



Impact of Discontinuation of Tobacco Cultivation in a Village in Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT Tobacco is an important commercial crop that has huge potential for generating employment, enhancing farm incomes, and foreign exchange earnings. Despite its vast economic potential, the net cultivated area for tobacco has been decreasing significantly. The factors responsible for this are: unpredictable rainfall, diminishing market prices, decline of tobacco demand, and un-remunerative prices in the national/ international markets. Government policies, particularly, health policies at the international level, increased public awareness about the health, and social hazards associated with the consumption of tobacco products are also responsible for the decrease in tobacco cultivation. This paper will examine the impact of discontinuation of tobacco cultivation on employment, wages in the farming sector and on the socio-economic conditions of farmers, agricultural labourers in Andhra Pradesh. The research results are based on the empirical study carried out in Aravallipadu village in Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh.

INTRODUCTION

In India, tobacco is a major contributor to the agrarian economy, the exchequer and to agro-exports. Six million farm labourers find gainful employment in tobacco farming. India is the world's second largest producer of tobacco, with an estimated annual production of 800 million kg. Tobacco is an important commercial crop in India, generating enormous socio-economic benefits in terms of agricultural employment, farm incomes, revenue generation and foreign exchange earnings. This is despite the fact that tobacco occupies a meager 0.24 percent of the country's total arable land area. It is grown largely in semi-arid and rain-fed areas. Tobacco and tobacco products generate excise and state tax revenue of around Rs 28,000 crore annually. The tobacco industry provides livelihood to 41.5 million people, who include farmers, farm labourers, rural poor, women and tribals (*The Tobacco Institute of India* 2017). About 38 million people are dependent on production of tobacco and related activities thereon for their livelihood (Union Minister for Commerce and Industry, while replying to the Starred Question No. 58 dated 26th November, 2012 in the Lok Sabha). Exports of leaf tobacco and tobacco products generate foreign exchange earnings of more than Rs 6,000 crore annually. India's tobacco produc-

tion is not aligned to the world demand, which is primarily for FCV tobacco, thus inhibiting its export potential. In India, FCV tobacco constitutes only 41 percent of the total tobacco production, as compared to 75 percent globally. Tobacco occupies a prime place in the Indian economy on account of its considerable contribution to the agricultural, industrial and export sectors (*Report on Tobacco Control in India*, Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare 2004).

Structure of the Paper

In the first section review of literature has been given. This will also include the objectives of the study, the methodology of the study and the sources from which data was obtained. In the second section, some case studies are discussed. Factors affecting the tobacco cultivation at the National, Andhra Pradesh and Prakasam District levels are presented in the third section. Reasons for shifting to other crops and socio-economic conditions of the farmers have been discussed in the fourth section. The fifth section has examined the impact of discontinuation of tobacco cultivation on employment, wages, and working hours and on the socio-economic conditions of the agricultural labourers. Finally, the conclusions are presented in the last section.

Review of Literature

The British authorities took special interest in the growth and sustenance of tobacco industry in the state. This issue was highlighted by Venkateswarlu (1957) who analysed the regulated cropping of tobacco in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh. Because of the importance of this area in the tobacco trade, the Madras Commercial Crops Markets Act (1933) was enforced in the District for regulating the marketing of tobacco. The Guntur Tobacco Market Committee was constituted in 1939. This historical account shows that the British government continuously encouraged tobacco cultivation in the country to provide raw material for the factories established in England.

Hattangady (1980) examined the system of bank credit to tobacco farmers, small packers and exporters. Crop loans to the farmers cover a wide range of operations like raising of nurseries, preparations of main fields, transplantation and other cultural operations, harvesting, curing - and even marketing. However, the study does not inform us about the impact of tobacco cultivation on the social system.

Singh (1992) discussed the economics of tobacco cultivation, especially in India, where the major portion of the population depends on agriculture for its livelihood. He compared tobacco cultivation with that of other crops – cereals, pulses, oilseeds, cash crops and other crops – and identified some problems of tobacco cultivation. These included: capital, labour, middlemen, storage, marketing and taxation.

