

The Agricultural Labour Inquiry in India

In its efforts to raise the low living standards of the 250 million persons who depend for their living on agriculture in India, the Government found that it was handicapped by the lack of comprehensive data concerning the working and living conditions of these workers. Accordingly an inquiry was conducted in 1950 and 1951 into the position of agricultural workers and their families throughout the country. The findings of the inquiry, which have been published in a number of detailed reports¹, are summarised briefly in the following pages.

The object of the agricultural labour inquiry was to collect data on employment, earnings, the cost of living, living standards and indebtedness of agricultural labour in the Indian Union with a view to considering what protective and ameliorative measures, including the fixation of minimum wages, should be undertaken to improve conditions. The term "agricultural worker" in the report includes all those who work in the fields for wages, as well as the sub-marginal cultivators with small strips of land for whom agricultural labour is the major activity.

The inquiry covered three stages and was conducted in about 800 villages selected on the principle of stratified random sampling. The first stage was a general village survey, in which broad data relating to the selected villages were collected. The second stage, the general family survey, covering about 100,000 families, was intended to gather data regarding all the families in the sample villages with a view to delimiting agricultural labour families and providing the background for a proper appreciation of the results of the third and final stage of the survey—the intensive family survey—which relates to employment, wages income and the cost and standard of living of a sample of agricultural labour families numbering about 11,000 in the selected villages.

NATURE AND MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM

According to the 1951 census about 83 per cent. of the population of the Indian Union (361 million) live in about 560,000 villages. About 70 per cent., or roughly 250 million people, depend on agriculture. The estimated total number of rural families is 58 million, 17.6 million

¹ The following publications of the Ministry of Labour, Government of India, have been used in the preparation of this summary: *Agricultural Wages in India* (1952); *Rural Manpower and Occupational Structure* (1954); *Report on Intensive Survey of Agricultural Labour (Employment, Underemployment, Wages and Levels of Living)* (1955); and B. RAMAMURTI: *Agricultural Labour. How They Work and Live* (1954).

(30.4 per cent.) of which are agricultural workers' families. Half of the agricultural labour families (8.8 million) hold land and the other half are landless. Of the agricultural labour families 90 per cent. are casual labour families and 10 per cent. attached labour families.

Land Resources and Population

Since 1921 a rapid increase in the population (44 per cent.) has resulted in a decline in the total land per head from 3.0 to 2.1 acres, and a considerable narrowing of the employment possibilities and the wage and income levels of the rural population.

Cultivators' Holdings

Taking the Indian Union as a whole, the average size of cultivators' holdings in the sample villages was 7.5 acres, of which on the average 6.6 acres were cultivated. The average size of holdings was lowest in the southern and eastern zone (4.5 acres in each case). These are mostly rice growing areas with a comparatively high percentage of irrigated and double-sown land. In the northern zone, a rice and wheat growing tract, the average size was 5.3 acres; in all the other three zones, the north-west, west and central, the average size was a little above 12 acres.

From the point of view of wage-paid employment the variation in the size of the individual holdings is of greater significance than the average size. The holdings of one acre and below formed 17 per cent.; those between one and $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres about 21 per cent.; those between $2\frac{1}{2}$ and 5 acres another 21 per cent. About 16 per cent. were in the group 10 to 15 acres and accounted for 32.5 per cent. of the area. The holdings above 25 acres accounted for 5.6 per cent. of the total and covered about 34 per cent. of the area.

Land Tenure

Of the 7.5 acres that constitute the average holding per family, 4.3 acres or 56.8 per cent. are owned, 3.1 acres or 41.3 per cent. are taken on rent and 0.1 acre or 1.9 per cent. is held free of rent. Owners cultivate about 35 per cent. of the total number of holdings, tenants 35 per cent., agricultural workers 20 per cent. and non-agriculturists 10 per cent. The percentage distribution of the total area of the holdings among these categories is: landowners 52.4, tenants 35.7, agricultural workers 7.8 and non-agriculturists 4.1.

Implements and Livestock

The number of draught animals and ploughs owned are closely related to the number of holdings and their size.

