



Collective Farming: An alternative practice of cultivation for farmers protection

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Abstract

Collective farming is an alternative method of cultivation need to be emerged in the present context in India. The cultivable land available is shrinking day-by-day due to use of land for non-agriculture use and growing population. The size of cultivable land is very small, more than 50% of farmers in India are small and marginal farmers. In order to adopted scientific method of cultivation larger size of land is required. To have a larger size of land for improved method of agriculture the available alternative is pooling the tiny size of land in India. Though the conditions are formulated for cooperative farming in India necessary steps are not taken to implement. The cooperative farming practiced in many Communist countries like China, Czechoslovakia, Romania, etc. In India also cooperative farming practiced in early period as voluntary in the temple land. Though cooperative development is one of the objectives in India's land reform policy much attention is not given. The study confined to Mysore district of Karnataka State attempted to find out the possibility of practicing cooperative farming, which is necessary to rescue the farmers from distress.

Keywords: cooperative farming, low productivity, size of holding, protection of farmers

Introduction

Agriculture as one of the main sources of productivity in India has been practiced by nearly 70% of the population in India. India is land of over population where the availability of land per person is less than 0.49 hectare. Due to non-availability of cultivable land the size of land holding in India is very small. As per NSSO report (2003-04) about 29.82% of the land holding size in India is less than 0.4 ha, 18.97% with 0.4-1 hectare. More than 50% of the farmers having only small size of land. The small holding is not economic holding. In the present context India's agriculture has been a bane to the farmers. Farmers committing suicide due to distress situation occurred in their cultivation. This may be due to many reasons such as increasing cost of production, inadequate market, less price for their products, growing debt, etc. Because of these causes the productivity in agriculture is very low, as the result they cannot meet their needs.

As Dr. Ambedkar stated in his essay on small holdings in India and their remedies in 1918 low productivity in agriculture in India is due to small holding, attention has now been concentrated on the excessive subdivision and fragmentation of agricultural holdings. Enlarge and consolidated the holdings it is confidently argued, and the increase in agricultural productivity will follow in its wake. So he believed that the evils fragmentation are very great and must be met by a comprehensive scheme of consolidation. Therefore he emphasised for collective farming in India in order to solve the problem of agriculturists and enhance productivity in India.

Collective farming is an agricultural practice in which farmers run their holdings as a joint enterprise. It may also called as agricultural cooperatives. The practice of collective farming practiced mainly in communist countries. This is mainly due to the reason of state ownership of land. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar also strongly believed nationalization of

land to overcome the problem of scattered holdings and landlessness.

Agriculture has been source of livelihood in many developing countries. It is one of the oldest occupation practiced after the dawn of civilization. There are different types of agriculture practice in different part of the world such as commercial cultivation, subsistence agriculture, shifting cultivation and estate farming. These various types of agriculture depends on climatic conditions, availability of land and the type of Government rule. Collective farming is an agricultural practice in which farmers run their holdings as a joint enterprise. It may also called as agricultural cooperatives where members are jointly engage in agricultural activities. The practice of collective farming is called differently in different countries.

Earlier to 20th century as small groups of families living together and jointly managed piece of land which was a common arrangements in all human history. Since the beginning of agriculture as permanent and settled occupation individual form of ownership evolved. Later on due to several reasons the collective farming came in the existence.

The practice of collective farming predominantly found in communist countries. It is mainly due to the reason of state ownership of land. Karl Marx stated that primitive communism (joint ownership) was ended by exploitative means of primitive accumulation. It was believed that whoever is first to work on the land was the rightful owner. However in course of time due to many reason the processes of ownership of land has been changed. This has been distinctively found in democratic form of Governments and communist form of governments.

Most of the communist countries have a type of collective farming which is controlled by the authorities such countries are former Soviet Union, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, China, North Korea, Vietnam and

Tanzania. The practice of collective farming called as communist collectivization. Whereas in democratic farm of Governments the collective farming is an voluntary basis called as voluntary collective farming example few countries of Europe, India, Israel, United States, Canada and Mexico.

Communist countries adopted policy of collective farming driven by government policies. Though it was called as cooperative farming indirectly controlled by the government. The collective farming in Soviet Union date backs to 1920 when Stalin was the leader. He introduced collective farming to increase the agricultural production. Stalin aim was to help the poor farmers economically through collectivization. It was a forceful attempt to introduce the collective farming by Stalin. But attempt of forceful implementation of collective farming led to starvation in Russia because the farmers did not want to go for collectivization.