Chojar (2002) provided an analysis of marketing operations of the tobacco industry with special reference to Flue-Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco, which is predominantly cultivated and marketed in Andhra Pradesh. A significant impact has been found on the internal and external environment of marketing operations of the industry, and on the higher behaviour of the major buying segments, which are mainly composed of manufacturers, domestic traders and exporters. Thus, all these studies are oriented towards the economy, market, production and prospects of tobacco, rather than on the social phenomenon, or relationships, between producers and labourers.

Krishna Rao and Nancharaiah (2012) in their study found that the paddy and Bengal gram are more profitable crops than the tobacco. In both the villages, an inverse relationship has been found between the size of holding and cost of production in all crops cultivation. At the end it can be concluded that the cultivation of Bengal gram and paddy is more lucrative than the tobacco cultivation in the selected villages. At present, the central and state governments are planning to discourage tobacco cultivation and its consumption due to the adverse effects of tobacco on the health of both the growers and its consumers. Thus the government may disseminate the economics of these *rabi* crops and motivate the farmers to discontinue the cultivation of tobacco cultivation. However precaution should be taken to preserve the labour employment since tobacco is a more labour intensive crop than Bengal gram and paddy.

Thus any effort to discourage the cultivation of tobacco must be matched by initiatives to provide alternative occupations to workers who are now totally dependent on this crop for their sustenance.

Kranthi Kumar (2013) in his book explained the reasons for socio-economic disparities between two villages using a comparative method. In one of the villages studied, tobacco is being extensively cultivated and its effect on the socio-economic fabric is clearly visible. In the other village, there is hardly any tobacco cultivation and the quality of life of the residents, in terms of material prosperity, educational levels of the children and political empowerment, is no match to that of their counterparts residing in the other village. The villages are almost equal in area, have agriculture as their main economic activity and persons of almost the same castes reside in both. Today, one can still find oasis of prosperity, surrounded by deserts of neglect, deprivation and destitution. The task of ensuring a better deal to struggling farmers is indeed challenging, but certainly not impossible.

Objectives of the Study

The study has been undertaken with the objective of examining how the discontinuance of cultivation of tobacco has had its impact on

the socio-economic conditions of both the farmers and agricultural labourers in the study area. The issues to be taken up will discuss issues like: financial conditions (which include income, savings and level of indebtedness), educational status of the children and inter-caste relations.

METHODOLOGY

The data for this paper comes from an in-depth study undertaken in Aravallipadu village in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh during December 2018.

Primary Data

The data on which the study is based has been largely drawn from the participant observation of the researcher with the respondents in the study area. These individuals included: farmers who have been cultivating this cash crop and farm labourers. The researcher also adopted the focused group discussion method to obtain greater insights into the issues faced by the respondents. Five case studies have also been included in this study.

Secondary Data

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, while there have been numerous studies on various issues (mostly the financial ones and the area under cultivation) associated with tobacco, this is the only one which has spoken about the *impact of discontinuation* of cultivation of this crop. Hence, other than some aspects covered in the section on review of literature, this paper is largely based on the personal initiative of the writer.

The following five case studies illustrate the switching over from the tobacco cultivation.

Case Study I

Guntur Subbaiah (aged 70 years) owns 8 acres of land and he belongs to the Reddy caste. He had been cultivating tobacco from 1975 onwards. In 1998, he got very good yield of the crop and earned a good profit. With that, he bought four acres of land at a cost of Rs. 12000/-. He had two bullocks. In 2002, he took a loan from Andhra

Bank to purchase an HMT tractor, costing Rs. 5 lakhs. In 2005, he bought four acres of land at a cost of Rs. 40,000/-. In 2010, he bought one acre of land, costing Rs.30,000/-. He never incurred loss on tobacco cultivation. He had 17 acres of land. In 2010, he got Rs 3 lakh profit, which he deposited in the Podili Branch of the Andhra Bank. He says he got the money for purchasing the lands only from tobacco cultivation. His two sons and two daughters are married. His first son is a cultivator and the second son is a teacher in a Government school. Guntur Subbaiah is the richest person among the Reddys of Aravallipadu. He stopped cultivating tobacco in 2012 in the village due to insufficient rainfall. Since then, he has been cultivating red gram in the village. However, according to him, he is not getting a good profit from this crop.

