# Socio-Economic Status of Farmers in Telangana – A Cross Sectional Survey

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**ABSTRACT:** The proper design and effective implementation of government development programmes depend on a careful examination of the socioeconomic circumstances of farmers. The study was conducted in Telangana during 2022-23 to investigate the socioeconomic position of farmers. Employing a cross sectional survey design, the primary data was collected through structured interview questionnaire using a sample size of 300 respondents from all over the state of Telangana. Results of the study showed that majority of the farmers were maintaining nuclear family with less than five members. Most of the farmers belonged to marginal farmers' categories who are involved in farming alongside casual labour. Majority of the farmers had low livestock possession, material possession and farm inventory. Farmers had secondary and intermediate school level and nearly half of the farmers belonged to backward caste category. Overall majority of the farmers belonged to middle class category followed by lower class category.

**Keywords:** Socio economic status, dimensions, farmers, agriculture.

## INTRODUCTION

The contribution of agriculture sector to Indian economy stands at mere 18.8% of the country's Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2021-22 (*Central Statistics Office, CSO*). Even the predicted growth of this sector (3.9%) is low than industry (11.8%) and services (8.2%) for 2021-22 (www.ibef.org). Even though, majority of population depending on agriculture, its growth is still behind the industry and service sector. However, we must take into account that in Indian agriculture, vast majority constitute to small (85%) and marginal (66%) holdings (Census, 2015). From this point of view, the role of this sector of population in the development of rural areas and the entire economy cannot be underestimated.

Researchers over the years have emphasized the role of smallholders in economic growth, reducing poverty and ensuring food security, mainly in developing regions like India (World Bank, 2008 & 2019). Traditional agricultural practices, lack of resources, weak marketing are associated when discussed about these units, which results in their low household income (World Bank 2008; Chand, 2016, Satola *et al.,* 2018). The NSSO data on consumption expenditure survey for 2011-2012 reveals that more than one fifth of rural households with agriculture as main occupation have income less than poverty line. The past strategy has been on increasing productivity and attaining self-sufficiency in food production but the perception in the 21st century has changed, focusing on the economic well-being of the farmers and doubling farmers' income (National Policy for Farmers, 2007; Chand, 2017; Ashutosh *et al*., 2019). From this point of view, the estimation of the socio-economic conditions of the farmers cannot be undermined. It has a profound role in determining one's inequities in accessibility to the common resources, livelihood pattern, household food & nutritional security etc. (American Psychological Association, 2007; Surabhi & Mamta 2016). Socio-economic status (SES) is one of the most important variables in social science studies/researches as it guides the psychological and behavioral components of a sample viz. knowledge, adoption, attitude, perception, innovativeness, level of aspiration, risk bearing ability, economic motivation etc. (Raza *et al.,* 2015; Pratima and Poonam 2019; Neetu *et al.,* 2020; Daniel *et al.,* 2022).

Socio-economic status (SES) is a combined measurement of economic and social position of an individual or a group in relation to others in the society. It has a profound role in determining one's accessibility to the common resources, livelihood pattern, household food & nutritional security etc. It also guides the psychological and behavioral components of a sample viz. knowledge, attitude, perception, adoption, change-proneness, level of aspiration, risk bearing ability, economic motivation etc. With this above discussion an effort was made to investigate socio-economic status of farmers in the state of Telangana.

**METHODOLOGY**

The study employed cross sectional survey design in which the phenomenon was studied in a single point of time without influencing it. Sample was selected from three agro climatic zones of Telangana. One district from each agro climatic zone with two mandals from each district and two villages from each mandal were selected using random sample method. From the total twelve villages, twenty five farmers were selected from the total twelve villages taking the sample to 300 farmers.

From the extensive review it was put forward that the Socio economic status was a multi- dimensional construct (Tiwari *et al.,* 2005; American Psychological Association, 2007). Hence it was measured in terms of other variables viz., education, occupation, family size, caste, landholding, water availability, livestock status, housing conditions, farm power and material possession. These variables were measured in new light owing to establish a new measurement. The interview schedule was used to gather data from the respondents. The gathered data was examined, and conclusions were developed in light of the findings. Frequency, percentage were the statistical methods used to analyze the data using SPSS 22 software.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

*A. Socio-economic conditions of respondents*
*Education level.* As could be seen from the Table 1, most of the farmers were secondary educated (34.33%) and there were 70 illiterates (23.33%). Total number of farmers with education up to secondary level was 220 (73.33%). Amitha & Karthikeyan (2022) also reported that the majority of beneficiaries of PM KISAN in the state of Telangana completed high school. The results were in conformity with Davinder *et al*. (2020).

