



TMC MM 5.2: Studies on social dynamics of cotton production in distress areas

INTRODUCTION

The literature explains that most of the farmers suicides reported were from cotton growing areas. Earlier reports also quoted that cotton growers were not able to get remunerative prices and have to sell the produce at very low prices and are not able to repay their debts due to droughts and continues crop failures. This leads them towards frustration and humiliation. Several other reports on farmers suicides also blame the failure of cotton crop, failure of rains, bad marketing and indebtedness for farmer's suicides. An attempt was made in this study to look at the phenomenon of cotton growers suicides through social - psychological perspective which treat suicides as deviant behaviour. Crop failure and indebtedness can explain some of the variance but there are other important antecedents of suicide like perceived financial condition, expenditure pattern, contingencies, government policies, family problems, social isolation and social support. These may lead to alienation from land which leads to depression and suicides.

OBJECTIVES

- To quantify the cotton growers alienation from land
- To study social dynamics of cotton production in high suicide prone areas
- To Study issues of indebtedness among farmers
- To explore the antecedents of alienation from land

SALIENT FINDINGS

Alienation

Powerlessness

Majority of the cotton growers from distress as well as non-distress situations from all the centers (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Eastern Vidarbha and Western Vidarbha) found to agree or strongly agree to economic powerlessness which indicates non availability of capital,

no economic support from friends and no creditability at moneylender.

Majority of the respondents from distressed situation in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Eastern Vidarbha and Western Vidarbha and majority of the farmers from non distressed situation in Karnataka and Western Vidarbha also agreed towards socio-political powerlessness which indicates no participation and powers in formal organization, non government organizations and in farmers forum, groups or associations.

In general terms, majority of cotton growers from distressed situation in all the centers expressed lack of cooperation from others, had no involvement in decision making.

Isolation

In case of isolation majority of the cotton growers responded that previously their relatives, neighbours and friends used to help them in crisis, but now nobody was ready to help them (except cotton growers from non-distressed situations of Andhra Pradesh and Eastern Vidarbha). Due to repeated cotton crop failures, leading them to poor economy, no body wants to maintain relations with them, thinking that they may become a sort of economic burden over them (except cotton growers from non-distressed situations of Andhra Pradesh). Due to absence of enhancement in their economy with continuous cotton farming, they failed to repay the debts obtained from their relatives hence they found guilty to ruined the relations with them (except cotton growers from non-distressed situations of Andhra Pradesh and Eastern Vidarbha).

Level of alienation

Large proportion of cotton growers from Eastern Vidarbha, Karnataka and Western Vidarbha had high alienation irrespective of situations. The majority of

cotton growers from Andhra Pradesh recorded medium level of alienation. The alienation was more or less similar in cotton growers residing in distressed and non-distressed situation which was indicated by the statistically non significant mean differences.

Social Dynamics

Land Holding Pattern

Comparatively higher land was possessed by the cotton growers of Eastern Vidarbha followed by Western Vidarbha, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh under both the situations. The average land holding was comparatively higher with the farmers residing in non-distressed situations.

Productivity of Cotton

There was no considerable difference in the observed productivity potentials of Bt cotton at distressed and non distressed situations though the productivity levels of distressed situations were low than that of non distressed situations.

Infrastructure Facilities

Majority of cotton growers from both, distressed as well as non distressed districts from all the centres faced inadequacy of inputs like fertilizers, farm machinery. The resources like irrigation facilities, electricity for farm operations and watershed development works were also inadequate with cotton growers from both, distressed as well as non distressed districts. The information infrastructures like computer and internet, telephones, mobiles were not available with them. The post harvest infrastructures like warehouses, cold storage, rural agro-based industries and efficient market systems were total absence.

Labour Process

Majority of cotton growers from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Vidarbha reported that they are facing inadequacy in the availability of family labour as well as hired labour. The situation was similar at distressed as well as non-distressed situation. Majority of the cotton growers under study reported that labour cost was too high

Perception towards pesticides

The cotton growers from distressed and non-distressed situation of Eastern Vidarbha and Western Vidarbha had low to moderate perception towards pesticides while cotton growers from distressed and non-distressed situation of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka had moderate to high perception towards pesticides.

Indebtedness

Economic Viability of Cotton Farming

Cotton farming was economically viable at cotton growers as expressed by the B:C ratio. The economic viability of cotton farming was comparatively higher with the cotton growers residing in non-distressed situation than the cotton growers residing in distressed situation but the difference was statistically non significant.

Extent of borrowing and utilization

On an average, 90 percent of cotton growers residing in

distressed situation and 84 per cent of cotton growers residing in non-distressed situation had taken loan. There was no significant difference in the amount of loan taken between distress and non distress farmers. On an average, 71 percent of cotton growers residing in distressed situation and 56 per cent of cotton growers residing in non-distressed situation were defaulters.

Antecedents of Alienation

Earning and Expenditure Pattern

The earning pattern of the cotton growers under study indicated that agriculture (farming) was the major contributor of the annual income in both distressed and non distressed situations. The expenditure pattern shows that agriculture was the major area of expenditure wherein minimum of one-fourth and maximum of three-fourth of the total expenditure was made towards agriculture. In case if Vidarbha farmer average annual expenditure was higher than average annual income.

Alcoholism

Considerable alcoholism was observed at all the centers and in both, distressed as well as non-distressed situations. The alcoholism was higher in distressed situations.

Social Support

Majority of cotton growers from both the groups (distressed and non-distressed) from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Vidarbha had high social support.