Case Study II

Pari Bangaraiah, a Madiga by caste, is about 52 years old. He has been cultivating tobacco on four acres of land since 1997. He also took four acres of land on lease for cultivating this crop, since he felt that cultivation of tobacco would not be cost-effective, if the cultivation is on less than eight acres. He has his own barn. He used to sell his crop to the *Tobacco Board* in Podili. Before he started tobacco cultivation, he had 12 years of experience in tobacco curing as a driver in Podili. His first son is pursuing MCA in a private collage in Vijayawada and his second son has completed graduation. The third son is studying intermediate in a private collage in Podili. In 2010, he constructed a house which cost him about Rs.1,50,000/-. Thus, tobacco cultivation helped Pari Bangaraiah to improve his economic status in the village. However, due to the falling market rates for tobacco, Bangaraiah has stopped cultivating this crop from 2013 onwards. After he discontinued the cultivation of tobacco, he is unable to pay the college fees of his children from his own earnings and has borrowed Rs. 50,000/- at 5 percent interest from money lenders.

Case Study III

Kambampati Nagaiah, a 54-year-old man, who belongs to the OC community, started tobacco

cultivation in 1990. He had only six acres of land initially and he took two acres of land on lease from P. Venkateswarlu, a person belonging to the Kamma caste, in 1992. The lease has continued since then. He says that he started tobacco cultivation by seeing the profits earned by others. According to him, in tobacco cultivation, the family members get enough work for themselves and can also give work to others. He purchased two acre of land in 1996 for Rs. 30,000/-. For a few years, he earned good profits from tobacco cultivation. He spent the money on extending his house and on the marriages of his daughters. He gave a dowry of Rs 2 lakh for his elder daughter and Rs 4 lakh for his younger daughter. He also purchased 20 *savaras* of gold for about Rs 2 lakh. His son completed an undergraduate course in Podili in 2012. Nagaiah is not cultivating tobacco from 2014 due to the increase in labour wages and decreasing profits from tobacco cultivation. After that, he has been growing red gram crop, which has not been giving him good profits. Due to that, he has not been able to send his son to college.

Case Study IV

Pari Venkateswarlu, a 45-year-old man, who belongs to the Madiga caste; worked for more than 15 years in the tobacco field. He got interested in tobacco cultivation and constructed a house from his own savings at a cost of Rs. 2 lakh. His son is pursuing his BSc. Degree course. Since there is hardly any agricultural labour work in the village; Venkateswarlu migrates to Macharla during the paddy harvesting season. He borrowed Rs. 1 lakh at 5 percent interest from a moneylender for his son's college education. He has two sons and one daughter. One son and his daughter are married. He says that he could educate his sons and get his daughter married because of the good income from tobacco.

Case Study V

Pari Venkataiah, a 50-year-old man of the Madiga caste, worked as a tobacco labourer for 35 years. He got very good wages in tobacco related works. In 2000, he constructed a new house worth about Rs 1,50,000. His son is pursuing a UG course in a private collage in Podili,

paying Rs. 30,000 per year. His daughter got married at the age of 21 and he gave her a dowry of Rs 1 lakh, from his own savings. He had improved his economic status during the tobacco cultivation period. Now, he migrates from the village for agricultural work. At present, farmers are growing red gram and cotton in the village. Due to the reduction in income, Venkataiah cannot think of sending his son for higher studies.

Brief Description of the Study Area

Aravallipadu village, falls under Donakonda Mandal, Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh, and is has 458 households. Out of 140 sample households, there were 70 farmers and an equal number of agricultural labourers. Aravallipadu totally depends upon rainfall for agriculture. Red gram and cotton are the important crops grown here. In the village, crops are cultivated during the early *Rabi* season.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Area under Tobacco Cultivation at the National, Andhra Pradesh and Prakasam District Levels

A clear idea on this issue can be had from Table 1. It would be seen that there has not been any uniform trend in the figures for all-India, Andhra Pradesh or Prakasam district during the periods 2005-06 to 2014-15. For instance, the very high figure of 6.29 lakh hectares for the entire country (in 2009-10) did not necessarily mean a commensurate increase in the proportionate percentage of land under tobacco cultivation in Andhra Pradesh. On the other end of the spectrum, even though the all-India figures dipped to as low as 2.91 and 2.42 lakh hectares in 2013-14 and 2011-05, the corresponding figures for the state were 1.43 lakh hectares (49.14%) and 1.39 lakh hectares (57.43%) respectively. A remarkable feature about Prakasam district has been that its relative proportion with regard to the entire state has generally lingered between 45 percent and 52 percent. However, in 2013-14, the districts contribution became as high as 60.13 percent. This fell marginally to 57.55 percent in 2014-15. The lesson that can be drawn from this table was that, despite the almost global outcry

