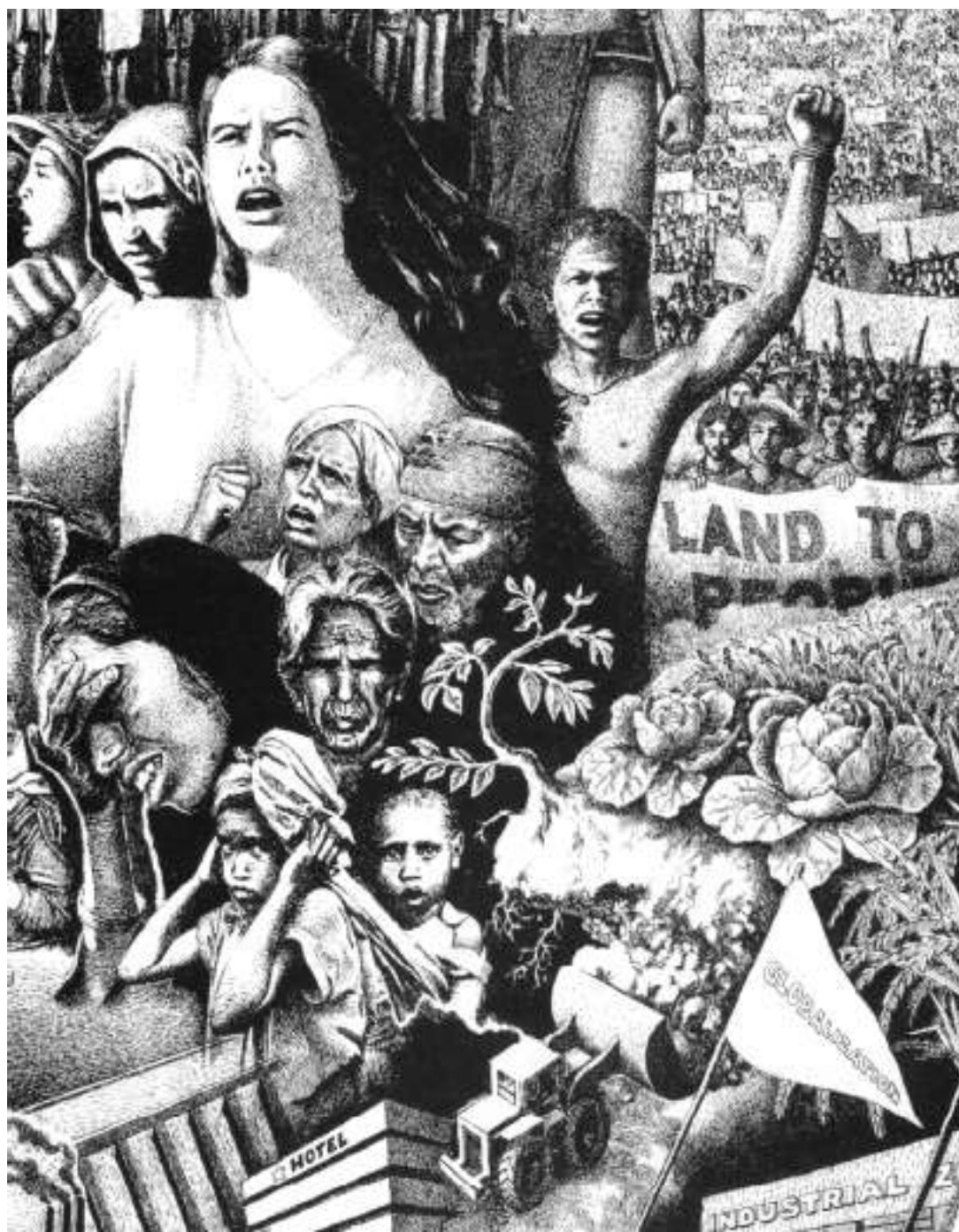


Empty Promises...Empty Stomachs



Impact of the Agreement on Agriculture and Trade Liberalisation on Food Security

PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK (PAN) ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
IN COLLABORATION WITH
ASIA PACIFIC FORUM ON WOMEN, LAW AND DEVELOPMENT (APWLD)

This Resource Book has been specially produced in order to facilitate information sharing and exchange with our Asia Pacific network partners, the media, and the public at large. It is hoped that the information shared, will stimulate debates and discussions as well as encourage networking, involvement and participation in the issues tackled within.

