

PROBLEMS
OF
SMALL FARMERS
IN ASSAM

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PREFACE

This short study was undertaken at the instance of Shri B.Vankatappiah, Member, In-Charge of Agriculture, Planning Commission. It is mainly based on data collected in connection with continuous village surveys conducted by the Agro-Economic Research Centre at various places in Assam.

Because of the difficulty of ascertaining land right in hill areas, no attempt is made to analyse the data on hill villages. The basic data for the report are taken from six village survey reports of the Centre. Acknowledgements are, therefore, due to the study teams associated with these reports.

The report is drafted by Shri P.D.Saikia, Research Officer under my general **guidance**. The tabulation of data was done by Shri Durgeswar Bora, Senior Computer and Shri Paresh Ch.Dutta, Junior Research Investigator. It is typed by Shri A.K.Chakravarty, Stenographer and Shri P.C.Borah, Typist of this Centre. Shri N.Deka operated the duplicating Machine.

It is hoped that the report will focuss attention to the problems of small farmers in Assam.

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Section I.

1. General Background :

1.1. Land holdings per family and the nature of these holdings affect the economic efficiency of farming to a large extent. Nearly one-sixth of the rural families in Assam is landless and nearly 50 per cent (including landless) hold less than 3.3 acres per family. Considering 5 acres as the basic economic holding per family, from 63 to 69 per cent of the families have less than an economic holding. The average size of holdings of the smaller size group below 3.3 acres (excluding landless) which account for 35 to 40 per cent of the rural families is between 1 to 1.66 acres only.¹

1.2. The Agricultural Labour Enquiry has shown that in Assam 62 per cent of the total number of holdings covering 32 per cent of the total area were below 5 acres; 26 per cent of the number of holdings with an area of 34 per cent of the total were between 5 to 10 acres; 11 per cent covering 30 per cent of the area were between 10 and 25 acres, and only one per cent of the total number of holdings covering 3 per cent of the total area were above 25 acres in size as shown in Table 1.²

1.3. The study has further revealed that 59 per cent of the total number of holdings covering an area of about

1. Goswami P.C. Economic Development of Assam - Asia Publishing House, Bombay 1963 (pp.49-50) quoted from Reports of the Rural Economic Survey of the Economics and Statistics Department of Assam.

2. Agricultural Labour Enquiry, Report on Intensive Survey of Agricultural Labour, Vol-III- East India-1955.

74 per cent belonged to agricultural land owners' families whereas 24 per cent of the holdings covering 19 per cent of the area were held by tenant families. The agricultural workers' families held only 7 per cent of the total number of holdings covering 2 per cent of the total area. The corresponding figures for non-agriculturist families were about 10 and 5 per cent respectively.

Table I.

Percentage Distribution of Holding
Of Assam by Size Groups.

| Size Group | Percentage of | |
|-------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| | Holdings | Area |
| 1 acre and below | 6.0 | - |
| 1.1 to 2.5 acres | 18.0 | 6.0 |
| 2.5 to 5 acres | 38.0 | 26.4 |
| 5.1 to 10 acres | 26.0 | 34.0 |
| 10.1 acres and above | 12.0 | 33.6 |
| TOTAL | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Average Size (in acres) | - | 5.3 |

1.5. The average size of the holdings for all categories of families worked out to 5.3 acres. The corresponding averages were 6.6 and 4.2 acres respectively for the agricultural land owning and tenant families, 2.8 acres for non-agriculturist families and only 1.8 acres for the agricultural workers.

1.6. These facts indicate the magnitude of the problem of the rural families with uneconomic land holdings in Assam. The greatest problem of Indian agriculture is the uneconomic holdings of the majority of the farmers. Though there is a relatively low density of population in

Assam, the pressure on land is not proportionately low. This state of affairs indicates that agricultural operations for the vast majority of cultivators cannot give them opportunities for full utilisation of the available human and animal power, and not even for subsistence, let alone for maximisation of returns.

1.7. The small family holding is not a single consolidated farm. Each holding is subdivided into several fragments situated in different places. The extent of fragmentation in the different districts of Assam is shown in Table 2.