The families of landowners have 44.8 per cent. of the ploughs, those of tenants 38.2 per cent., those of agricultural workers 11.7 per cent. and those of non-agriculturists 5.3 per cent. On an average there is 0.7 plough per family. A landowner family has 1.2 ploughs, a tenant's family 1.0, an agricultural labour family 0.3 and a non-agricultural family 0.2 plough.

For the purposes of the inquiry the term cattle included oxen or bullocks, cows (over three years) and buffaloes. There are, on an average, 2.2 head of cattle per rural family; the families of agricultural land-

owners have 3.8, tenants 3.3, agricultural workers 1.0 and non-agriculturists 0.9 head of cattle.

The average number of sheep and goats per family is 1.3, the corresponding figures for families of landowners, tenants, agricultural workers and non-agriculturists being 1.7, 1.1, 0.8 and 1.5 respectively.

The average number of poultry per family is 0.9.

RURAL MANPOWER AND OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE

Occupational Distribution of Families

The families surveyed were classified into four main groups : owners, tenants, agricultural workers and non-agriculturists. These main groups were further classified into non-cultivating, cultivating and partly cultivating owners and tenants, agricultural workers with land and without land and non-agricultural workers, artisans, business men, salaried employees and others. The families of agricultural workers were further classified into attached and casual workers' families, and those without stable occupation were classified separately.

The villages consisted predominantly of agricultural families, who formed 79.8 per cent. of the total, agricultural landowners accounting for 22.2, tenants 27.2 and agricultural workers 30.4 per cent. The non-agricultural families formed 20.2 per cent. (including 0.5 per cent. formed by families without any specific stable occupation).

The more important occupations pursued by non-agricultural families are handicrafts, public or private service (village officers, teachers, etc.) and other paid employment, such as domestic service and trade. The non-agricultural families of this category constitute 14.7 per cent., and non-agricultural families depending on wages 5.5 per cent.

Age and Sex Classification of the Rural Population

Taking the working age as from 15 to 55, 27.7 per cent. of the population in the sampled villages are males of working age, 19.9 are males below and 4.1 per cent. males above the working age. The figures for the corresponding age-groups of females are 26.0, 18.4, and 3.9 respectively.

Size of Families

The average size of the rural family is 5.01 (1.62 men, 1.48 women and 1.91 children). There are slight variations in the different zones.

The agricultural families are larger (5.50 members) than the non-agricultural families (4.54). Landowners have an average of 5.45 persons per family, tenants 5.39 and agricultural workers 4.70. Those of the latter category with land have families averaging 4.8 persons and those without land 4.1 persons. The size of the family of casual workers is 4.58 and that of attached workers 4.79.

Earning Strength of Families

The earning strength includes earners (however small their income) and helpers, who assist the head of the family without any independent income for themselves. On an average the total earning strength per

family is about 2.6. Work is done by almost all the men and a little over half the women and the children above 10 years of age.

In the families of owners and tenants taken together, earners and helpers number respectively 1.1 and 1.5; in the family of agricultural workers there are more earners (2.4) and fewer helpers (0.3). The number of women workers in the agricultural labour families (1.0) was found to be higher than in the owner and tenant families (0.7). The number of dependants in the agricultural labour families was 2.0, against 2.8 in both the owner and tenant families.

Occupational Distribution of the Labour Force

An analysis of the occupational distribution in rural families (earners and helpers) gives different results according to whether the family occupation (i.e. the occupation of the head of the family) or the principal occupation of each person contributing to the maintenance of the family is taken as the basis. An analysis on the latter basis showed less dependence on agriculture and more dependence on non-agricultural occupations. The reason is that earners in rural families do not always follow the family occupation, and the number of workers in the families of agricultural workers who take up non-agricultural occupations is greater than the number of workers in the families of non-agricultural workers who take up agriculture.

Subsidiary Occupations of Earners

By the "main occupation" of a person is meant the occupation in which he is engaged for 50 per cent. or more of the total number of days worked by him during the previous year, all other occupations being considered as subsidiary occupations. These occupations appear to be very limited. Only 26 per cent. of the rural earners and 21 per cent. of the agricultural workers have subsidiary occupations.

Most of the subsidiary occupations are in agriculture. Of the 18.3 per cent. of the agricultural earners who have subsidiary occupations, only for 7.9 per cent. is the subsidiary occupation non-agricultural.

EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT, WAGES AND LIVING STANDARDS

Employment

The zonal differences in the average number of days employed on wages are considerable.

Male agricultural workers are employed on wages for the largest number of days (289) in north India and somewhat less (245 and 224 days respectively) in central and east India. In the south, west and north-west they are employed for wages for the smallest number of days (181, 196 and 202 days respectively).

The employment of attached workers is uniformly high in the different zones and ranges from 10 to 11 months in the year, except in north-west India, where it is a little less than 10 months. The extent of employment depends on a number of factors that cannot easily be analysed. In the first place employment is determined by the number of attached workers and the number of workers having land to cultivate. Secondly it depends on the relationship between the opportunities of

wage-paid employment and the supply of labour, the distribution of holdings, the crop pattern and crop and weather conditions.

The reasons why the highest average employment is found in the north, for instance, is probably the fact that this zone contains the highest proportion of land sown more than once (24 per cent.) and of irrigated land (29 per cent.). Moreover, the zone is situated in the alluvial Indo-Gangetic plains, with fertile and productive soils; agricultural workers are less numerous here than elsewhere, and the proportion of women workers is very small (14 per cent. as against 40 per cent. for all India). Consequently men workers in this zone secure employment for a larger number of days than in other zones.

On the other hand the low level of wage-paid employment in the west is probably due to the low proportion of irrigated land (4 per cent.), to many rain-shadow regions and infertile areas, to the low proportion of the area sown more than once (3.1 per cent., the lowest in the whole of India), and to the high number of women workers (equal to the number of men workers).

In east India the average employment of agricultural workers is higher than in the west and south owing to the higher proportion of irrigated land and land sown more than once and the smaller proportion of women workers.

South India has the lowest average number of days of employment during the year. The availability of land per cultivator is the lowest. The average size of holding is only 4.5 acres as against an all-India average of 7.5 acres. The proportion of agricultural labour families in the total number of agricultural families is the highest, and the proportion of women workers is almost equal to that of men workers (48 and 49 per cent. respectively). These factors restrict employment opportunities and cause a surplus of agricultural labour. Out of a total of 17.6 million agricultural labour families in the whole of India, no less than 6 million or roughly one-third are to be found in the south.

Casual Workers.

The employment of casual workers follows, in general, the same trend as that of all workers except in the states, where there is a considerable number of attached workers.

Most women undertake casual employment, mainly in order to provide additional income to maintain the family. The average employment of the women workers was 120 days in agricultural and 14 in non-agricultural labour.

Of the total number of man-days put in by casual workers, men contribute 62 per cent., women 35 per cent. and children the remaining 3 per cent. Of the total man-days worked by men and women, harvesting accounts for the largest number of man-days (21 per cent.). Harvesting is usually a rush job to be completed within a comparatively limited period, and therefore a substantial number of workers are hired for the operation. Next to harvesting, weeding, generally considered a woman's occupation, accounts for the largest percentage of man-days (15 per cent.) worked by agricultural labourers. Next in order are ploughing and preparatory operations, accounting for 13 and 12 per cent. respectively. Unlike ploughing, preparatory operations offer some scope to women workers. Transplanting accounts for 8 per cent. of the total man-days worked, and here the contribution of women is higher than that of men. Sowing, threshing and irrigating require

fewer man-days and account only for 3.8, 4.8 and 3.1 per cent. respectively. Both men and women work in these operations; though in irrigating the contribution of the men is much higher than that of women.

Non-agricultural labour accounts for 14 per cent. of the total man-days worked by men and women. The men's share is more than double that of the women.

Hired Man-Days Worked per Acre.

It has been estimated that the total number of agricultural workers is of the order of 35.4 million, composed of 19.6 million men (55 per cent.), 14.1 million women (40 per cent.) and 1.7 million children (5 per cent.). By multiplying this number by the average number of days worked in agricultural labour during the year by each worker, the total man-days may be estimated at 5,700 million, the share of men, women and children being 66, 30 and 4 per cent. respectively.

According to the 1951 census the gross sown area in the Indian Union is about 303 million acres. Hence an average of about 19 man-days are put in by hired agricultural labourers per acre of the sown area, varying from 7.2 man-days per acre in the west to 39.0 man-days per acre in the south.