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Nair, K. Prabhakar

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Principle Writer & Editor: K. Prabhakar Nair

Additional Editorial Input & Production Supervision:

Jennifer Mourin Editorial Advisor & Project Leader:

Sarojeni V. Rengam Programme Officer: Selvi
Supramaniam

Front Cover Artwork: Artus Talastas

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PAKISTAN

The Impact of Liberalization and Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) on Food Security for Rural Women

By

Roots for Equality
A-113 Block –13D, Gulshan-e-Iqbal
Karachi, Pakistan

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to FAO, South Asia has around 284 million hungry people. What will be the impact of globalization of agricultural trade under AoA and of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) on rural women's ability to ensure food security for themselves and their families?

This study was carried out among women in the Hyderabad and Multan districts of Sindh and Punjab regions in Pakistan.

Objectives:

- To study the impact of major policy instruments implemented during the period 1988-95 and the post-1995 period in the agricultural production and trade sectors.
- To examine and compare the production system in one major cash crop and one major food cultivation area with reference to its economic impact.
- To study the accessibility of women to food crops for themselves and their families.

Methodology: The field research included qualitative and quantitative methods. In qualitative methodology, general and focus group discussions were held. Generally, only women in small groups (4-9) were included in focus group discussions, though it was not always possible to keep the number down. In cases where the numbers would grow (and in many cases men would also join the group), general discussions were held. In quantitative research, a pre-tested questionnaire was used to collect household and agricultural production data.

Sample and area: As mentioned earlier, one district each from Sindh and Punjab was covered: Hyderabad and Multan, respectively. The sample included 47 households from 12 villages—six each from the two districts. All the villages covered in the Hyderabad district were from Sheikh Birkhio. The villages in Multan were from Jhok Vains and Sher Shah (which was included because it was outside the flood-prone area). Twenty-five households were covered in the Hyderabad district and 22 in the Multan district for the household survey. The production data survey covered 39 farmers: 22 from Sindh and 17 from Punjab.

SECTION 2

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Demographic information and educational status: Based on the population data, the average household size came to be 7.5 reflecting the census data for rural population. Nearly 48 per cent of the sample fell in the age group ranging from infants to 17 years, and about 37 per cent in the age group 18 to 45 years. The male-female distribution in the household data was 52.3 per cent and 47.7 per cent, respectively. The data reflects the sexual discrimination against women prevalent in the South Asian region.

Of the 47 households included in the survey, 37 were Muslim and 10 Hindu. All Hindu households were from the Sindh region. Two categories of Hindus were identified from the focus groups. One group had been long-time settlers, having come to the area before Pakistan was formed. The other group reported coming to the area in the past 20 years; the land which they had been working on previously was lost due to water-logging and salinity, and hence they had migrated, searching for other agricultural land where they could work as farm labour.

In the age group 6 and above, 62 per cent of the sample had no education. Only 6 per cent of the sample was currently receiving education. Of those who had any education at all, approximately 12 per cent had received only primary education, and a slightly higher percentage reported having read the Quran. Only 6.5 per cent of the sample had received secondary education.

Education data by gender shows 58 per cent of males and 67 per cent of females had no education. However, a comparison by the level of education shows a much wider gap. Among the male

respondents, 15 per cent had received primary education compared with 1.9 per cent for female respondents. Nearly 10 per cent of the male population had received secondary education compared with 3 per cent for the female population. In the male sample, 9 per cent were currently part of an educational programme, compared with 3 per cent for the females sample.