Table 2.
Extent of Fragmentation of Holdings
in Assam 1948-49.*

| | Darr- ang Dist. | Sibs- agar Dist. | Lakhi- mpur Dist. | Now- gong Dist. | Mikir Hills Dist. |
|--|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Percentage of holdings with | | | | | |
| (a) 4 or more fragments: | 45.0 | 51.4 | 37.4 | 55.5 | 2.8 |
| (b) 3 or more fragments | 60.0 | 68.0 | 51.0 | 67.0 | 11.0 |
| 2. Percentage of fragmentation with size : | | | | | |
| (a) Less than 2 bighas (0.6 acre) | 50.2 | 49.1 | 49.2 | 50.3 | 10.7 |
| (b) Less than 5 Bighas- (1.6 acres) | 76.6 | 77.9 | 72.9 | 80.8 | 34.1 |
| (c) Less than 10 bighas (3.3 Acres) | 90.6 | 92.6 | 79.8 | 94.1 | 63.6 |

In the plains districts nearly a half of the fragments is outside the village in which the cultivator lives.

*Goswami P.C. The Economic Development of Assam - Asia Publishing House, Bombay. 1963 - P. 51.

Thus the tiny plots of land and the location of the plots in far away distances from the farmers' house pose a serious difficulty in agricultural development of higher crop production.

1.8. Table 3 would indicate the percentage distribution of operational holdings in Assam. In Assam small sized operational holdings constitute the significant proportion of the total. A sizeable group of operational holdings constituting 40 per cent are below 2.50 acres, and the operational holdings between 2.50 to 4.99 acres constitute about 34 per cent. That means three fourths of the total operational holdings are below 5 acres. These 74 per cent of the operational holdings have 54 per cent of the total area operated. The situation clearly points out the magnitude of the problem of uneconomic farms and thereby the small farmers in the state.

Table - 3.

Percentage of Distribution of Estimated number of Operational Holdings and Area Operated by size Class of Operational Holdings ::: Assam.

| Size Class of Operational Holdings (In Acres) | Estimated No. of Operational Holdings (P.C) | Estimated Area Operated (P.C) |
|---|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. Upto 0.49 (" 0.20) | 1978.72 7.73 | 1960.61 5.35 |
| 2. 0.50 - 0.99 (0.21 - 0.40) | 12.01 | 8.95 |
| 3. 1.00 - 2.49 (0.41 - 1.00) | 32.66 | 25.99 |
| Sub-Total | 52.40 | 40.29 |
| 4. 2.50 - 4.99 (1.01 - 2.02) | 30.23 | 33.72 |
| Sub-Total | 30.23 | 33.72 |
| 5. 5.00 - 7.49 (2.03 - 3.03) | 10.01 | 12.91 |
| 6. 7.50 - 9.99 (3.04 - 4.04) | 4.29 | 5.51 |
| Sub Total | 14.30 | 19.42 |
| 7. 10.00 - 12.49 (4.05 - 5.05) | 1.70 | 2.91 |
| 8. 12.50 - 14.99 (5.06 - 6.07) | 0.59 | 1.22 |
| 9. 15.00 - 19.99 (6.08 - 8.09) | 0.48 | 1.76 |
| 10. 20.00 - 24.99 (8.10 - 10.12) | 0.22 | 0.38 |
| 11. 25.00 - 29.99 (10.12 - 12.14) | 0.05 | 0.15 |
| 12. 30.00 - 49.99 (12.15 - 20.24) | 0.03 | 0.15 |
| 13. 50.00 and above (20.25 & ") | - | - |
| Sub Total | 3.07 | 6.57 |
| GRAND TOTAL | 100.00 | 100.00 |

Note: Figures in brackets indicate area in hectares.

Source : (1) The National Sample Survey - Sixteenth Round - July 1960., June 1961. No. 113.