*Nature of the Family.* As could be seen from the Table 1, most of the farmers were secondary educated (34.33%) and that there were 70 illiterates (23.33%). Total number of farmers with education up to secondary level was 220 (73.33%). It could be observed that more than one-half, that is 61.67 per cent of the farmers had family members between three to five, while 32 per cent were having less than three members. In terms of caste composition about near half 49 per cent of the farmers belong to backward category, 31.6 per cent belong to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and remaining 18 per cent belongs to general category where as the economically backward class did not constitute to about 1 per cent. It was found that most of the farmer families belong to nuclear family with family sizes between 3-5 members (Veenita & Shirisha 2021).

*Occupation.* It was observed from Table 1, that majority of the farmers (41.67%) were involved in on farming activities which involve farming and agricultural production, including casual and seasonal labor. While 31.33 per cent of farmers were involved in farming alone without any subsidiary activities. Around 21 per cent were involved in farming in addition to non-farm activities such as owning a grocery store, private sector jobs, tailoring etc., while the remaining (6%) belonged to farming+ off farm in which respondents were engaged in the cultivation of crops along with agriculture-related activities that occur beyond the farm such as livestock, poultry rearing, providing ploughing and inter crop weeding services etc., The majority of the farmers belong to marginal farmer category, which necessitated them to take up any one of the subsidiary occupation to improve their livelihood and income.

**Table 1: Socio-economic conditions of respondents (N=300).**

| Items | Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Education Level** | Illiterate | 70 | 23.33 |
| | Can read | 6 | 2.0 |
| | Can read and write | 7 | 2.33 |
| | Up to primary | 34 | 11.33 |
| | Up to secondary | 103 | 34.33 |
| | Up to higher secondary | 19 | 6.33 |
| | Diploma or certificate holder | 12 | 4.0 |
| | Graduate | 38 | 12.67 |
| | Post graduate | 11 | 3.67 |
| **Family type** | Nuclear | 193 | 64.33 |
| | Joint | 107 | 36.66 |
| **Family size** | Upto 3 | 96 | 32.0 |
| | 3-5 | 185 | 61.67 |
| | Above 5 | 19 | 6.33 |
| **Caste composition** | OC | 54 | 18.0 |
| | EWS | 2 | 0.67 |
| | OBC | 147 | 49.0 |
| **Occupation** | Farming alone | 94 | 31.33 |
| | On farming | 125 | 41.67 |
| | Farming + off farm | 18 | 6 |
| | Farming + non farm | 63 | 21 |
| **Size of land holding** | Marginal (<= 1 hectare) | 124 | 41.33 |
| | Small ( >1 to <= 2 hectares) | 88 | 29.33 |
| | Semi-medium (> 2 to <= 4 hectares) | 57 | 19.00 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Medium (> 4 to <= 10 hectares) | 27 | 9.00 |
| **Water Availability** | 0-2 months | 23 | 7.67 |
| | 3-6 months | 40 | 13.33 |
| | 6-9 months | 192 | 64.00 |
| | 9-10 months | 45 | 15.00 |
| **House Type** | Permanent | 76 | 25.33 |
| | Semi-Permanent | 65 | 21.67 |
| | Temporary | 153 | 51 |
| | Non-serviceable | 6 | 2.00 |
| **Livestock status** | Low | 141 | 47 |
| | Medium | 91 | 30.33 |
| | High | 68 | 22.67 |
| **Farm Power Status** | Farming building | 26 | 8.67 |
| | Cattle shed | 54 | 18.00 |
| | Tractor | 58 | 19.33 |
| | Drip irrigation set | 66 | 22.00 |
| | Sprinkler irrigation set | 10 | 3.33 |
| | Pump set | 133 | 44.33 |
| | Sprayer | 151 | 50.33 |
| | Duster | 2 | 0.67 |
| | Power tiller | 2 | 0.67 |
| | Cultivator | 54 | 18.00 |
| | Disc plough | 36 | 12.00 |
| | Weeder | 0 | 0 |
| | Harrow | 0 | 0 |
| | Leveller | 4 | 1.33 |
| | Cage wheels | 3 | 1.00 |
| | Rotavator | 28 | 9.33 |
| **Material possession** | Refrigerator | 167 | 55.67 |
| | Gas cylinder(LPG) | 300 | 100 |
| | Mixer | 155 | 51.67 |
| | Grinder | 37 | 12.33 |
| | Water purifier | 35 | 11.67 |
| | Washing machine | 51 | 17.00 |
| | TV | 247 | 82.33 |
| | Computer | 30 | 10.00 |
| | Smart phone | 168 | 56.00 |
| | Internet connection | 20 | 6.67 |
| | Fan | 300 | 100.00 |
| | Cooler | 104 | 34.67 |
| | Air conditioner | 37 | 12.33 |
| | Bicycle | 77 | 25.67 |
| | Motor cycle | 207 | 69.00 |
| | Car | 37 | 12.33 |

