Enhancing the Role of Tenant Farmers in Achieving Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture

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ABSTRACT

Most of the India's poor rural men and women make their living by working as agricultural labour or by leasing in the agricultural lands. Today more than 65 per cent of the agriculture is practiced by the tenant farmers who are either landless or small farmers or marginal farmers. These tenant farmers are the people who actually reside in the villages. Out of the remaining 35 per cent owner farmers practicing agriculture, majority are migrated to nearby towns and cities for better amenities to their family and practice week end farming. Most agricultural land agreements are informal because landowners are often reluctant to let out their land as they fear their tenants will overstay or permanently occupy the land. The land owners rent out their land only for short periods to ensure that tenants do not stay on. These short term informal rental agreements mean that the tenants have little or no incentive to make long term, productivity enhancing improvements to the land. This perverse incentive framework combined with the fact that tenants have difficulty accessing loan or other services are resulting in lower agricultural productivity and increased land degradation. A total of 400 tenant farmers were sampled at random. Focussed group discussions were conducted with the respondents to probe in the problems faced by the tenant farmers. Accordingly measures were formulated to enhance their role.

Key words: *Tenant farmer; Land leasing; Rental agreements;*

The migration of real land owners from rural to urban areas has paved way for tenancy in farming. To enhance social and economic status this opportunity is being utilised by the landless agricultural labour. Small and marginal farmers are also leasing in the agricultural lands to supplement their farm income. But the tenancy in India is mostly informal depriving the tenant farmers from governmental benefits in farming. Today tenancy has pushed rentals into informality, ensures shorter rental periods and makes it difficult for renters to access loans, crop insurance, drought relief and other government benefits. Due to shorter land tenures the farmers are unable to plan long term land development programmes and further the tenant farmers are trying to take maximum from the land without considering its health management as there is no guarantee for him to till the land in the coming years. Today farming means dumping bags and bags of chemical fertilizers without adding organic manures, using harmful weedicides, indiscriminate use of plant protection chemicals, thus causing threat to soil health, environment, plant health and finally to human health. The government has formulated laws and acts for legalising or formalising of land leasing to help to improve tenant farmers access to credit, insurance, input use and consequently productivity of leased in land. At times during weather vagary like drought or cyclone etc, it is the tenant farmer who is affected the most as they are not legally recognised as farmers neither in revenue laws nor in the relief code, it is the land owner who becomes eligible for compensation. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has also introduced Loan Eligibility Cards (LEC) to license tenants on yearly basis so that they can access banks for credit, insurance, subsidy, etc. But these cards are given with the authorisation of owner farmers. As a result negligible proportion of the tenant farmers are

issued with LECs. The farmers who have the LECs are not getting government benefits, and many does not know what to do with them. Hence at this juncture a study was conducted in Krishna and Guntur districts of Andhra Pradesh during 2014-16 to formulate alternate measures to enhance the role of tenant farmers for promoting nutrition sensitive agriculture.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Krishna and Guntur districts of Andhra Pradesh state using expost facto research design during the year 2014-16. A sample of 400 tenant farmers and their owners were sampled for the study. Focussed group discussions were conducted with the respondents to probe in the problems faced by the tenant farmers. Land owners age, preference to choose tenants, reasons for leasing out the land, perception for not making a formal agreement with the tenants, action if formal agreement with the tenants is made compulsory were studied. Tenant farmers age, education, family type, family size, land holding, experience in tenancy, number of leases in, training received, annual income, source of credit, extension contact, mass media exposure, social participation, scientific orientation, risk orientation, market orientation, perceived barriers in tenancy, satisfaction with tenancy, suggestions given by the tenant farmers to overcome the problems in tenant farming were studied. Statistical tools like frequency, percentage, ranking and Multiple Linear Regression (MLR) analysis were worked out.

MLR was used to find out the amount of contribution made by the independent variables in explaining the variation of the dependent variable. The fit of the multiple regression equation was measured with R^2 where R^2 represents the coefficient of multiple determinations and it measures the proportion of variation in the dependent variable explained by the selected independent variables in the equation. *Y=a+b1X1+b2X2.....bnXn.* Where 'Y' is dependent variable; 'X' is independent variable; 'A' is constant; 'n' is total number of independent variables; 'b' is partial regression coefficients. The regression coefficient bi's were tested for their significance with the following formula "$t_{(n-k-1)} = b_i / S.E$" (bi) where ' n' is Number of respondents; 'k'is number of independent variables'; 'S.E (bi)' is standard error of i^{th} partial regression coefficient; 'b_i' is i^{th} partial regression coefficient and 't' is test statistics. Based on the study alternate measures were developed to promote nutrition sensitive agriculture by tenant farmers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is evident from Table 1 that 79.00 per cent of the land owners belonged to above 55 years age, followed by 41 to 55 years (15.00%), 25 to 40 years (3.75%) and below 25 years (2.25%). More than half of the land owners leased out their lands to an outsider but a known person (53.25%), followed by relatives (45.00%) and a meagre proportion of them leased out their lands to new person (1.75%). This clearly indicates that land owners believed relatives and known persons than unknown persons. The reasons expressed by the land owners for leasing out their lands were that they had no helping hands at home (48.50%), followed by that they were engaged in business (26.25%), aged to do farming