(2) Do. - 26th Round, July, 1970, Sept. 1971 - No. 215(2)

Handwritten calculations showing cumulative percentages for the first two sub-totals:

$$\begin{array}{r} 52.40 \\ + 30.23 \\ \hline 82.63 \\ + 14.30 \\ \hline 96.93 \\ + 3.07 \\ \hline 100.00 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 40.29 \\ + 33.72 \\ \hline 74.01 \\ + 19.42 \\ \hline 93.43 \\ + 6.57 \\ \hline 100.00 \end{array}$$

Section II.

2. Pattern of Land Holdings and the Small Farmers:

2.1. The five villages taken for the study to focus the problems of the small farmers were surveyed by the Agro-Economic Research Centre for N.E.India, Jorhat, between 1963-65. The villages are situated; two in the Sibsagar District, two in the Kamrup District and one in the Lakhimpur District of Assam.* Although the sample for the study is very small and inadequate, the villages are considered as representative villages of the Assam plains. These villages are expected to reflect a somewhat fair picture of the rural areas of the plains districts of Assam.

2.2. Table 1 shows the land holding pattern of the five villages. In these villages 16.57 per cent of the households are landless. Some of these landless households have very small operational holdings which they take on lease from others. Most of the landless households are agricultural labourers. Moreover, 21.72 per cent of the households have land holdings below 1 acre and another 22 per cent between 1 to 2.50 acres. These 23.72 per cent households ^{hold} only 14.39 per cent of the total land resources of the villages. Moreover, 17.71 per cent of the households have land holdings between 2.50 to 5.00 acres. That means nearly two-thirds or 61.43 per cent

* Data taken from the Village Survey Reports prepared by the Staff of the Agro-Economic Research Centre, Jorhat.

1. Dispur - by Dr.P.C.Goswami (Published),
2. Tegheriartari - (Report being written),
3. Morangaon - by Shri N.Saha (Typed),
4. Khonajan - by Shri C.K.Bora (Mimeographed),
5. Chalihagaon - by Shri J.L.Borkakaty (Mimeographed).

of the land resources of the villages. Thus the bulk of the population have uneconomic or 'nearly economic' size of land holdings.

Table - 4.

Distribution of ownership land Holding
In Five Plains Villages in Assam
According to Size-group.

| Size Groups. (In Acres) | Households | | Area (In Acres) | |
|----------------------------|------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | No. | P.C. of total | Area | P.C. of total |
| Land less | 58 | 16.57 | - | - |
| Sub total | 58 | 16.57 | - | - |
| Below 1.00 | 76 | 21.72 | 28.09 | 2.52 |
| 1.00 - 2.50 | 77 | 22.00 | 132.73 | 11.87 |
| Sub total | 153 | 43.72 | 160.85 | 14.39 |
| 2.50 - 5.00 | 62 | 17.71 | 210.50 | 18.82 |
| Sub total | 62 | 17.71 | 210.50 | 18.82 |
| 5.00 - 7.50 | 32 | 9.14 | 191.33 | 17.13 |
| 7.50 - 10.00 | 19 | 5.43 | 165.13 | 14.76 |
| Sub total | 51 | 14.57 | 375.01 | 31.92 |
| 10.00 - 15.00 | 17 | 4.83 | 203.39 | 18.21 |
| 15.00 - 20.00 | 6 | 1.71 | 99.53 | 8.91 |
| 20.00 - 25.00 | - | - | - | - |
| 25.00 and Above | 3 | 0.86 | 86.72 | 7.75 |
| Sub Total | 26 | 7.43 | 389.99 | 34.87 |
| Grand Total | 350 | 100.00 | 1,118.35 | 100.00 |

Name of the villages

and year of Survey:- 1) Dispur - 1961-62;
2) Tegheriartari - 1962
3) Morangaon - 1961
4) Khonajan - 1963
5) Chalihagaon - 1964.

2.3. Only 14.57 per cent of the households possess medium sized land holdings between 5-10 acres. These 14.57 per cent of the families have sizeable portion of 31.92 per cent of the village land under their possession. Another interesting feature of the land holdings is that only 7.43 per cent of the households possess land holdings of above 10 acres. No household possesses above 30 acres of land (land holding ceiling per family in Assam being

50 acres). However, these 7.43 per cent of the households possess 34.87 per cent of the total land possessed by all the villagers.