Unemployment

The data on unemployment among agricultural workers collected during the inquiry relate only to visible unemployment of adult male workers; similar data in respect of women are not available.

The extent of monthly unemployment depends not only on the proportion employed in any month but also on the volume of unemployment of those who work for wages in that month. On the average such workers are unemployed for about six to seven days per month.

Even in the peak month some 13 per cent. are without wage employment. Some allowance has however, to be made for the incidence of sickness and absenteeism for other reasons, as well as self-employment, which prevent workers from accepting work during the month even if work is available.

In the Indian Union as a whole, as many as 97 per cent. of attached workers report wage-paid employment every month, and on the average they are unemployed for only 19 days during the year. The 3 per cent. not reporting wage-paid employment every month are perhaps those whose contracts are for less than a year.

The problem of unemployment concerns essentially the casual workers, of whom 82 per cent. at a monthly average report unemployment during an average of 8 days per month.

In east India the percentage of labourers reporting wage-paid employment varies from 59 to 88, and the annual unemployment of those reporting such employment varies from 54 to 94 days. In south India the annual unemployment of the workers employed on wages is 122 days, in west India 185 days.

On the average, in the whole of India, an agricultural worker has paid employment for 218 days in the year, cultivates his own land for 49 days and is unemployed for 98 days. These figures are based on the information collected in the inquiry as regards wage earners; as regards other workers (who represent only 16 per cent. of the total) it has been assumed that they are unemployed for half the year.

Wages

Casual Workers.

The actual payment of wages is made in a variety of ways : wages in cash and in kind, wages partly in cash and partly in kind, payment on a time basis and on a piece basis, with or without perquisites in the form of midday meal, tea or tobacco, and various combinations of these modes of wage payment.

Of the total man-days worked by adult casual workers in the Indian Union, payment on a piece basis accounts for only 5.5 per cent. Time wages, amounting to 94.5 per cent., are paid for all agricultural operations, whereas piece rates are paid generally for a few operations like embanking, harvesting and, to a certain extent, weeding. Piece rates are paid also when the work has to be finished expeditiously.

In the total wage employment in agriculture 57.7 per cent. of the man-days are paid in cash and 32.2 per cent. in kind. The balance of man-days, 10.1 per cent., is remunerated partly in cash and partly in kind. The shift from kind to cash wages took place during and after the Second World War.

A special feature of wage payment in agriculture is the supply of perquisites in addition to the payment of wages in cash or in kind. This practice is prevalent to the extent of about 33 per cent. of the total man-days worked by adult workers.

The supply of perquisites is prevalent to the same extent in both cash and kind payment, the respective percentages of man-days being 36 in the former and 32 in the latter. The nature of perquisites varies considerably—raw sugar, various kinds of grain, tea, coffee or other drinks.

The average daily wage rate of the casual worker was found to be 17.5 annas for the whole of India, showing rather important local and monthly variations. The average wage rate is highest in the north-west (23 annas). In the east it is 20 annas, in the north 19, in the west 18, in the south 16 and in central India 13.

The average daily wage of women workers amounts to 62 per cent. of the men's average daily wage.

As regards the demand for labour the important factor influencing wage rates is the value of agricultural production, which in its turn depends on such factors as the gross sown area per cultivator, the proportion of irrigated and double-cropped land, the productivity of the soil and the nature of crops and their prices. Other factors are the rights of the cultivator in his land, the size of the holdings and their distribution. As regards the supply of labour, the more important factors are the number of agricultural workers, the proportion of attached and casual workers, and the proportion of men and women in the total labour force.

The wage level may be expected to be lower if there is relative poverty of resources, inadequate utilisation or abundance of labour supply or low local prices and a low cost of living. The scope for non-agricultural employment and the prevalent levels of wages for such employment also influence the levels of agricultural wages. In the north-west, where men's wage rates were high, the proportion of agricultural labour families to the total agricultural families is lowest (10 per cent.), the gross area sown per cultivator (5 acres) is relatively high and the proportions of irrigated and double-cropped area are respectively 33 and 19 per cent. of the net sown area. The productivity of land is also high in the Punjab and the Patiala and East Punjab States

Union. Holdings are large, and as many as 31 per cent. of agricultural labour families are those of attached workers.