Table 1. Distribution of land owners according their selected profile characteristics (N=400)

Category	No	%
Age		
Below 25 years	9	2.25
25 to 40 years	15	3.75
41 to 55 years	60	15.00
Above 55 years	316	79.00
Land owners preference to choose tenants		
Relatives	180	45.00
Outsider but a known person	213	53.25
New person	7	1.75
Reasons for leasing out		
Employed elsewhere	50	12.50
Doing other business	105	26.25
Aged to do farming	51	12.75
Have no helping hands at home	194	48.50
Perception of land owners for not making a formal agreement with the tenants		
Fear that tenants will occupy the land	391	97.75
Tenant farmers are politically more powerful	340	85.00
The bargaining power of tenant farmers has become more now	274	68.50
Land may end up in legal problems	304	76.00
Follow up action if formal agreement with the tenants is made compulsory		
Till my own land	99	24.75
Compromise and go for legal agreements	23	5.75
Prefer to keep my land fallow	278	69.50

(12.75%) and they are employed elsewhere (12.50%). This clearly indicates that the land owner's children are not engaged in farming and stay away from their parents for education or for job or any employment reasons. This further indicates that farming is not practiced as ancestral profession by many.

The reasons for land owners not making formal agreement with the tenants were probed in and found that majority expressed the fear of tenants occupying the land (97.75%), followed by tenant farmers were politically more powerful now a days (85.00%), fear that land may end up in legal problems (76.00%) and the bargaining power of tenant farmers has become more now (68.50%). The results were in conformity with that reported by *Prasad et. al (2012)*. This indicates that landlords fear of loosing their land if tenancy was made formal. There are several government laws and acts to promote formal agreements for tenancy but it is not being implemented at all. The land owners were asked the follow up action if formal agreement with the tenants was made compulsory, then they expressed that they preferred to keep their land fallow (69.50%), followed by they will till their own land (24.75%) and only a meagre proportion of the land owners would go for legal agreements (5.75%). This indicates that a meagre proportion of the land owners are ready to undergo formal tenancy agreements if made compulsion.

It is evident from Table 2 that 47.00 per cent of the tenant farmers belonged to 26 to 40 years age, followed by 41 to 55 years (45.25%), below 25 years (7.00%) and above 55 years (0.75%). This indicates that majority of the tenant farmers were middle aged which can be accounted that usually, farmers of middle age are enthusiastic having more responsibility and efficiency than the younger and older ones. The education level was found to be high school (38.75%), followed by illiterate (28.25%), primary school (18.50%), intermediate (13.50%) and middle school (1.00%). It is evident that greater proportion of farmers were educated up to high school and did not go for further studies, the probable reason might be their low annual income, lack of awareness on the importance of education and lack of encouragement from family members for continuing further studies.

A little more than three fourth of the tenant farmers belonged to nuclear families (75.25%), while the remaining belonged to joint family (24.75%). From the above findings it could be inferred that in rural areas and among the farming families the trend of family type is moving from joint to nuclear family types. The annual income of 50.25 per cent of the tenant farmers was low, followed by medium (45.50%) and high (4.25%). Greater proportion of them fell in low annual income category may probably be due to increased cost of tenancy leases and cost of cultivation. The family size of 49.00 per cent of the tenant farmers was found to be large with more than 4 members, followed by medium (38.50%) and small (12.50%) as represented in Table 3. The probable reasons behind these findings could be that the young and middle aged people preferred to live in nuclear families while the old aged people preferred joint families. Further, awareness and formal education of respondents might have helped them to maintain small family size.