Table 1: Area under tobacco cultivation at the National, State and Prakasam District levels

Year	Tobacco area (in Lakh Hect)				
	India	Andhra Pradesh	%*	Prakasam	%**
2005-06	3.69	1.34	36.31	0.61	45.52
2006-07	3.54	1.27	35.37	0.60	47.24
2007-08	3.59	1.19	33.41	0.56	47.05
2008-09	3.93	1.71	43.51	0.81	47.36
2009-10	6.29	1.98	31.47	0.94	47.47
2010-11	4.63	1.57	33.90	0.81	51.57
2011-12	4.77	1.32	27.67	0.62	46.93
2012-13	5.10	1.34	26.27	0.71	52.98
2013-14	2.91	1.43	49.14	0.86	60.13
2014-15	2.42	1.39	57.43	0.80	57.55

Source: Compendium of Area and Land Use Statistics of AP: Statistical Abstract of AP: 2005-06 to 2014-15, Directorate of Economic and Statistics, Government of India

Note:*Indicates the percentage share of state area in National area,

**Indicates percentage share of Prakasam district area in State area

against the use of tobacco products, Andhra Pradesh continues to be a major producer of tobacco in the country. At the same time, Prakasam district is 'dominating' other districts of the state in the production of this cash crop. The first issue of interest is the change in area under tobacco cultivation at the national, state, and district levels in the past decade.

Total Cropped Area and Tobacco Cultivation at Andhra Pradesh and Prakasam District Levels

Table 2 enables us to discuss this issue in some depth. One cannot fail to notice the fluctu-

ations in the total cropped area in the state. It touched its peak of 145.12 lakh hectares in 2010-11 and dipped to its lowest levels in 2013-14 (81.12 lakh hectares) and 76.89 lakh hectares (in 2014-15). One possible reason for the sharp fall is the increasing interest towards construction of properties on the land. Prakasam district was found to find a high total cropped area of 7.47 lakh hectares in 2010-11 and a low of 5.9 lakh hectares in 2006-07. It is very clear that, all these years, the proportion of tobacco cultivation to that of other crops has been very high in this district, when compared to the figures for the state as a whole.

Table 2: Total cropped area and tobacco cultivation at Andhra Pradesh and Prakasam District levels

Year	Area (in lakh Hect)					
	Tobacco cropped area in AP	Total cropped Area in AP	%*	Tobacco cropped area in Prakasam	Total cropped area in Prakasam	%**
2005-06	1.34	133.62	1.00	0.61	6.50	9.38
2006-07	1.27	128.10	0.99	0.60	5.9	10.17
2007-08	1.19	135.66	0.87	0.56	6.93	8.08
2008-09	1.71	138.30	1.23	0.81	6.64	12.20
2009-10	1.98	125.60	1.58	0.94	6.27	14.99
2010-11	1.57	145.12	1.08	0.81	7.47	10.84
2011-12	1.32	137.59	0.95	0.62	6.36	9.75
2012-13	1.34	136.49	0.98	0.71	6.42	11.06
2013-14	1.43	81.12	1.76	0.86	6.88	12.50
2014-15	1.39	76.89	1.80	0.80	6.05	13.22

Source: Compendium of Area and Land Use Statistics of AP: Statistical Abstract of AP:

2005-06 to 2014-15, Directorate of Economic and Statistics, Government of India

Note:* Indicates the percentage share of state area in State area,

Demographic Profile of the Farmers and Agricultural Labourers

The adoption, or discontinuation, of a crop can be impacted by a number of socio-economic factors of the 'major players'. The subsequent paras will discuss the demographic profile of the respondents in the study area. In Aravallipadu village the majority of the farmers (more than 94.3%) have been found to be males. The largest number of respondents is in the age bracket 21 to 50 years. The largest numbers of respondents (84.3%) are Open Categories (OCs); followed by Backward Castes (BCs), 12.9 percent and Scheduled Castes (SCs) 2.9 percent. It was very encouraging to note that an overwhelming 92.9 percent of the respondents in the village were residing in *pucca* houses. However, one cannot totally ignore the 4.3 percent *kutchra* and 2.9 percent who were residing in semi-*pucca* houses. In this village, a large proportion of the population (58.6%) did not have domestic toilets. However, the majority of the respondents (98.6%) had electricity connections. It was found that 88.6 percent the respondents had electric meters in their premises. In Aravallipadu village, most of the agricultural labourers (91%) are males.