Children in the Hindu community particularly did not go to school and started working on land from the age of six. The respondents said that they could not afford to send their children to school.

Agriculture-related data: Of the 47 households, 29 (61.7 per cent) did not own agricultural land. Another 19 per cent of the households had only one acre of land. Eighty-one per cent of the sample had no farming land of their own. Approximately 6 per cent of the sample had 3-4 acres of land, and 8.5 per cent had 6-12 acres. Two households (4.2 per cent) had 28 and 55 acres each.

About 80 per cent and 77 per cent of the households were involved in farming in the Sindh and Punjab regions, respectively. Besides land-owners, there were two other categories: farm labourers who were being paid wages for the work carried out and sharecroppers who shared half the cost of cultivation with the landlord and were then entitled to half of the harvest. Sharecroppers (*hairs*) of one landlord also worked as farm labour on another landlord's land. Women from their households would also accompany them to work on the land. The landlords deducted the loans taken by the farm workers from their wages, and many reported that the money retained by the landlord was in excess of the money borrowed.

In the Multan district focus group discussions, it was often stated that everybody had some land; the difference was that some had more land than others. Hence those who had less land worked on other people's land. In addition to sharecropping, another system was now emerging—where farmers would lease land from the landlord for 'contract farming', the rate of lease payment depending on the nature of the land. The contract farmer would bear the cost of cultivating the land, and the profit or loss would be for him to reap or rue.

The area surveyed in Multan was very dry and depended on floodwater to keep the agricultural economy running. But people also ended up losing land to the floods.

Water shortage was another problem. There were many whose land was going to waste because of the shortage of water, and consequently they were forced to work as farm labour on other people's land. Others reported not only working on others' land but trying to find work in the mills. It was reported that people would do anything as long as they were being paid. In a number of cases, it was reported that people migrated from one area to another looking for sharecropping or contract farming opportunities. A number of people, who had been working on the contract basis, said that they later bought their own land.

In the Multan research area, wheat and cotton were the predominant crops. Other crops that were grown in this area included onion, chickpea, and certain varieties of lentils and chilies. Fruits included mango and watermelon. However, in case of floods, only one crop, wheat, was generally sown. There had been no floods for three years prior to this study, and some farmers had grown cotton. In general, wheat was the most preferred crop in the Multan region. Preference was to store wheat for 12 months and to try and store seeds as well. However, a majority reported that they were able to store wheat only for three months' or at the most six months' consumption. The rest was sold to repay loans. People in Multan also reported that they preferred to store their own wheat seeds as those available from the market were not very good in quality. People also reported exchanging seeds.

A general culture of sharing food was also reported in the Multan region, and a number of people said they received food from neighbours. If they did not have vegetables to cook, somebody would let them have it from his/her own land. And if they did not have *chach* (a curd drink, heavily diluted with water), they would take some from their neighbours.

An interesting observation was that there was still a barter economy in place in a number of the villages in Multan. The potter, blacksmith, etc, are given wheat in return for the work done. If the potter provides somebody with two utensils, he is given five kilograms of wheat in return.

People believed that the landlords do not give loans to their sharecroppers. It is only when a small farmer works as farm labour on a landlord's land that he is given a loan against his labour. At the end of the season, the landlord deducts the amount from the worker's accumulated wages.

Table 1. Landholding patterns (wheat farms)

Land size (acre)	Sindh (per cent farmer)	Punjab (per cent farmer)
1-2	18.2	70.6
3-4	23.0	0.0
5-6	23.0	0.0
7-8	14.0	12.0
13-14	0.0	6.0
20-22	4.6	6.0

Table 2. Landholding patterns (cotton farms)

Land size (acre)	Sindh (per cent farmer)	Punjab (per cent farmer)
1-2	0.0	47.0
3-4	18.2	0.0
6-8	23.1	6.0
10-12	1.0	6.0
Do not cultivate	0.0	29.4

LAND DISTRIBUTION AND THE IMPACT ON FOOD SECURITY

The agricultural production survey covered 22 farmers in the Sindh area and 17 in the Punjab area. Following are the details of their land holdings (with respect to wheat and cotton production, *Tables 1 and 2*).