Table 2. Distribution of tenant farmers according to their age, education, family type and annual income

Category	No	%
Age		
Below 25 years	28	7.00
26 to 40 years	188	47.00
41 to 55 years	181	45.25
Above 55 years	3	0.75
Education		
Illiterate	113	28.25
Primary School	74	18.50
Middle School	4	1.00
High school	155	38.75
Intermediate	54	13.50
Family type		
Nuclear	301	75.25
Joint	99	24.75
Annual income		
Low (Rs.54,200-Rs.1,52,540)	201	50.25
Medium (Rs.1,52,540-Rs.2,50,880)	182	45.50
High (Rs.2,50,880-Rs.3,49,220)	17	4.25

Majority of the tenant farmers were basically agricultural labour (93.50%), followed by small farmers (5.25%) and marginal farmers (1.25%) and none of them were big farmers. The findings were in conformity with that reported by *Anand (2014)*. Increasing farm mechanisation due to hiked labour wages is promoting the conversion of agricultural labour into tenant farmers. None of them were large farmers, the probable reason might be the fragmentation of ancestors land from

Table 3. Distribution of tenant farmers according to their other profile characteristics

Profile characteristics	Category	No.	%
Family size	Small (upto 2)	50	12.50
	Medium (2-4)	154	38.50
	Large (>4)	196	49.00
Land holding	Marginal farmer	5	1.25
	Small farmer	21	5.25
	Agril. labour	374	93.50
Training received	Low (≥1)	376	94.00
	Medium (2-4)	24	6.00
Experience in tenancy	Less than 3 years	214	53.50
	4 - 6 years	186	46.50
Number of leases in	Single	178	44.50
	Two	185	46.25
	Multiple	37	9.25
Source of credit	Friends & relatives	71	17.75
	Banks	113	28.25
	Money lenders	216	54.00
Extension contact	Low	294	73.50
	Medium	106	26.50
Mass media exposure	Low	126	31.50
	Medium	179	44.75
	High	95	23.75
Social participation	Low	122	30.50
	Medium	86	21.50
	High	192	48.00
Scientific orientation	Low	193	48.25
	Medium	204	51.00
	High	3	0.75
Risk orientation	Low	45	11.25
	Medium	257	64.25
	High	98	24.50
Market orientation	Low	47	11.75
	Medium	336	84.00
	High	17	4.25

generation to generation might have led to small land holdings. Majority of the respondents reported that they received low training (94.00%) i.e., (≥1 training) while the remaining received medium training (6.00%) from government institutes and none of them received high training. This clearly indicates that in the normal process, land holding owner farmers are involved in organizing the training programmes by the development departments. Some tenant farmers by virtue of their familiarity and good contacts with the officials of developmental departments might have participated in the training programmes. Further the tenant farmers concentrate more on farming rather attending to the training programmes thinking wastage of time and hence this trend was noticed.

More than half of the respondents had tenancy experience of less than 3 years (53.50%), while the remaining had tenancy experience of 4 – 6 years (46.50%) and none of them had more than 6 years of experience which could be accounted for their age. The leases in made by 46.25 per cent of the tenant farmers were two, followed by single (44.50%) and 9.25 per cent made multiple leases. The area and number of leases made by tenants corresponds to their capacity, interest and family needs. More than half of the respondents borrowed money from money lenders (54.00%) for making investment in agriculture on leased in lands, followed by banks (28.25%) and friends & relatives (17.75%). Tenant farmers do not have fixed property namely cultivable land, hence they are not eligible for crop loans. More over friends & relatives do not generally have belief that tenant farmers would repay back the money taken as they do not have fixed assets. Hence greater proportion of the tenant farmers borrowed money from money lenders at high interest rates when compared to the interest rates of banks. However a few tenant farmers pledge gold and other fixed assets they own to get loans from banks.

The extension contact of 73.50 per cent of the respondents was found to be low while the remaining had medium extension contact (26.50%) and none of them were found in high extension contact category. Greater proportion of the tenant farmers fell in low extension contact category, the probable reason might be due to their concentration on only earning livelihood and increase their annual income. As a result they did not concentrate much or pay attention to extension contacts. Besides, Government efforts are also going towards owner farmers rather than tenant farmers and hence the above trend was observed. The mass media exposure of 44.75 per cent of the respondents was found to be medium, followed by low (31.50%) and high (23.75%) which corresponds to their education, awareness, belief, reliability and interest in mass media channels.

The social participation of 48.00 per cent of the tenant farmers was found to be high, followed by low (30.50%) and medium (21.50%). The scientific orientation of 51.00 per cent of the respondents was found to be medium, followed by low (48.25%) and high (0.75%) which corresponds to their extension contact.

The risk orientation of 64.25 per cent of the respondents was found to be medium followed by high (24.50%) and low (11.75%). Tenant farmers are the true risk takers paying the land lease rents ahead of reaping the profits or losses. The market orientation of 84.00 per cent of the respondents was found to be medium, followed by low (11.75%) and high (4.25%). The probable reason might be that the tenant farmers are exclusively dependent on the farm yields and the profits obtained through their sale.

