

Declining Female Labour Use in Rice Cultivation: Findings from Indian Villages

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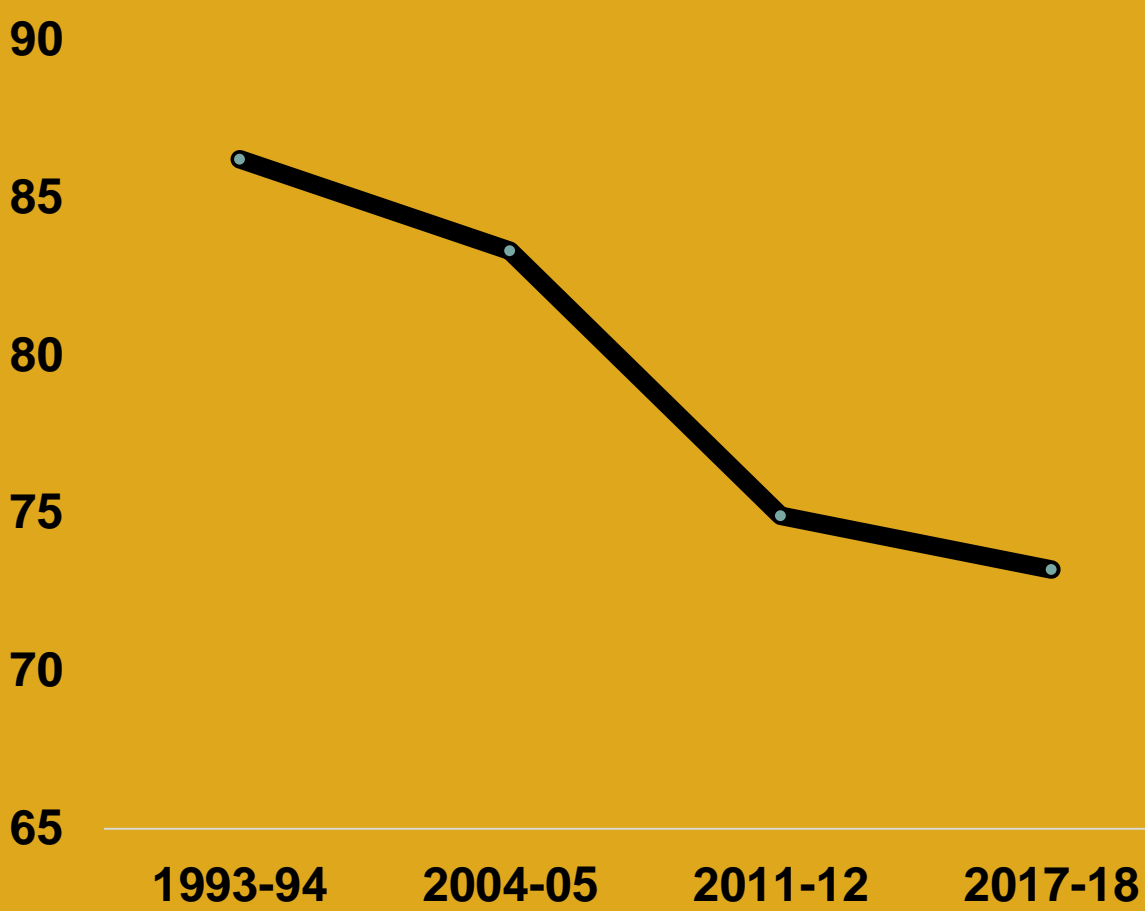
Objectives

- To analyse the declining trend of female labour use in rice cultivation.
- To identify factors that explain the variations in the features of female labour absorption in rice cultivation over time and across regions of India.

Sources of Data

The paper uses the data from seven villages which were surveyed under the Project on Agrarian Relations in India (PARI) by Foundation for Agrarian Studies, Bangalore.

Declining Share of Rural Female Workforce Engaged in Agriculture and Allied Activities (in per cent)



Declining Labour Use In Rice Cultivation

Study Village	State	District	Year of Survey	Extent of Area under Rice (in hectares)	Average Productivity (kg per hectare)	Average Labour Use per Hectare (8 hours labour days per hectare)	Share of Female Labour in Total Labour (in per cent)	Changes in Female Labour Absorption between 1970s and 2000s
Tehang	Punjab	Jalandhar	2011	582	5678	31	3	↓
Ananthavaram	Andhra Pradesh	Guntur	2005	457	4714	86	51	↓
Amarsinghi	West Bengal	Malda	2010	38	4523	148	42	No Change
Panahar	West Bengal	Bankura	2010	117	4118	170	23	No Change
Alabujanahalli	Karnataka	Mandya	2009	115	4084	168	41	↓
Kalmandasguri	West Bengal	Koch Bihar	2010	39	2996	120	43	No Change
Mahatwar	Uttar Pradesh	Ballia	2006	55	1491	144	47	A Mild Increase

Spread of Mechanisation in Crop Operations

Location of Village	Land Preparation	Harvesting	Threshing
Punjab	100	88	98
Andhra Pradesh	98	12	98
West Bengal	30	0	30
Karnataka	60	0	78
Uttar Pradesh	75	0	3

Proliferation of Piece-Rate Contracts

Location of Study Village	Share in Sowing and Transplanting (%)	Share in Harvest and Post-Harvest (%)	Share in Total Hired Labour (%)
Punjab	99	89	88
Andhra Pradesh	98	97	70
West Bengal	57	38	61
Karnataka	79	8	29



Findings

- 1.A stark decline in female labour absorption in rice cultivation in Andhra Pradesh and Punjab study villages.
- 2.Female labour-intensive crop operations were: transplanting, weeding, and harvesting.
- 3.Mechanisation of threshing operation partly explained the decline.
- 4.Shift from daily-wage contracts to piece-rate contracts in female-specific crop operations – transplanting and harvesting – blurred the contribution of women’s work in the operation. Decline in absolute number of labour days required.
- 5.Socio-cultural factors – caste of the household explained variations in female family labour participation on field across villages.