Switching Over From Tobacco to Other Crops

Many farmers are 'specialised' in cultivating only particular types of crops. Shifting to other crops from their 'traditional' ones is almost like a cultural change, since each crop has unique operations associated with it. A clear inference that can be drawn from the above discussion is that most of the respondents did not change the 'cropping pattern' overnight. In the initial stages, due to factors like 'fear of the unknown', the proportion of individuals opting for the change was very less. Thereafter, the success stories of those who switched to other crops must have motivated the undecided ones to follow their example. The figure reached as high as 58.6 percent in the year 2015-16. The rural society in India still continues to be largely conservative in many respects. There is also the general reluctance to discard the age-old practices that had been sustaining them all these years. In most cases, the switch-over to other practices is

due to very compelling reasons. The important reasons, in decreasing order of importance are: (i) Diminishing Market Prices, (ii) Increase in the Wages of Labourers, (iii) Unpredictable Rain-fall, and Crop Diseases.

Due to discontinuation of tobacco cultivation, the farmers in the study area have been forced to switch to other crops. The two most common alternative crops now being grown in the study area are: red gram (grown by 85.7% of the respondents), cotton (favoured by only 10.3 percent of the respondents) and both red gram and cotton 4 percent of the respondents. The researcher was informed that the former crop entails lesser investment. The fact of large number of suicides by cotton farmers must also have been a major causative factor for this choice. It has been mentioned above that red gram emerged as the better alternative to tobacco in the study area. The next issue of interest was whether this is also reflected in the relative area under cultivation. The researcher found that red gram (with 1200 acres) dominated cotton (300 acres) in the matter of area under cultivation.

Annual Income of the Respondents

Any change in the choice of crops brings about a corresponding change in income for the particular farmer. Table 3 will give an idea of the situation in this regard in the study area. A very amazing finding has been the overall fall in annual income of such farmers. Earlier, 65.7 percent of the total respondents had an annual income of Rs 300,000 and above. Now, no farmer was found to have an income in this range. Now, a total of 92.9 percent of the respondents were found to be

Table 3: Annual income of the respondents

S. No.	Annual income (Rupees)	During tobacco cultivation period	After discontinuation of tobacco cultivation
1	<10000	2 (2.9)	45 (64.3)
2	100001-200000	3 (4.3)	20 (28.6)
3	200001-300000	19 (27.1)	5 (7.1)
4	300001-400000	35 (50.0)	-
5	>400001 and Above	11 (15.7)	-
Total		70 (100)	70 (100)

Source: Primary data

having an annual income of Rs 2,00,000, or less. The change in income of a person can impact his consumption expenditure. Table 3 had brought out that generally there had been a fall in the annual income of the respondents after they stopped cultivating tobacco. During his field study, the researcher found that, while in the earlier period, 85.7 percent of the respondents had an annual expenditure of Rs 60,000 and above, this figure dropped to 4.3 percent after cultivation of tobacco was discontinued.

Savings of the Respondents

The savings of a person are largely conditioned by his income and his expenditure. A person can think of savings only after he has met his financial obligations. Table 4 depicts the situation in this regard in the study area. The first conclusion that can be drawn is that, post-discontinuance of tobacco cultivation, no respondent has savings in the range of Rs 60,000 and above. Also, only a total of 14.2 percent of them were able to save in the range of Rs 40,000-60,000. Savings in the form of gold/silver, found to be a very reliable option, especially for the lower saving brackets, in both the periods. Bank, post offices, etc., do not seem to have made very significant inroads as saving options in the study area. The concerned postal and bank

officials operating in the study area need to put in more concerted efforts to motivate people to deposit their savings with them.