It is evident from Table 4 that the top twelve perceived barriers by the tenant farmers were huge land lease rents (97.75%, Rank I), followed by land lease rents to be paid before the crop season (95.50%, Rank II), entire land lease rents to be paid in cash (94.00%, Rank III), short tenancy tenures (91.75%, Rank IV), changing land lease rents year after year (86.25%, Rank V), lack of financial support from banks (85.25%, Rank VI), exorbitant interest rates at private money lenders (84.75%, Rank VII), input subsidy is not applicable for tenant farmers (81.50%, Rank VIII), informal lease contracts (75.25%, Rank IX), developmental departments do not offer agricultural trainings for tenant farmers (73.75%, Rank X), crop insurance is not applicable for tenant farmers (72.00%, Rank XI) and weather insurance is not applicable for tenant farmers (71.00%, Rank XII). The above barriers were also reported by *Haque (2016); Mahanakumar (2014), Myers et. al (2014), Alarima et. al (2012), Dev (2012), Bina (2011)* and *Nidhi (2011).*

Table 4. Distribution of tenant farmers according to their perceived barriers

Category	No.	%	Rank
Huge land lease rents	391	97.75	I
Land lease rents to be paid before the crop season	382	95.50	II
Entire land lease rents to be paid in cash	376	94.00	III
Short tenancy tenures	367	91.75	IV
Changing land lease rents year after year	345	86.25	V
Lack of financial support from banks	341	85.25	VI
Exorbitant interest rates at private money lenders	339	84.75	VII
Input subsidy is not applicable for tenant farmers	326	81.50	VIII
Informal lease contracts	301	75.25	IX
Developmental departments do not offer agricultural trainings for tenant farmers.	295	73.75	X
Crop insurance is not applicable for tenant farmers	288	72.00	XI
Weather insurance is not applicable for tenant farmers	284	71.00	XII

Note: Responses are inclusive

The land lease rents are hiked and more. In greater proportion of the cases tenant farmers had to pay cent per cent of the land leased rent before the commencement of the cropping season on the demand of land owners. Due of the lack of financial support from banks, the tenant farmers had to approach money lenders for financial support for investment in farming. Money lenders lend money at high interest rates leading tenants into debts. Tenancy tenures are mostly short term, so tenant farmers cannot concentrate on land improvement practices. Tenures are short term probably to avoid land seizing related problems. Moreover, either governmental or non-governmental developmental organizations usually sponsor agricultural training programmes for owner farmers only. Input subsidies are also for owner farmers only and not for tenant farmers. The leased rents for a particular crop are not constant, probably due to difference in land physical properties. Hence lot of competition among the farmers interested in tenancy farming. Whoever bids a high lease rent, he becomes tenant of that land. Mostly the lease contracts are oral, rarely they are written and no vouchers are given when leased rents are paid. Hence, no guarantee about the lease, tenure and owner can throw the tenants out any time from the fields and no one can protest it. Schemes like crop insurance and weather insurances are available only for owner farmers and not for tenant farmers.

Tenant farmers satisfaction with tenancy is evident from Table 5 and indicates that 35.25 per cent of them were satisfied, followed by dis-satisfied (33.00%), very much dis-satisfied (21.25%), neither satisfied nor dis-satisfied (6.50%) and very much satisfied (4.00%). The results indicate that more than three fourth of the tenant farmers are either not satisfied or undecided, and is very clear that the tenant farmers who are not satisfied are more than those who are satisfied. This is an indication that government should intervene to take measures to correct the situation in a better possible way keeping the pulse of land owners and tenant farmers in view. Government had formulated laws and acts to

Table 5. Distribution of tenant farmers according to their satisfaction with tenancy

Category	No.	%
Very much satisfied	16	4.00
Satisfied	141	35.25
Neither satisfied nor dis-satisfied	26	6.50
Dis-satisfied	132	33.00
Very much dis-satisfied	85	21.25

Table 6. Multiple linear regression analysis of selected variables of tenant farmers and their satisfaction with tenancy

Variables	bi's	SE	't' value
Age	0.056	0.062	0.911^{NS}
Education	-0.105	0.082	-1.281^{NS}
Family type	0.416	0.213	1.954^{NS}
Annual income	0.413	0.135	3.058*
Family size	-0.090	0.121	-0.743^{NS}
Training received	0.074	0.110	0.674^{NS}
Experience in tenancy	0.224	0.079	2.832*
Land holding	-0.040	0.111	-0.363^{NS}
Number of leases in	0.298	0.088	3.376*
Source of Credit	-0.197	0.061	-3.217*
Extension contact	0.294	0.129	2.985*
Mass media exposure	0.018	0.127	0.140^{NS}
Social participation	0.417	0.117	3.571*
Scientific orientation	0.197	0.148	1.327^{NS}
Risk orientation	0.266	0.125	2.891 *
Market orientation	0.462	0.152	3.031*