The other extreme is central India, where wages are lowest. Agricultural labour families form 38 per cent. of all agricultural families, the gross sown area per cultivator is lower than in north-west India (about 4.5 acres) and the irrigated and double-cropped area forms only 6 to 8 per cent. of the net cropped area. The productivity of the land, on which millet is the chief crop, is also low. As many as 81 per cent. of agricultural labour families are casual labourers' families. The higher proportion of women among agricultural workers (56 per cent.) further tends to bring down the wage level.

In north and east India wages are respectively 19 and 20 annas for men workers. While agricultural labour families are fewer (18 per cent.) and women form only 14 per cent. of agricultural workers in north India as against 40 per cent. and 35 per cent. respectively in east India, the productivity of the land is high in West Bengal and Assam among the states included in that zone.

In south India, the low wage level is apparently due to the high proportion of agricultural labour families, which constitute 62 per cent. of the agricultural families. As many as 96 per cent. of these are casual workers' families. Women workers make up 48 per cent. of the labour force.

The wage rates of women workers in south, west and central India are proportionally much lower than in other zones. They are higher in the north and east, presumably because there is a smaller proportion of women workers in the latter zones.

In view of the variety of the modes of payment, payment in kind and perquisites have been evaluated according to ruling retail prices in order to facilitate comparisons. The money values of the wage rates thus obtained have, however, a limited utility in view of the fact that these modes are not equally prevalent in the different areas or for the different agricultural operations within each area. Further, no differences in the hours of work in the different seasons have been taken into account.

On an average, perquisites account for one-fourth and one-third respectively of men's and women's wages. The value of perquisites, as well as its proportion to the total daily wage, is lowest in north India and highest in north-west India.

A worker engaged in different agricultural operations may be paid wages differing from operation to operation. The variations depend mainly on the strenuous nature of the operation, the exigencies of the work and the supply of labour.

In the Indian Union as a whole, adult male workers are paid the highest daily wage (20.2 annas) for harvesting; the wages for threshing and transplanting were 19.3 and 18.5 annas respectively. Weeding is the lowest paid operation, the daily wage being 14.3 annas. For the other agricultural operations the average daily wage for men varies between 16 and 17 annas. The average for preparatory operations is a little higher than for ploughing but lower than the average for all operations.

Of the male workers about 58 per cent. can secure additional non-agricultural employment during an average of 56 days per annum. The type of work available depends on local conditions and consists of road building or other public works, house construction, digging wells and chopping wood. In Madhya Pradesh the making of bidi (cigarettes) on piece wages is an important occupation and in some parts of Assam,

West Bengal, Madras and Mysore tea and coffee plantations afford some additional employment to agricultural workers.

Among the women, about 34 per cent. are also employed on non-agricultural labour for an average of about 41 days a year, generally as domestic servants but also for decorticating groundnuts and in some areas for pounding paddy.

From the average agricultural income of the labour family the estimated wage bill of all agricultural labour families is calculated at about 5,000 million rupees, that of casual workers at about 4,250 million rupees and that of attached workers at 750 million rupees. According to the report of the National Income Committee agriculture other than plantations accounts for 48,000 million rupees of net domestic product in the Indian Union. The estimated wage bill thus forms 10.5 per cent. of this net domestic product in agriculture, the casual workers in agriculture alone accounting for about 8.5 per cent.

In the total wage income of all casual workers, the share of adult male workers is 3,100 million rupees (72.9 per cent.) and that of women workers 1,060 million rupees (24.9 per cent.). The children's share of the wage bill is about 90 million rupees (2.2 per cent.).

Of the total wage bill of men, women and child casual workers—4,250 million rupees—wages in cash and in kind, including perquisites, account for 2,420 million and 1,830 million rupees respectively. The perquisite content of the wage bill is about 440 million rupees.

Attached Workers.

Unlike casual workers, attached workers, who are mostly men, receive fixed wages that are for a definite period irrespective of the seasonal nature of the work or the seasonal demand for labour. They also enjoy a certain security of employment, for which, however, they may have to accept a daily wage lower than that of casual workers. The variations in the methods of remuneration and employment contracts of attached workers are too great to be summarised here.

