26

Figures in the parentheses indicate the per cent of total

The total human labour employment created due to share cropping in rice cultivation in the sample area was 60.09 mandays per farm per year in average situation which varied from 13.56 mandays in marginal farm to 141.82 mandays in large farms per year. Thus, human labour employment generation due to share cropping in rice cultivation increases with the increase in farm size.

Another some special characteristics of share cropping in the study area are:

1. For marginal and small farmers, they undertake share cropping due to their very small size of operational holding (0.58 ha & 1.47 ha respectively) and also due to their available human and draught animal power resources. Thus, they are using their disguised un-employment in Sali rice cultivation through share cropping mode of crop cultivation. Otherwise, there would be more disguised unemployment. Existing owned resources would be under utilized or remains idle. Thus, share cropping helps marginal and small farmers in minimizing their level of disguised unemployment. Their resources get seasonal employment and thus, help in supplementing their total farm income and employment.
2. For medium and large farmers, the main reasons for pursuing share cropping in Sali rice cultivation is due to their comparative better economic condition, better resource endowment such as human labour, draught animal resources, tractor and power tillers availability and those who do not have enough of these resources, they are also in position to hire these sources of power for their crop cultivation. Share cropping by medium and large farmers also help in supplementing their total farm income, resources get employment and thereby helps in enhancing their purchasing power and per capita income.
3. Those marginal farmers who give their cultivable land to other farmers for share cropping in rice cultivation, they do that due to their non-availability of draught animal power, their inability to hire tractor or power tillers for ploughing their land and also due to their inability to apply the required amount of fertilizers and plant protections chemicals. Because, economically their purchasing power is very very low and their attitude for cultivation is far away from commercial line. Their economic conditions is such that they find wage earning in other's farms and non-farm sectors more profitable than undergoing traditional mode of crop cultivation in their very small unit of land.
4. For small, medium and large farmers ,the reasons for their giving cultivable land to others for share cropping are due to their non-availability of required owned or hired human labour and also due to their engagement in non-farm business and service sectors which they consider as comparatively more profitable than the cultivation of crops in their lands. That is, for these farmers, non-farm business and service sector employment are their next best alternative. Therefore, they let their own cultivable land for share cropping to other interested farmers and thus, this also supplements their total farm and non-farm income.

The average yield of rice crop in the study is not so high. It is only 3260 kg per hectare which is 481kg less than the yield in Punjab state and 3202kg less than yield of Egypt which is the highest in yield in case rice crop in the world(Annonymous,2012). .

Conclusion

Thus, from the study it can be concluded that share cropping in the study area is an important agrarian phenomenon. There is still vast scope to boost rice production in the study area through increasing the productivity of crops with the adoption of improved and economic methods of crop cultivation in due space and time on a sustainable basis. Share cropping in the study area is established as supplementary source of farm income to those farmers who undertake share cropping by hiring lands from others. It also act as a complementary source of income and employment for both the group of farmers that is one who undertake share cropping on others lands and others who let their land for share cropping to other farmers. Thus, Share cropping in the study area is found as both supplementary and complementary source of farm income. Of course, in the study area, there is still great scope to make share cropping more profitable as the productivity of rice crop is 481 kg less than the productivity of Punjab and 3202 kg less than the productivity of Egypt which is highest in the world.

Moreover, on need basis, keeping in view with the availability of resources and economic conditions of farmers concerns, share cropping can be undertaken for other high value crops especially in vegetable crops provided topography, soil condition and economic conditions of farmers and market situation permit the same. As share cropping is an existing phenomenon in the study area, fruitful effort should be undertaken in due space and time and in right quantities to boost production from its existing level by effectively and sustainably enhancing the productivity of rice crop. For this, based on soil testing reports, recommended level of balances fertilizers, FYM must be applied. Irrigation, weeding, plant protection measures should be undertaken in due space and time efficiently and eco-friendly. In doing so, whatever improved technical knowledge, training and other helps farmers need, those can be easily obtained from the state agricultural university and its research institutes and also from Krishi Vigyan Kendras and also from some other organizations and NGOs. For those farmers who could not apply fertilizers in their crops due to lack of money, they can obtain their required amount of money from their nearest banks in the form of Kisan Credit Card. But they must convince the banks that they will in fact use the borrowed money in crop cultivation in a profitable manner and they will also repay the loan in time. So there is nothing impossible.

References

Annonymous, 2012, www.agri.horti.sector.assam.