Amount of Loans Taken by the Respondents

Loans are generally taken to meet pressing personal and social obligations, more so when the income and savings are unable to cater for such commitments. An issue of interest is whether the changes in the crops being cultivated have correspondingly impacted the quantum of loans taken by the respondents. It has already been brought out that there has generally been a marked fall in income (and consequently, savings) after cultivation of tobacco was discontinued. This fact has been substantiated by the fact that there has been an increase in loans, especially for the respondents in the lower income brackets. It emerged during the field survey that, while 57.1 percent of the respondents took loans in the Rs 3,00,000-400,000 range in the earlier period, no respondent took loans of this quantum after tobacco cultivation was discontinued. One possible reason could be the reduced re-paying capacity. The researcher also found that a total of 78.5 percent of the respondents had taken loans below Rs 2,00,000 after tobacco cultivation was discontinued in the study area. A slightly encouraging fact that

Table 4: Savings of the respondents

Savings in rupees	During tobacco cultivation period					After discontinuation of tobacco cultivation				
	Cash savings	Gold / Silver	Bank / Financial institutions	Post office	SHGs	Cash savings	Gold / Silver	Bank / Financial institutions	Post office	SHGs
20000	6 (8.6)	4 (5.7)	-	-	12 (26.7)	59 (84.3)	60 (85.7)	55 (78.6)	30 (85.7)	18 (78.3)
20001-40000	13 (18.6)	11 (15.7)	13 (18.6)	7 (17.5)	2 (4.4)	11 (15.7)	5 (7.1)	10 (14.3)	5 (14.3)	5 (21.7)
40001-60000	29 (41.4)	2 (2.9)	15 (21.4)	18 (45)	22 (48.9)	-	5 (7.1)	5 (7.1)	-	-
60001-80000	14 (20)	7 (10)	42 (60)	15 (37.5)	9 (20)	-	-	-	-	-
>80001	8 (11.4)	46 (65.7)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	70 (100)	70 (100)	70 (100)	40 (100)	45 (100)	70 (100)	70 (100)	70 (100)	35 (100)	23 (100)

Source: Primary data

emerged was that, despite the general reduction in income in the latter period, 14.3 percent of the respondents stated that they had not taken any loans.

Purpose of Loans Taken By the Respondents

Loans can be taken for a variety of reasons, when the income/savings are found to be insufficient to meet the particular need(s). The researcher ascertained from the respondents the various purposes for which loans were being taken by them. Agriculture and education of children were found to be the most common reasons in both the periods for taking loans. At the other end of the spectrum was ‘Purchase of land’ in both the periods. Marriage emerged as a noticeable reason for the respondents, both during the tobacco cultivation period and after cultivation of this crop was discontinued. Interestingly, there was a slight increase in the number of persons taking loans for house construction purposes in the latter period.

Annual Income of Agricultural Labourers

Table 5 should help us to analyse this issue in some depth. It is a known fact that agriculture is the backbone of the rural economy in this country. This will also help one to ascertain to extent to which the discontinuation of tobacco cultivation has impacted the economic conditions of the respondents.

A very noticeable fact that emerges is that a total of 81.4 percent of the respondents were having an annual income of Rs 60,000 and above when tobacco was being cultivated. In the subsequent period, no respondent was having an

annual income in this range. Also, after cultivation of this crop was discontinued, the largest proportion of the respondents (98.6 percent) was having an annual income of less than Rs 20,000. The consumption expenditure of a household is largely determined by its income. It would be of interest to examine whether the expenditure pattern is similar to the income distribution, as depicted in Table 5. During the field visit, it became amply clear that the discontinuation of tobacco cultivation has had a negative impact on the annual consumption expenditure of majority of the respondents. In the earlier period, only 2.9 percent of the respondents had an expenditure of less than Rs. 20,000. In the subsequent period, as high as 85.7 percent of the respondents were having an annual consumption of less than Rs 20,000.

Savings of Agricultural Labourers

As already mentioned, the savings of an individual are largely determined by his earnings and his expenditure. Table 6 should give an idea of the extent to which these factors impacted the savings of the respondent agricultural labourers.

It did not come as a total surprise that as high as 70 percent of the respondents had annual savings of Rs 60,000 and above, when tobacco was being cultivated. The corresponding figure for the latter period was as low as 2.9 percent. After cultivation of tobacco was discontinued, the majority of the total respondents (92.8%) could mobilise savings of only Rs 40,000, or below. In most cases, indebtedness occurs when a person is unable to meet his obligatory expenditure from his existing income/savings.