*Size of land holding.* Approximately 41 per cent had less than 1 hectare and 71 per cent had less than 2 hectares. Only 1.33% had large (>10) hectares. Remaining 28 per cent of farmers possessed around 2-10 hectares. The results were in conformity with Amitha & Karthikeyan (2022).

*Water availability.* From the Table 1 it could be observed that majority of the respondents (64%) had water available for 6-9 months from various sources such as bore well, tanks, canals etc. This could be reason for low cultivation of summer crops in the state of Telangana.

*House type.* Housing classification reference as per census (2010-11). The results indicated that majority of respondents (51%) had temporary type of housing conditions which refers to houses with wall and roof made of temporary material like Un-burnt brick, Wood and asbestos sheets. Whereas 25.33 per cent of

respondents had permanent housing where wall and roof made of permanent materials like burnt bricks, cement, galvanized iron sheets, metal, tiles, stone concrete etc. A mere 2 per cent of the sample had non serviceable housing condition where wall was made of mud, grass, bamboo, and thatch etc.

*Livestock status.* Majority of the farmers were found to be having low livestock possession (47.00%). The average livestock owned was found to be two animals which include either cow or buffalo. Singh *et al.* (2009) also stated that majority of dairy farmers possessed only cattle and overall herd size was low.

*Farm power status.* It could be found that under farm inventory possession, majority of the respondents owned pump set and sprayer which was used for water supply and pesticide application. Items such as duster, power tiller, weeder, harrow, cage wheels and leveler were not possessed by the respondents. Whereas farm

building, rotavator, sprinkler set were observed to be owned by around below 10 per cent respondents. Cattle shed, tractor, drip irrigation, cultivator and disc plough items were found to be possessed by around 10-22 per cent of respondents. It could be understood that farmers in the state of Telangana had low farm mechanization status. Benjongtoshi and Patra (2021) found in their study that farmers had low farm inventory.

*Material possession.* In the house material possession dimension it was found that majority (100%) of the respondents possessed gas cylinder and followed by Television (82.33%), motor cycle (69.00%), smart phone (32.50%), refrigerator (55.67%) and mixer (51.67%). Items such as grinder, water purifier, washing machine, computer, air conditioner and car were possessed by less than 20 per cent of respondents. It was observed that inter connection was the least possessed. The gradual raise in family income increases the possession of assets to their needs and wants. Richa *et al*. (2022) showed similar findings that respondents possessed television, bike and smart phone.

**Overall Socio-economic status.** The results revealed that majority (50.33%) of the respondents were in 'middle' socio-economic status class, while 33.33 per cent belonged to lower socio-economic status class. Around 16.33 per cent of the respondents belonged to 'upper' class. Umesh, (2022) reported similar findings in which majority of dairy farmers belonged to middle class followed by lower class.

**Table 2: Socio-economic status of the respondents (N=300).**

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Upper | 49 | 16.33 |
| Middle | 151 | 50.33 |
| Lower | 100 | 33.33 |

## CONCLUSIONS

An understanding of the socio-economic status of the farmers and its determinants will help in pilot assessment of the farmers conditions where real target group will be benefited from the development programmes**.** Majority of the farmers have secondary and intermediate school level of education belonging to OBC category. As majority of the respondents were marginal and small farmers, they were engaged in subsidiary occupation involving on farm, off farm and non- farm activities. The livelihood status involving the possession of assets in both farm and household was observed to be poor. Livestock possession was also low with only cattle catering to their needs. The above study summarizes the socio-economic position of a sample of farmers and knowledge of this can be utilized in planning better programmes improving their social and economic well-being.

**Conflict of Interest.** None.

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