As can be seen from the data in *Table 1*, a majority (70.6 per cent) of the farmers in Punjab have very small land holdings. In the Sindh area, there is greater distribution of land. It needs to be pointed out that wheat is cultivated for reasons of food security; most farmers cannot afford the high cost of cultivating cash crops. Even wheat cultivation may not fully meet the food requirements of small farmers. Wheat yield per acre in Sindh and Punjab varied from 22 to 40 maunds (1 maund = 40 kg). There was only in one case in Punjab reported to be as low as 22 maunds. The general wheat requirement for a family of 7 to 10 was 3-5 kg per day. This works out to an average monthly requirement of about 3 maunds for an eight-member family, which essentially means that the 22 to 40 maunds of wheat that can be grown per acre was not sufficient to meet the daily consumption of the average household throughout the year (see *Table 3*). This would be especially true for farmers with small land holdings. And, as can be seen from the data for Punjab, 71 per cent of the farmers have only one acre of land.

Table 3. Wheat grown sufficient for year's consumption in farming households (percentage)

	7oz	10% a/wa5z	10	10 accezz fo w2eaf
Sindh	1.0	21.0	31.0	31.0
Punjab	1.9	61.0	12.0	17.6

The main crops grown in Sindh, according to the sharecroppers, were generally sugarcane, wheat, cotton and chilies. Very few vegetables were grown because the landlords preferred crops which yielded higher profits to them.

The intensity of exploitation was felt more in one village where the landlord was considered to be one of the biggest in Sindh. The sharecroppers could barely store enough wheat for 3 months and then were forced to buy it or get it on loan from the store. If loans were stopped, they would go without food. Their food then consisted only of *chutney* (a paste-like preparation) made from tomatoes or chilies or onions.

Workers complained that, whether working on the farm, in the mill or any other work, wages were not in proportion to the amount of labour put in. A carpenter, for instance, would get only rupees (Rs) 100 (1US\$ = Rs 63 at current value) for a full day's work, which was not enough to meet the daily cost of living. This forced all members of a household to work for a sustenance living. While men worked on other peoples' land or in the mills, women worked in the fields. People would also maintain livestock and sell it to clear debts.

WOMEN AND AGRICULTURE

Hindu women: Except for one section (caste), Hindu women participated in nearly all work needed to be done on the land. This is, of course, in addition to the domestic workload. In summer, work in the fields included cotton and onion seed sowing as well as cutting the wheat harvest. In winter, it was cotton picking, sowing wheat seed and cutting sugarcane. Women were also responsible for clearing the land after cotton picking. In addition, they picked vegetables. Generally, women went to the fields around 6 in the morning and returned by noon. If there was a heavy workload, they might

go back to the field in the afternoon. All this was paid work done for landlords. For sowing onions on one acre of land, the wage was Rs 500, and for picking one bag of onions, Rs 20.

They are also responsible for drying chilies after they are picked from the field. They keep half the dried chilies and the rest goes to the landlord. In nearly all the villages, women use the chilies for making *chutney* for the afternoon meal.

According to the women, cutting wheat was the most difficult task due to the hot summer. They had to cut the wheat and tie them up in bundles. Now, with machines, the job has become easier, but the wages too have decreased.

Women from a particular caste among the Hindus did not work on the land at all. They observed strict *purdah* (a religious practice of covering the head and face) and did not come out of their homes. Their main economic work included embroidery and making *ralli* (patchwork quilts). They were also responsible for tending animals and they cleaned the grains when the harvest was brought in from the fields.