Table 5: Annual income of agricultural labourers

S. No.	Annual consumption expenditure	During tobacco cultivation period	Discontinuation of tobacco period
1	Less than Rs.20000	2 (2.9)	56 (80.0)
2	Rs.20001-40000	8 (11.4)	13 (18.6)
3	Rs.40001-60000	3 (4.3)	1 (1.4)
4	Rs. 60001-80000	54 (77.1)	-
5	Rs.80001 and Above	3 (4.3)	-
	Total	70 (100)	70 (100)

Source: Primary data

Table 6: Savings of agricultural labourers

S. No.	Savings	During tobacco cultivation period	Discontinuation of tobacco period
1	Less than Rs. 20000	1 (1.4)	60 (85.7)
2	Rs.20001-40000	8 (11.4)	5 (7.1)
3	Rs.40001-60000	12 (17.1)	3 (4.3)
4	Rs. 60001-80000	16 (22.9)	2 (2.9)
5	Rs.80001 and Above	33 (47.1)	-
	Total	70 (100)	70 (100)

Source: Primary data

The researcher found that, in the earlier period, none of the respondents had indebtedness of Rs 15,000, or above. In the subsequent period, the figure rose to as high as 51.5 percent. This has been slightly moderated by the fact that as high as 28.6 percent of the respondents in the latter period stated that they had no indebtedness.

Employment Generated by Crop

When tobacco was being cultivated in a big way in Aravallipadu village, the other crops were Bengal-gram and chilies. Tobacco was then the major crop, since it provided employment for a large number of Agricultural labourers. After cultivation of tobacco was discontinued in this village, the important crops there are now are red gram and cotton. Tobacco used to provide as many as 180 days of employment to the agricultural labourers, whereas red gram and cotton provide only 60 days of employment in this village. When tobacco was being cultivated in this village, this crop, along with Bengal –gram and chilies provided almost round the year employment to the agricultural labourers. Tobacco used to provide not only man-days of employment, but also kept the workers engaged for several hours in a day. Both these factors helped the labourers earn more wages.

Wage Determination

When tobacco was being cultivated in the village, the wages were fixed through negotiations between the farmers and labourers. In the study village, the *mutah-maistry* has been playing a key role of spokesperson and mediator between the labourers and the farmers. As demand for workers increase, the labourers, through the maistry, demand an increase on their wages also. Of course, the final decision is left to the farmer. However, at least, the labourers have the bargaining capacity. Once the labourers are successful in getting the wages increased in one stance, particularly in the beginning, the other farmers follow suit throughout the season.

In Aravallipadu village, the labour market is unorganised and scattered. There is no labour organisation, for the agricultural labourers either. During the agricultural season, the farmer usually informs a labourer who has good report

with him about the labour requirement of that day. Then one worker mobilises the labourers as per the requirement of the farmer. In the study village, during the tobacco cultivation period, the wages for both males and females were Rs. 400 for operations such as transplantation and harvesting. This spoke about the gender equality since these operations required equal skills. However, after tobacco cultivation was discontinued, the present wages have been Rs. 150 for males and Rs. 120 females. For the task of spraying of pesticides for the all the crops, men are paid more than twice what is given to the women. This is because women only mix the chemicals, whereas men spray the chemicals. This process carries the risk of inhaling the noxious vapours. One important reason for such difference in wages is that tobacco operations require skills that are not required for other crops.

Working Hours of Women Agricultural Laborers during the Tobacco Cultivation Period

When tobacco was being cultivated in the village, most of the women labourers worked for long hours on tobacco farms, at barns and in grading, since the wages were higher than those for other agricultural work. During the harvesting season, women worked a 15-hour day, in contrast to men who worked only for eight hours. Men who did not work either in the morning, or after returning home in the evening, helped in the house by preparing food and taking care of the children. During the tobacco harvesting season, women used to get up at 4.00 a.m., finish their morning ablutions and sat near the fire to get warm. The *maistry* comes calling her fellow labourers by name, counted them and led them to the tobacco field at 5 a.m. reaping the leaves and putting these on strings to dry. This process took a maximum of two hours. The women returned to their houses and did domestic work. At 7.30 a.m. they prepared food, ate that and then proceeded to the tobacco barn. They started the stringing process at 9 a.m. This work took about seven hours. They returned home at 2.30 p.m. and hurriedly finished their meal. They again returned to the tobacco barn and completed the remaining stringing process, which ended at 6 pm. They then went to another tobacco barn at

6 p.m. to unload the tobacco from the barn, which took another hour. They returned home at 7 p.m.