R^2 =0.8924 a = -0.923 F = 198.464

bi's =Regression coefficient,

* Significant at 0.05 level of probability; NS - Non-significant

streamline tenant farming by promoting formal agreements between land owners and tenant farmer. But land owners are not ready for it, they are even ready to keep the land fallow instead of formal written agreements. Everyone knows that todays farming is done by tenants mostly, but no one acknowledges this on paper as there are no written formal agreements. Every effort should to be made to search alternate ways for the exiting situation. It is evident from the Table 6 that though all the selected variables contributed to the total variation, in particular annual income, experience in tenancy, number of leases in, source of credit, extension contact, social participation, risk orientation, market orientation significantly contributed towards tenant farmers satisfaction with tenancy. The MLR equation is as follows-

Y=-0.923+0.056X1-0.105X2+0.416X3+0.413X4-0.090X5+0.074X6+0.224X7-0.040X8+0.298X9-0.197X10 +0.294X11 +0.018X12 +0.417X13 +0.197X14 +0.266X15+0.462X16

It could be inferred that the multiple regression equation with sixteen selected variables put together contributed 89.24 per cent to the total variance in the tenant farmers satisfaction with the tenancy; remaining 10.76 per cent was due to the effect of extraneous variables.

The suggestions given by the tenant farmers to overcome the problems in tenant farming are ranked based on per cent are presented in Table 7 shows that loan procedures need to be simplified and banks should extend crop loans for tenant farmers (96.50%, Rank I), followed by tenancy contracts need to be continuously monitored by the government (91.50%, Rank II), tenancy tenures should be at least for 3 to 5 years (88.25%, Rank III), tenant farming may be facilitated through commodity based groups like Farmer Producer Organisations and Self Help Groups (81.50%, Rank IV), developmental departments should extend agricultural trainings, exposure visits for tenant farmers on regular, season and time specific basis (78.75%, Rank V), developmental departments need to involve more of tenant farmers in extension activities (75.25%, Rank VI), special attention need to be given to orient tenants for promotion of pulse crops (73.50%, Rank VII), tenants need to be educated on ill effects of excess use of fertilizers and pesticides (72.25%, Rank VIII), input subsidy should be extended for tenant farmers (69.00%, Rank IX), government should monitor the land lease rents (65.75%, Rank X), all farmers should only go for written land lease agreements (62.75%, Rank XI), receipts should be given on payment of land lease rents (59.00%, Rank XII), crop insurance should be extended for tenant farmers (55.75%, Rank XIII) wheter insurence should be extentended (54.00%, rank XIV).

Majority of the tenancy agreements are informal thus restricting the tenant farmers investment of time and money in land improvement because of the inherent overhang of uncertainty.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the above findings that reforms in tenancy farming are not really percolated to the tenant farmers and their participation in the extension activities is very minimal and hence there is a need that the Government need to take stern steps to direct all the

Table 7. Suggestions given by the tenant farmers to overcome the problems in tenant farming

Suggestion	No.	%	Rank
Loan procedures need to be simplified and banks should extend crop loans for tenant farmers	386	96.50	I
Tenancy contracts need to be continuously monitored by the government	366	91.50	II
Tenancy tenures should be at least for 3 to 5 years	353	88.25	III
Tenant farming may facilitated through commodity based groups like Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) and Self Help Groups (SHGs)	326	81.50	IV
Developmental departments should extend agricultural trainings, exposure visits for tenant farmers on regular, season and time specific basis	315	78.75	V
Developmental departments need to involve more of tenant farmers in extension activities	301	75.25	VI
Special attention need to be given to orient tenants promotion of pulse crops	294	73.50	VII
Tenants need to be educated on ill effects of excess use of fertilizers and pesticides	289	72.25	VIII
Input subsidy should be extended for tenant farmers	276	69.00	IX
Government should monitor the land lease rents	263	65.75	X
All farmers should only go for written land lease agreements	251	62.75	XI
Receipts should be given on payment of land lease rents	236	59.00	XII
Crop insurance should be extended for tenant farmers	223	55.75	XIII
Weather insurance should be extended for tenant farmers	216	54.00	XIV

Note: Responses are inclusive

Government departments to involve them in all the activities to enhance their role towards contributing the agricultural growth as desired and it is not possible with their active participation since in the most of the districts more than 50 per cent of farming is done by the tenant farmers for various reasons.

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