Women generally had some livestock. There is also a trend for them to look after the landlord's livestock. As caretakers they are responsible for the provision of feed and feeding. In return, they could use the milk for consumption. Nearly all respondents said they did not sell the milk but kept it for personal consumption. Some women had saved money to buy their own buffalo. According to them, this provided milk for the whole family as well as yielded butter. Women reported giving buffaloes/cows to their daughters at weddings. Animals were considered an asset, especially for women, as they could sell them when in need. Further, animal breeding helped them to increase their assets while at the same time adding to their source of food.

Focus group discussions revealed that the women respondents had, over the past ten years, stopped growing vegetables such as tomatoes, *bajra* (a coarse grain), maize and sugarcane and also bananas. According to them, tomatoes and banana plants had become very susceptible to pest attacks. Another group said that they had stopped cultivating *moong ki dal* (a particular kind of lentil) and bananas due to water shortage. Water had to be bought and the rise in oil and diesel prices had made it difficult for them to do this. The tube wells from where they drew water were owned by landlords who rented them on an hourly basis. In a particular village, a landlord was reported to own 15 tube wells.

Muslim women: Muslim women from families owning larger land (25 acres) did not work on the land. They may sometimes work on their own land. Among them, the younger girls would go to the fields with their fathers or brothers. Their major work was in the household, and included cleaning wheat after the harvest. According to them, only women from the low caste worked in the fields.

In two different villages, two groups of Muslim women reported that they did not work on the land as they were expected to observe *purdah*. Of these, one group belonged to the Brohis, an ethnic community predominantly settled in Baluchistan. Their families had migrated from another village in Sindh. Now they were living as *haris* (sharecroppers) on the landlord's land. Both groups reported that they earned money from stitching and sewing at home. One woman reported exchanging embroidery for milk from other households. Other forms of food exchange included wheat in return for rice. Generally, this exchange was carried out between *haris*.

Farm work done by women included preparing land for sowing, sowing seed, applying fertilizer and picking vegetables and fruits. In addition, cutting the wheat harvest, stacking it in bundles and later cleaning the wheat are all women's chores. It needs to be mentioned that women's work includes the hours they put in on their own land as well as wage labour for other landlords. Collecting fodder, feeding livestock, collecting and storing firewood, etc, are also part of their work (the firewood may not only be used at home but also sold).

The women's day starts with providing breakfast to the family and attending to the various chores at home. After finishing these domestic chores, they follow the men to the field. Returning at noon, they prepare the meal, take it to the field for the men, and, on the way back, collect fodder and carry it home. Generally, they do not go back to the field after this unless some extra work has to be done.

During floods, women take up piece-rate crochet work, knitting, etc. However, in all the villages where the survey was conducted in Multan, women were found doing this work though there had been no floods in the past three years. The money earned was used for buying food and other household requirements. According to the women, if they did no other work, one crochet piece would

take them six days to make. Men would bring the wool from Multan. Some women reported buying their own material and also selling the products by themselves in the city. For making crochet from 2.5 kilogram of wool, women were given Rs 130.

FOOD CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

Focus group discussions as well as the survey showed that most villagers (92 per cent) had two meals a day; only 8 per cent of the households had three meals a day. For the mid-day meal, many families reported having chopped onions and red chili with *roti* (unleavened wheat bread); a routine night meal was *roti* with milk or with just salt or onions or dried chili or mint. If no vegetables were available, only *roti* was eaten. And when there was no money to buy flour for the *roti*, they would only make *chutney* from red chilies and eat it. Generally, they would have a 'good' or a 'bad' meal depending on their economic situation. Women reported not taking loans for food consumption. If food were available, they would eat it or otherwise go without.