Minimum wage rates have so far been fixed for agricultural workers under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, by the states of Punjab, Delhi, Kutch, Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Coorg, Ajmer, Bihar, Patiala and East Punjab States Union, Vindhya Pradesh, Assam and Rajasthan. The rates apply throughout the state, except in Uttar Pradesh, where they have been fixed for 12 districts only and in Bihar, Assam and Vindhya Pradesh, where they apply only to the districts of Patna, Cachar and Sidhi respectively.

In Uttar Pradesh rates have been fixed only for organised farms of 50 acres and over; in Kutch farms of 5 acres and below have been exempted. In other states, the rates apply to all farms employing labour.

Child Labour.

In the Indian Union as a whole, children form 4.6 per cent. of the total agricultural labour force. They are mostly recruited between the ages of ten and 15 years, generally as casual workers. About 4 per cent. (1.25 million) of all casual workers are children.

Children account for 4.2 per cent. of the man-days worked by all agricultural workers, including 0.4 per cent. of the man-days worked in non-agricultural labour.

Attached child workers are usually employed as graziers. They do

sundry light jobs, such as watching crops and the flow of water to the fields and general field work during the busy season. Casual child workers are more often employed for harvesting, weeding and transplanting, the spreading of manure, etc.

Generally the types of non-agricultural work for wages available to children are the same as those available to adults, namely carting, earth-work on roads, wells and buildings, etc., and in a limited number of provinces bidi-making, the collection of tendu-leaves, the decortication of groundnuts, and work on tea, coffee and jute plantations.

Child workers are on the average employed on wages for 165 days in a year—150 days in agricultural and 15 days in non-agricultural employment. The average daily wage is 11.1 annas in agricultural and 9.9 annas in non-agricultural employment.

Living Standards

Income.

The family has as an economic unit various sources of income, including agricultural and non-agricultural labour, the cultivation of its own land, and occupations other than farming.

The average annual income per family worked out to 447 rupees, of which 287 rupees (64.2 per cent.) accrued from agricultural labour; other sources, including occupations other than farming, accounted for 10.5 per cent. of the total family income.

It is estimated that, on an average, about 57 per cent. of the total income from agricultural wages accrue from cash payments and the remaining 43 per cent. from payments in kind, including perquisites.

The average annual income of an attached worker's family is higher than that of a casual labourer's family, the respective figures being 489 and 442 rupees. The higher income is almost entirely due to a greater number of days of employment. But tied as they are to the land of the employer for the greater part of the year, the attached workers are not in a position to take to other activities, with the result that their income from such activities is generally lower than that of a casual labourer's family, but not so low as might have been expected.

About one-half of the agricultural families have land. Workers with land, however, hold only small strips, and the average size of their holdings is only 2.86 acres; 53 per cent. of the holdings are owned, 44 per cent. are taken on rent and only 3 per cent. are held free of rent.

The average income of a family with land is much higher than that of a family without land, the difference being about one-fourth of the total family income. The fact that the major source of income (60 to 70 per cent.) is agricultural labour indicates that these families are primarily worker families rather than cultivator families. Owing to their preoccupation with land, the wage income of families with land is lower than that of landless families, but this deficiency in wage employment is more than made up by the income earned from the cultivation of their land.

The total annual income of all the agricultural labour families in the Indian Union was estimated at 7,900 million rupees. According to the report of the National Income Committee (1954), the national income for 1950/51 was 95,300 million rupees. The income of all agricultural labour families, who form 22.7 per cent. of the total number of families, urban and rural, thus accounts for only 8.3 per cent. of the national income. The average annual income per head is 104 rupees. In general

no substantial difference was found between the figures for casual and attached workers' family members, with or without land.

This average annual income corresponds to 40 per cent. of the national income per head of population (264 rupees) in 1950/51. Direct comparison with the income per head of industrial labour families was not possible in the absence of family budget data relating to the latter.

Cost of Living.

The several items of consumption come under the following headings : (a) food ; (b) clothing and footwear, bedding and household requisites ; (c) fuel and light ; (d) house rent and repairs ; (e) services and miscellaneous ; and (f) ceremonies and functions. The income of the agricultural labour families being low, the necessity to subsist determines expenditure, and there is hardly any problem of preference as regards the goods and services on which money should be expended. When the cost of bare necessities cannot be met from income, the worker has to resort to borrowing, though facilities for this are extremely limited.