In Romania land collectivization began in 1948 and continued for more than a decade. Romania followed the policy of Soviet Union which ultimately led to protest by the land owners. However in parts of Romania the collective farming gave good benefits to the several farmers because of its advantage of reduced cost of production. In Hungary though it was initially introduced in 1948 it was successful in 1960 only. Actually in 1955 it was physically forced to encourage membership for collectivization, but after Hungarian revolution gradually it was introduced.

In Czechoslovakia centralized land reform introduced after first world war when the land distributed to small peasants and poor, where the large size farmers did not support movement of collectivization. After World War II the excess land owned by farmers confiscated and created collective farming. However many cooperatives in Czechoslovakia collapsed due to bad management of cooperatives. It was successful only when governments extended massive subsidy to the cooperatives.

China also had practiced the collective farming between 1949 and 1976. But it was a disaster in China which led to great Chinese famine. Due to bad policy of collectivization, the agricultural productivity drastically reduced. The new leader Deng Xiaoping introduced new method of collective farming which could increase the agricultural productivity. Though the land ownership remained with rich the

agricultural land was given to peasants. Throughout the reform process the Communist party supported the bottom-up reforms and farmers allowed to go for household responsibility system.

Israel practiced collective farming during 1909 as a symbol of Socialism. However there were several criticism it was practiced in which production and service were managed collectively. Apart from collective farming at village level, service cooperatives were found. In 2006, there were 40 cooperative organisation in Israel. This kind of collective farming is a voluntary differ from traditional collectivization.

In India voluntary collective farming practiced in villages in the early period. This was mainly for devotional offer of labour voluntarily in the temple land under the leadership of temple priest. The size of the land varying from 3-5 acres. The production from this field belongs to god which used as internal sources for maintaining the temples and performing rituals in the temples. Every farmers of the village voluntarily involved in cultivation. After land reforms implemented in India much attention is not given, though it was one of the objectives of land reform act.

Study Area

Mysuru district covers a total geographical area of 676,382 hectares with 62,851 hectares of forest land. The net cultivable land is 486,410 hectares and of these 114,010 hectares of land is irrigated. The prominent river of the district are Cauvery, Kabini and Lakshmanathirtha. Mysore district is considered as one of the prosperous districts in the State. It is primarily agriculture based region.

Mysuru district consists of seven revenue taluks namely H.D. Kote, Hunsur, K.R. Nagar, Nanjangud, Periyapatna, T. Narasipura, Mysore Urban and Mysore Rural. For administration purpose, Mysore district comprises two subdivisions, which are Hunsur and Mysore. There are 1,216 villages, 11 statutory towns, 235 Grama Panchayats and 226 Wards. The total population of the district is 2.64 million (2011).

There are 3,85,726 holding cultivating 3,68,528 hectares of land. About 67.48% of farmers are small farmers having less than 1 hectare. 22.41% of them are marginal farmers together constitute more than 50% in the district.

Table 1: Size of land holdings and area under cultivation in Mysuru district – 2012-13

Sl. No.	Taluk	Small		Marginal		Sub-marginal		Medium		Large		Total	
		Nos.	Area in hectares	Nos.	Area in hectares	Nos.	Area in hectares	Nos.	Area in hectares	Nos.	Area in hectares	Nos.	Area in hectares
1	H.D. Kote	23410	12669	16613	23069	5866	15302	1249	6682	93	1233	47231	58953
2	Hunsur	31351	16361	14623	20368	5379	13898	1090	5680	83	2134	52526	58440
3	K.R. Nagar	42873	19426	9307	12324	2891	7416	453	2320	11	154	55535	41639
4	Mysuru	36550	16485	9846	13171	3790	9752	704	3802	90	1365	50981	44575
5	Nanjangud	47084	23672	15570	21159	6191	16077	1379	7291	99	1325	70323	69523
6	Periyapatna	27836	14674	12237	16922	5028	12751	1047	5730	79	1196	46227	51274
7	T.Narsipura	51005	22076	8250	10987	3035	7788	596	3030	17	227	62903	44124
Total		260109	125363	86446	118000	32180	82984	6518	34535	472	7634	385726	368528
Percentage		67.48		22.41		8.34		1.68		0.12		100	

Source: Mysore District Statistics 2012-13

Methodology of the Study

As part of research work of ICSSR Senior Fellow the topic has been chosen to find out the opinion of the farmers towards collective farming as an alternative to prevent the

distress in agriculture. Mysore district of Karnataka State is selected for study. The study based on primary and secondary sources of information. The secondary sources

are district report, report of agriculture department and books on collective farming. To get the primary data farmers are selected from four taluks of Mysore district on random basis. Structured research schedules were prepared and administered to the farmers of study area to collect the opinions.