In Multan, food consumption was much better. About 59 per cent of households had three meals a day. Lunch and dinner comprised *roti* and cooked vegetables or lentils, and the night meal was much the same. Here, women felt that the milk yield from livestock had decreased. There was just enough for the children and for making tea. If there was more milk, men would have it, and women got a share only when there was some left over.

A Landlord's Household Profile

This landlord had 34 acres of land, half of it with him and the remaining being worked by 2aris, the household got enough heat for the whole year. Apart from wheat, they grew cotton and sugarcane. They keep their own crop seed for sowing. Among vegetables; tomato, onion, chili, gar and pumpkin were cultivated, with the crop shared equally with the 2aris. Women from this household went onTy for cotton picking on their own land. According to them, onTy Hindu women worked in the field and Muslim women did not. They were responsible for domestic work, which included tending livestock. Milk was sold. Other economic activities included rali work and other kind of embroidery.

Breakfast in this household included butter, egg and milk. Butter was being sold to other households. Meat and fish were part of the daily meal.

Women reported that they did not sell wheat and kept it for consumption and seed. The vegetables were sold in the bigger market in Hyderabad, Sindh.

FOOD SECURITY ISSUES

Though landlords gave half the harvest of wheat to sharecroppers, this was not so with vegetable share-cropping. Sharecroppers reported getting half of the cash proceeds after the vegetable crop was sold. However, they did not know the actual quantity of the vegetables sold as the landlords did not take them to the market.

Women get 120 kilograms of wheat for cutting one acre of wheat crop, but the actual amount they receive varies. They have to accept whatever the landlord gives them. This is because the landlords deduct the loans they take from the wheat payment. Since it is not easy for the women or men to keep track of the loan amounts, they are not sure how much is to be deducted.

Yet, women gave priority to wheat-cutting work as it provided some level of food security. Not only would they work on their own land but also cut wheat as farm labour on other people's farms. The same food security concern drove women to work on rice fields. They could also collect rice for consumption. If they could collect more than what they needed, they could sell it and earn some money.

Similarly, chilies were dried and kept so that they could be consumed through the year. If a larger crop was available, they would sell part of it. Sugarcane was also grown in the Multan area. According

to the respondents, fear of floods kept them from putting too much effort and money into cultivating other crops.

One person reported that in areas where large quantities of sugarcane were harvested, the government had banned making *gurh* (a local form of brown sugar), and the cost of *gurh* had risen sharply in the market. While it cost Rs 10/kg till last year, now it sold at Rs 40/kg. This meant people had to depend on mill-processed sugar from the market, which too was steadily becoming expensive. Three years ago, it cost Rs 14 per kg and now it was as high as Rs 30/kg. And many families, it was said, went without sugar.

The general opinion was that prices had risen with the coming of the military government. People in one village particularly voiced their acute discontent with the military regime. According to them, water had become far more expensive under this regime; also, the government system of providing subsidized water had become worse. Now water through the canal irrigation system was provided only once a week. Under the present regime, food aid provided through the *zakat* (tax levied on Muslims based on *shariah*) money was also not being distributed. Earlier, wheat flour, grains, lentils, cooking oil and money was distributed to the poor in the village generally once or twice a year.

LAND LEASING

Because they could not afford the increasing expenses of cultivating the land (because of the scarcity of water and the related cost of installing and running tube wells or purchasing water), some small farmers leased their land. In the Tando Mohammad Khan area in Sindh, two families with small landholdings (3-4 acres) reported leasing land to landlords for a period of 2-3 years. A big landlord reported leasing land from small farmers. The entire lease money was given at the time of the settlement. Women were, however, unhappy with this practice. According to them, leasing land meant that they would have no land for themselves and hence they would not be able to grow or store their annual grain (wheat flour) requirement. The money from the lease went directly to the males and it was spent quickly, leaving the women with no means of earning incomes or food production.

People with larger land were not necessarily happy, either. A woman who had 10 acres of land was upset because she was unable to cultivate it for lack of water. She reported that the family now had no means to have an evening meal. Her village had a custom of exchanging vegetables, and therefore she could sometimes get vegetables from neighbours. She had four sons but they could not earn because of the lack of jobs.