The all-India average annual income per agricultural labour family is 447 rupees, and the average annual expenditure 468 rupees, including an average expenditure of 7 rupees on "ceremonies". There is thus a deficit of 14 rupees on consumption alone. The low level of living of the workers is indicated by the fact that out of 461 rupees spent on recurring items of expenditure, 393 rupees (85.3 per cent.) is spent on food and 29 rupees (6.3 per cent.) on clothing, totalling 91.6 per cent. on food and clothing alone. The average annual expenditure on other necessities (shelter, fuel and light), and miscellaneous items such as washing soap, medicine, tobacco, liquor, etc., amounts to only 39 rupees or 8.4 per cent. of total expenditure. Generally the average annual expenditure in individual states fluctuates around the level of income, though in most cases expenditure exceeds income.

The average annual expenditure per adult male worked out at 134.9 rupees, with a rather high coefficient of variation.

On the average a family of casual workers spends 457 rupees a year and a family of attached workers 494 rupees. Since the average annual income per family is 442 and 489 rupees, the families have an average annual deficit of 15 and 5 rupees respectively.

Average expenditure per family with land is generally higher than that of families without land. However, as the size of the family with land is generally larger, the differences in expenditure per head or per consumption unit are nearly evened out.

An agricultural family spends 393 rupees a year on food. This accounts for 85.3 per cent. of the total annual average expenditure on consumption items and corresponds to 91.4 rupees per head or 7.6 rupees per month.

An average of 282 rupees (71.9 per cent. of the food budget) is spent on cereals alone, the value of cereals contained in food as perquisites excluded. The latter is estimated at about 28.8 rupees a year (7.3 per cent. of the total food expenditure). Altogether 79.2 per cent. of the food budget is spent on cereals. The remaining 20.8 per cent. is spent on a number of items including pulses, spices and edible oil, accounting for about 10 per cent. Another 5 per cent. is accounted for by sugar, vegetables, meat, fish and eggs, etc. The total intake of cereals in different zones, according to the income and expenditure trends, amounts to an average of 20.3 oz. per consumption unit, as against 16 oz. of

cereals allowed to a manual worker under rationing and the 14 oz. prescribed by nutrition experts in a "balanced" diet.

The consumption of pulses per head is only 1.1 oz. per consumption unit (average value 19 rupees a year).

The consumption of oil comes to 10.9 rupees per family. The consumption of milk and milk products is negligible except in the Punjab and the Patiala and East Punjab States Union. The annual expenditure per family on vegetables is 4.8 rupees, on sugar 6.2 rupees and on meat, fish, and eggs 6.6 rupees.

The diet of the agricultural worker consists mainly of cereals that lack protective food value and have little variety, taste or colour. Hence the importance of spices (average annual expenditure 11.3 rupees or 2.9 per cent. of the expenditure on food) to make the monotonous meals more appetising.

Clothing, footwear, bedding and household requisites are significantly affected by climate, tradition and social environment but, having spent on food 85.3 per cent. of the total expenditure, the family cannot spend much on these items. The average annual expenditure is 29 rupees or 6.3 per cent. of total consumption expenditure. With this amount, a worker's family can afford only a *dhoti* or a *pyjama* and a *khurta* for an adult male and a *sari* for a woman. Children are mostly to be found semi-clothed, especially during the summer. Footwear is used only in certain areas, where the expenditure per family is insignificant.

Firewood, twigs, dry leaves, straw and sometimes cow dung are used as fuel, and no expenditure is incurred on this item. A bottle of kerosene oil or a box of matches is bought for lighting; sometimes light is provided by the fire from the oven or from the twigs and logs used for warming up the family during the winter. The average annual expenditure on this item is 5 rupees (1.1 per cent. of the total expenditure).

The housing of agricultural workers is far from satisfactory. The houses are small, congested and made of mud and thatch; 90.2 per cent. of the workers live in self-owned houses, 7.9 per cent. in rent-free houses and only 1.9 per cent. in rented houses.

Houses with one room constitute 55 per cent. of the total, those with two rooms 27 per cent.; the average number of rooms per house is 1.9.