Analysis of Data

Sampling survey conducted in four taluks of Mysore district namely H.D. Kote, Hunsur, K.R. Nagara and Periyapatna. Three hundred farmers from four taluks selected on random basis for filling up the research schedules. The data collected from the farmers has been tabulated to draw the inferences only descriptive analysis is adapted to get the opinion of farmers with regard to possibility of practicing of collective farming. The information on various aspects has been shown in different tables.

Table 2: Size of land holdings

Size of holding (acres)	Frequency	Percentage
0-1	168	56%
1-2	102	34%
2-4	30	10%

Of the total 300 respondents, 56% of the farmers in study area have small landing less than 1 acre. About 30% of these holding of lands between 1-2 acre considered as small farmers. Similarly farmers having land of 2-4 acres is 10%. In the study area most of the farmers are small and marginal farmers. Despite the tiny land holding, they are cultivating the land and during off season they works as labourer in informal sectors and agriculture land. Most of the households are small families with 3-5 members only. The land they are owning is due to subdivision and fragmentation as an inherited property, only few family got the land by land reform act implemented. With regard to the membership to the primary agriculture cooperative societies (PACS) about 76% of them have become member in the societies. 26% of the farmers are not the members in the societies.

Table 3: Membership in the APCS

	Number	Percentage
Membership	228	76%
Non-membership	72	24%

Farmers have become member only to avail loan from the societies. The trend of becoming member is increased in recent year after governments started waving of loan during distress period. Few farmers are unable to become member due non-availability of land records for various reasons. Regarding the size of land holding of their neighbours it opinioned that about 80% of the neighbour land owners are small farmers. With regard to awareness about cooperative farming about 92% of the farmers have no concept of cooperative farming which shows lack of information regarding collective farming. Regarding the opinion of farmers for inclination to become member of cooperative farming, only little percentage of them are willing to join the cooperative farming with the intension of getting advantages such as:

- The cooperative farming ensure profit with reduces cost of production due to mass cultivation.

- Collective farming is viable for scientific cultivation with risk free.
- It also ensure investment free and leads to cohesiveness.
- Collective farming leads to mutual cooperation and facilitate for marketing.

One of the disadvantages for cooperative farming in the study area is production of tobacco. Most of the farmers irrespective of their size of holding growing tobacco. Tobacco cultivation is possible in a small holding also where family member are engaged in production. The Tobacco Board of India has created good marketing for their tobacco production and also inputs like seeds and fertilizer supplied to the members on loan basis. The farmers expressed the views that the collective farming is suitable for maize cultivation cotton, ginger, turmeric, groundnuts, etc. It is also opinion of the farmers that collective farming more helpful to go for irrigation through borewells and lift irrigations by pooling their tiny lands. About 78% of the responds said that the return from individual cultivation is not ensured. About 69% of them are willing to go for alternative cultivation like cooperative farming if opportunity provided. Nearly 80% of the respondents have the willingness for opting combined irrigation through cooperative farming.

Suggestions

Cooperative farming is one of the alternative practice of cultivations need to be promoted. Mysore district of Karnataka state is a rainfed area with small holdings ideally suited for cooperative farming. The study area is highly potential area for ground water, steps need to be taken for encouraging the combined irrigation by pooling the lands of small farmers. Many voluntary organizations like farmers organisation has to initiate with the government department of cooperatives for propagating the advantages of collective farming.

Conclusion

In the present context in India it is necessary to go for alternative practice of agriculture to rescue the farmers from the distress situation. The small unit of cultivation is not viable as far as cost-benefit is concerned. The escalating cost of cultivation and price fluctuation leads to incur loss in agriculture production. If the farm cultivated in large scale like collective farming it may rescue the farmers from debt trap and sustain the Indian agriculture.

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