Other issues identified by the villagers in relation to food security included the decreased milk yield from buffaloes following decreased fodder growth, which, in turn, was ascribed to shortage of water. The decreased milk yield has further led to a decrease in milk products such as cream and butter. The final impact of all this on food security is decreased nourishment as well as a decrease in income as, unlike earlier, there was no surplus milk to sell.

In the Punjab area, where most households had only 1-2 acres of land, sharecropping and contract farming is common. But small farmers complained that it was now difficult to get land on contract, because the cost had gone up in the past two years. The cost, for half an acre of land, had increased from Rs 1000-1500 to Rs 2000-2500. Some farmers, however, are still trying to get land at this higher rate because they did not want outsiders to come and take over the land. One of the reported reasons for the decreased availability of land for contract farming was that people from the city were increasingly leasing the land. They were willing to pay more money than the local small farmers. The 'outsiders' had also the money to put in machines and run the tube wells. People from the city take large areas, 5-7 acres, of land under contract while the local farmers can take up, at the most, half-to-one acre.

Respondents reported that even with contract farming, they were unable to have enough food to last the year. Since even this was now getting out of their reach, they were forced to buy all the food from the market.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION COSTS AND RELATED ISSUES

Water scarcity was the biggest issue identified in both the Sindh and Punjab regions. Consequently, respondents in some villages reported lower crop production, and many more talked about the declining vegetable production. It was difficult to grow vegetables due to the shortage of water and buying water was too expensive. People from one village reported that there was only salt water in their wells.

The cost of obtaining whatever water was available for irrigation, both from the government canal irrigation system and tube wells, had been increasing. For example, in the Tando Mohammad Khan area in Sindh, the cost of buying water (*abiana*) from the irrigation canals has gone up from Rs 350 per acre of land in 1998 to Rs 1000 per acre in 2000. It is common knowledge that the system does not work too well. Water in the canals is in short supply, and the bigger landlords appropriate a major share. Farmers at the tail-end complained that they did not get their share of water.

So, instead of relying on the government system, people get water by constructing tube wells. These tube wells need diesel to run, and the cost of diesel has gone up from Rs 8 per litre to Rs 14 per litre in just over two years. This is reflected in the increase in the charges for drawing water (at an hourly rate) from tube wells over the past two years—from Rs 50 per hour in 1998 to Rs 75 per hour in 2000. (see Table 4). This was considered too expensive, and therefore farmers curtailed the use

Table 4. Increase in tubewell Charges

Year	Charges/acre	per cent increase/acre
1998	Rs 10	n.a.
1999	Rs 60	20.0
2000	Rs 75	25.0

Table 7. Increase in tractor use charges (Sindh)

Year	Charges/acre	per cent increase/acre
1998	Rs 110	n.a.
1999	Rs 200	33.3
2000	Rs 250	25.0

of water. One family which had sunk a tube well said it found it impossible to run the tube well for extensive farming. Farmers have also reduced growing vegetables because of the high cost of running tube wells. Generally, small farmers buy oil on loan against crops. Table 5 shows the increase in tractor use charges from 1998-2000 in the Sindh region.

Tractor costs: Following the rise in diesel price, tractor use costs have also been increasing in the Sindh region. In the past two years, the costs have risen by nearly 67 per cent. In Multan, the cost has risen from Rs 70/hour to Rs 100-120/hour, which is about 43 per cent to 71 per cent increase in two years.

SECTION 3

DISCUSSION

The earlier data shows clearly that the cost of agricultural production is increasing tremendously. In both the Sindh and Punjab areas, a shift from sharecropping to contract farming has already started. For farmers at the lower end of the economic ladder, the repercussions are serious. Many of them are moving away from land and trying to survive on daily labour.