The annual expenditure per family on "services and miscellaneous" is 30 rupees (6.5 per cent. of total expenditure). This group comprises a variety of items, including the services of a washerman and barber, washing soap, cigarettes, tobacco, nuts and liquor.

There is practically no expenditure on the education of children. The expenditure on medicine and amusement is almost negligible.

Of the total consumption units 2.0 per cent. consume less than 50 rupees, 24.4 per cent. consume between 51 and 100 rupees, 36.0 per cent. consume between 100 and 150 rupees, 19.5 per cent. consume between 150 and 200 rupees, 9.0 per cent. consume between 200 and 250 rupees, and 9.1 per cent. consume more than 250 rupees a year.

Poor as industrial and plantation workers are, agricultural workers are even worse off. The percentage expenditure on food is much higher in the case of agricultural labour families (84 to 90 per cent.) than in the case of either industrial (with few exceptions, 53 to 73 per cent.) or plantation worker families (72 to 77 per cent.).

The industrial workers spend more on fuel and lighting (7 to 10 per cent.) and on house rent (2 to 7 per cent.) than the agricultural workers' families.

Judged by expenditure per head (107 rupees for agricultural labour families, as against 204 rupees of all rural families) the living standards of agricultural labour families are extremely low.

A comparatively higher percentage expenditure on food—85.3 for agricultural labour families as against 71.4 for all rural families—is an indication of a poorer standard of living. An examination of the food items of all rural families showed a greater expenditure on cereals and especially on protective foods such as pulses, vegetables, edible oils, milk and milk products, and meat, fish, etc. The standards are strikingly low for agricultural labour families in other groups of expenditure as well.

Taking the Indian Union as a whole the calorie intake of an agricultural worker is 2,220 and thus short of the normal requirement (3,000 calories) by about 25 per cent. An agricultural worker's diet falls short of the protein requirement by 18 per cent. except in the north, where there is a surplus in the intake, due mainly to the consumption of a larger quantity of pulses—an important source of protein for agricultural workers.

Indebtedness.

About 45 per cent. of the agricultural labour families are in debt, the average per family being 47 rupees. Taking only the indebted families into account, the average debt is 105 rupees.

Of the casual workers' families 44 per cent. are indebted and of the attached workers' families 51 per cent. The amount of debt per indebted family is 100 rupees for casual workers and 143 rupees for attached workers. The higher indebtedness of the attached workers is accounted for by the fact that it is easier for them to secure loans from their employers, mostly as advances from the lump-sum wages for the year or half year as the case may be.

Among the casual workers' families with and without land, the percentage of indebted families is 46 among the former and 41 among the latter. The average debt per indebted family is considerably higher in the case of families with land than in the case of families without land (about 137 and 69 rupees respectively), probably because the capacity to borrow and the readiness of the lending agency to advance loans is greater in the case of landed than in the case of landless workers.

Debts are incurred mainly for production, consumption and social purposes. By far the greater part of the debt is incurred for consumption (78 rupees out of an average debt of 105 rupees per indebted family). This shows the insufficiency of the income of agricultural labour families to meet even primary necessities.

Taking families with land and without land, in both cases the bulk of the borrowing is spent for consumption purposes (an average of 98 rupees in the case of the landed and 56 rupees in the case of the landless). Families with land, however, spend on an average about 17 rupees out of their borrowings for production purposes.

Out of the estimated total of 17.6 million agricultural labour families, about 44.5 per cent. or 7.8 million are in debt, with an average debt of 105 rupees per family. Thus the total debt of the indebted agricultural labour families may be estimated to be of the order of 800 million rupees.

The biggest single source for borrowing is moneylenders; next in importance come employers. The amounts borrowed from these two sources were 38 and 22 rupees respectively out of the total of 105 rupees.

Shopkeepers came next with 6 rupees, while co-operative societies lent only 1 rupee.

The number of indebted families in the different expenditure groups expressed as a percentage of the total number of families in the group is more or less constant: 40.7 to 47.8 per cent., with an average of 45.0 per cent. Except for the families spending less than 100 rupees, the debt per indebted family is also the same. The position regarding indebtedness does not seem to be much affected by the levels of consumption expenditure.