After tobacco cultivation was discontinued, women have been working for 10 hours a day, in contrast to men who work for only 8 hours.

Seasonal Migration

Seasonal migration is prevalent, particularly among the agricultural labourers in Aravallipadu village. When tobacco was being cultivated in the village, there was not migration in the village. However, after the cultivation of this crop has been discontinued, the agricultural labourers have been migrating to places like Macharla, Vijayawada, Guntur and Kurnool in search of work, as unskilled labourers, or for harvesting paddy. A few of them migrate to Hyderabad for undertaking construction labour work.

Health Hazards Faced by Agricultural Laborers

Those engaged in the tobacco-related occupation, suffers from a variety of respiratory diseases, skin disorders, certain cancers, chemical toxicity, and heat-related illness. The type of hazard shows that the post-harvest operations (stringing, barn packing, unloading of cured leaves and packing) are more hazardous than other operations. On the other hand, those engaged in cultivation of red gram can suffer from back pain and leg pain.

Consciousness of Women Agricultural Laborers

Women laborers engaged in cultivation of tobacco are organised into *mutahs* and leadership skills had been developed among the women. These *mutahs* have developed a spirit of solidarity and mutual help, transcending the egoism of the individual family. The collective spirit among the women can be gauged from the fact that the farmers have to bargain with them. They cannot recruit these women individually, but have to negotiate with their spokeswomen who, in turn, are controlled by the other women laborers. The necessity to recruit a large number of women for agricultural operations during certain periods of the year provides the objective basis for the development of women's spirit

of solidarity and organisational skills. Women agricultural labourers of Aravallipadu village had joined the state-sponsored scheme of Self Help Groups (SHGs). There are 20 Self Help Groups in this village. They save money in the banks for education of their children and marriages of their daughters.

Inter-caste Relations

When tobacco was being cultivated in Aravallipadu, there was no such patron-client relationship, mainly because the cash-crop economy had replaced that of grain, and there was year-round employment in the tobacco industry and an agricultural labourer did not have to depend on one farmer for the entire year. The tobacco industry has proved to be a boon for them since it has freed them from the earlier kind of attached labour or menial service. Also, there was scope for better wages; freedom to work for different farmers almost simultaneously and almost assured work throughout the year. At the same time, for most other crops, the farmers tend to dissociate themselves from the agricultural labourers to avoid taking care of their families during the non-agricultural season. Many agricultural labourers want to be free from the farmers who try to extract more work in the year, and pay inadequate amounts for that.

Living Conditions

When tobacco was being cultivated in this village, the qualitative and quantitative consumption of food had improved considerably due to better incomes even for the once poorer households. The people have greater purchasing power and spent lavishly on themselves and their children. They used banking facilities which enabled them to keep their valuables safe and deposit money and use it whenever it is required. Agricultural labourers were sending their children to schools. Reduction of income, due to the discontinuation of tobacco cultivation, has adversely impacted the living conditions of the agricultural labourers in the study village.

CONCLUSION

In spite of growing 'unpopularity' of tobacco due to its proven health hazards, upheavals in the national and international markets and in-

creasing labour charges, the alternative crops have not been able to offset the loss in income after tobacco cultivation was discontinued in the Andhra Pradesh State.

The concerned decision-makers need to address this issue seriously so that the cultivators are not forced to revert to this crop as a necessary evil. Activists may strongly advocate a total ban on the cultivation of this crop. However, before such a drastic step is taken, the concerned decision-makers need to keep in mind the vast employment potential (almost for the entire year) of the crop. A summary ban on this industry could render a large number of persons without any source of income. Hence, alternative and legitimate employment (and almost equally attractive) sources of income need to be created in the first place. A possible way out would be to provide adequate training to such persons so that they could easily fit into the new stream of employment.

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