The price increases are reflective of the government's agenda of privatization and reducing/eliminating its responsibility in all areas of economic activity. Agriculture is now being termed an industry, and its role as crucial to the country's social well being is not considered important.

The onslaught of privatization started in the late 1980s when the country's Seventh Five-Year Plan (1988-93) laid out as its objective the maximization of the private sector's contribution to growth and carrying forward the process of privatization. The agriculture sector allocation in the development plan was reduced from 16.3 per cent to 13.5 per cent. The emphasis was on phasing out subsidies.

The government also signed a loan agreement with the World Bank in 1988 which resulted in reforms in the financial sector. The agreement has consistently asked for reduction in subsidies and an increase in private sector participation. In 1991, the Privatization Commission was established and its primary task was privatizing government-owned facilities.

The private sector has since expanded rapidly. Foreign investment, both direct and indirect,

increased from US\$ 443 million in 1992-93 to \$1,296 million in 1995-96. In the same period, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) signed a number of standby agreements for fiscal deficit reductions. It is worth pointing out that both these critical agreements signed with the IMF and the World Bank were carried out by caretaker governments, in 1988 and in 1993.

However, the government was unable to curtail fiscal deficits and a huge debt burden is being borne by the country. By 1996, the total public sector debt had risen to 82 per cent of the GDP compared to 75 per cent in 1988. Interest payments on the public debt had risen to 6.1 per cent of GDP, or 35 per cent of the government's total revenues. The problem also lay in the faster growth on interest payment than on the debt itself. In addition, the constant waiver and signing of new agreements with the World Bank and IMF has led to changes in policies in many major sectors such as communications, transport and energy.

There was pressure from the World Bank for the reassessment of energy policies. Under World Bank pressure, the government has attracted outside investment to develop a private energy service sector. There has been constant pressure and upward revisions in the price of gas and electricity. The decision was also taken to privatise the state oil and gas entities.

The standby agreements with the IMF and the World Bank emphasised the need for privatization and taxation. These taxes and the decrease in subsidy to the public sector have been reflected in the very high cost of production in the agriculture sector. At the same time with very low spending in critical areas of education and vocational training, the youth is totally unequipped to change from a rural economy to an industrial economy.

The education status of the population is well depicted in the data. A large majority are illiterate. Others, even if literate, are ill-equipped to compete in the market economy of urban Pakistan. Millions of rural folk are pouring into Pakistan's few cities in search of work. With the privatization drive pressing on at a fast pace, factories have been closing steadily in the past 5-10 years. There is a push to 'downsize' factories and get more and more work done in the ever-increasing informal sector. Hence urban areas are unable to absorb workers.

With an increasing number of people without access to land and no other skills at hand except tilling the land, the situation is going to be alarming as far as accessibility to food is concerned. This was clearly visible from the data. In the case of Hindu farm labour, many of them had no wheat storage and were dependent on buying their grains from the market. It was said over and over again that they did not have the money to buy groceries.

The reason of course is that the rural farming community does not live in a cash economy. Most of their wages are paid in kind. When they are paid in cash, their incomes are often depleted because they are in the hands of money lenders or landlords. Hence they see very little cash, which then forces them to take further loans from the landlords.

As the pattern of 'contract farming' increases, small farmers will be forced off the land. With no cash, they will not be able to pay for their food. Still cheaper labour rates will be the order of the day, leading to acute malnutrition among them.

The most vulnerable group would of course be women and children. The rural agriculture economy has not given women the skills required to survive in an urban environment. Although they have many skills, which can be used in the urban economy (for instance, crochet making, *ralli* making and other embroidery skills), women are still unable to use these skills for economic gain. Their lack of mobility, language barriers, and cultural and religious norms question the ability of these women to survive in a new environment.

Loss of land will inevitably result in their being handicapped in providing for their families. As they are driven off the land, they will become dependant on men to provide them with food from the market.

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