

## **SOCIAL SECURITY OF FARM LABOURS AND THEIR WELFARE IN INDIA**

**Shabana Anjum**

Guest Faculty, Department of Management Studies  
Sardar Patel University, Anand-388001 (Gujarat), INDIA  
E-mail: shabanaislam26@gmail.com

**Abstract:** Farm workers in India are characterized by low income, poor working and living standard, irregularity in employment, absence of social security measures and welfare laws because of which they are vulnerable to socio-economic hardship. They are also denied of minimum wages and their work is more of casual and contractual nature and also suffers from low productivity syndrome. The rural indebtedness of the farmers because of adverse seasonal conditions and dependence, lack of remunerative market, non-availability of adequate institutional support for financial assistance and the expenditure on prevailing social customs are the problems faced by Indian farmers. There are many labour welfare schemes and social security laws for the organized labour but few for unorganized farm workers.

**Keywords:** Farm labour, welfare, social security

### **Introduction**

Labour Welfare is the most important tool to make workers happy and contented. According to the agricultural labour enquiries is one who is employed not only in crop production but also hired in employment in other agricultural occupations such as dairy farming, horticultural, raising of livestock and poultry [1]. In broader terms they are included under unorganized sector in rural areas. The workers in agriculture suffer from poor standard of living and it's difficult for them to cope with the pace of modern life with minimum sustenance amenities. It is, therefore, one major aspect of national programmes towards the promotion of the welfare of the people and is as such designed to create a life and work environment of decent comfort for working class. They are also scattered and lack cohesiveness because of their diverse cultures and the illiteracy among them. Formation of trade unions by illiterates could lead to class conflict [2]. According to ILO (Digest of decisions and Principles of Freedom of Association Committee) Agricultural workers should enjoy the right to organize [3]. According to Directive Principle of State Policy, *Article 41*, the state shall within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provisions to securing the right to work, to education and public assistance in certain cases. *Article 42*, the state shall make effective provision for just and humane conditions of work

and for maternity relief. And the *Article 43* ensures Agriculture workers, a living wage, and condition of work and decent standard of life. Social security forms an important part of labour welfare providing the "security" which is of great importance to the worker's and their families' well-being. [4]

### **Real Problems of Farm Labourers**

- The average daily wage rates of Herdsman which comes under the category of Agricultural Workers was Rs.120.73 during September 2013 with a maximum and minimum rates in Karnataka (Rs. 204) and Madhya Pradesh (Rs 90.17), respectively. When compared to other agricultural occupations such as ploughing (Rs 228.99), sowing (Rs 197.02), transplanting (Rs 179.42) and harvesting (Rs 199.50), the daily wage rates of herdsman (120.73) is found to be low. Women and children under this category are paid Rs 88.26 and Rs 74.87, respectively as a result women become the preferred labor type for many employers.
- Farm workers get chance to work for only 240 days per year as per rule of contract labourers otherwise they may claim for permanency in job.
- Women's wages are generally lower than men, working conditions poorer and their bargaining power more limited.
- No proper facility of labour quarters in the farm premises which leads to the threat of being attacked by ferocious animals.
- As the farms are smaller in size and number of labours are also small in number per farm, so there is no union of farm labour for fighting against any welfare issues.
- Sometimes labours are required to work at night time also to take care of animals when the animals suffer from disease condition or about to parturate. The labours are also prone to get infection of zoonotic diseases like Tuberculosis, Brucellosis, Anthrax etc.

### **Status of Labour Welfare in India**

Following are some laws and schemes which are enacted by the government to provide assistance to labour.

- Minimum Wages Act, 1948
- Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976
- Livestock Importation Act, 1898
- National Food Security Act, 2013
- Rashtriya Swasthaya Bima Yojna (RSBY)

- NRHM

### **Neglect of Farm Labourers: “Politics of Inclusiveness”**

Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008 has a great pitfall and drawback. Neither agricultural laborers have been brought under the purview of the Act nor a separate bill for agricultural laborers tabled [5]. Not only in this act but farm labourers also not included in Factories Act, EPF Act, Gratuity Act, Workman’s Compensation Act.

### **Protective Measures for Farm Workers**

1. *Ensuring Minimum Conditions of Work in Agricultural Sectors:* A bill should be presented specifying the minimum conditions of work for farm workers and a statutory national minimum wage for all workers.
2. *Minimum Level of Social Security:* Constitution of National Social Security Board at the Central level which shall recommend formulation of universal national minimum social security scheme for all its citizens, as part of a comprehensive legislation covering life, health and disability, maternity and old age pension to protect the workers in the farm sectors.
3. *Separate funds in the budget to set up a welfare board:* There should be separate funds in the budget of different states to set up welfare board for agricultural labourers.
4. *Livestock Insurance:* The scheme is being implemented on a regular basis from 2008-09 in 100 newly selected districts of the country. The Livestock Insurance Scheme has been formulated with the twin objective of providing protection mechanism to the farmers and cattle rearers against any eventual loss of their animals due to death. This scheme needs to be extended to all the districts of India.
5. Second National Commission also recommended that a special provision may be made to enable workers in the unorganized sector to form Trade Unions, and get them registered even where an employer and employee relationship does not exist, or is difficult to establish; and the proviso stipulating 10 per cent of the membership shall not apply in their case [6].

### **Conclusion**

Indian farm workers face serious disadvantages as compared to workers in other sector. They lack regularity in employment, social security benefits and faces low wages and poor working conditions. Different legislations are enacted to improve the condition of working class but most of them are for the workers in the organized sectors. Even in the most awaited Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008, farm workers are actually excluded from the very definition of ‘unorganized worker’. Though there are many other schemes for the welfare of workers like The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), Rashtriya

Swasthya Bima Yojna (RSBY), Janani Suraksha Yojna, Aam Aadmi Bima Yojna etc but they don't reach to all needy workers as most of them are for the workers below poverty line. So their vulnerability and insecurity need to be addressed through an Integrated Social Security Scheme and umbrella legislation for ensuring a minimum level of protection to the workers in farm sector. Different other acts need to extend their coverage to agricultural workers too. Till then small measures like setting up of separate state welfare boards, debt relief, moratorium on loans and livestock insurance could be taken to improve their conditions to some extent. Organizing this unorganized farm sector is the need of the hour, it certainly is not easy but it calls for greater focus and many more hands to build based alliances and thereby a louder and concerted voice for this sector.

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