2.4. Although the land holding pattern is the most important factor in the rural economy, it does not always reflect the real situation of the area under operation, that is farm sizes. Table 5 shows the operational holding pattern of the 5 villages. It is interesting to note that the average size of operational holding in these 5 villages is 4.23 acres only. This points out the magnitude of the small sized farms in the Assam plains.

2.5. Table 5 shows that 18.59 per cent of the households have operational holdings of below 1 acre of land and the average size of operational holding is 0.31 acres. Moreover, 16.99 per cent of the families have operational holdings between 1 to 2.50 acres with the average size of 1.78 acres. Thus, 35.58 per cent of the households possess upto 2.50 acres of operational holdings with an average holding of 1.01 acres. This is the most vulnerable section of the population in the villages.

2.6. Only 33.65 per cent of the households have somewhat 'better-sized' operational holdings between 2.50 to 5.00 acres. This group of households have average size of operational holding of 3.65 acres. A sizeable portion of 22.44 percent of the households possess operational holdings between 5.00 to 10.00 acres. But only 8.33 per cent of the households have operational holdings of above 10 acres and 2 households have operational holdings of above 25 acres with average size of 26.33 acres only.

2.7. One of the interesting features is that many of the farmers with smaller land holdings lease out their land. This is because of the fact that some villagers possessing very small plots of land serve as agricultural labour and lease out their land to others. Some others lease out their land on account of the situation of the land far away from the households. But the households having land holdings above 10 acres very rarely lease out their land. On the otherhand, they take land on lease for operation from **the absentee** landlords and from co-villagers and neighbouring villages.

Table - 5.
Operational Holdings of Five Plains Villages in Assam
According to Size Group.

| Size Group (In Acres) | No. of H.H. | P.C. of H.H. | Owned Land (In Acres) | Land Leased: out (In Acres) | Land taken on lease (In Acres) | Total opera- tional hold- ing (Acres) | Average size of opera- tional holding (In Acres) |
|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Below 1 Acre | 58 | 18.59 | 55.06 | 40.11 | 2.93 | 17.88 | 0.31 |
| 1.00 to 2.50 | 53 | 16.99 | 67.54 | 9.07 | 35.77 | 94.24 | 1.78 |
| Sub Total | 111 | 35.58 | 122.60 | 49.18 | 38.70 | 112.12 | 1.01 |
| 2.50 to 5.00 | 105 | 33.65 | 225.01 | 22.67 | 180.61 | 382.95 | 3.65 |
| Sub Total | 105 | 33.65 | 225.01 | 22.67 | 180.61 | 382.95 | 3.65 |
| 5.00 to 7.50 | 56 | 17.95 | 246.59 | 34.01 | 139.43 | 351.92 | 5.28 |
| 7.50 to 10.00 | 14 | 4.49 | 79.13 | 4.17 | 46.62 | 121.58 | 8.86 |
| Sub Total | 70 | 22.44 | 325.63 | 38.18 | 186.05 | 473.50 | 6.76 |
| 10.00 to 15.00 | 20 | 6.41 | 164.47 | 13.00 | 79.63 | 271.10 | 13.56 |
| 15.00 to 20.00 | 4 | 1.28 | 51.50 | - | 15.33 | 67.83 | 16.96 |
| 20.00 to 25.00 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 25.00 and Above | 2 | 0.64 | 40.63 | - | 12.00 | 52.63 | 26.33 |
| Sub Total | 26 | 8.33 | 256.63 | 13.00 | 107.95 | 351.59 | 13.52 |
| Grand Total | 312 | 100.00 | 929.87 | 123.03 | 513.32 | 1320.16 | 4.23 |

Note- There are 33 households without Operational holding.

Section III.

3. Problems of the Small Farmers :

3.1. From the land holding pattern of the five villages under consideration it becomes somewhat problematic to define a small farmer. Excluding only a few households, the entire number of farms in the villages belong to small sized groups. Most of these farms cannot provide even a subsistence income to the families. Prof.V.M.Dandekar has pointed out the difficulties of defining a small farmer*. For the purpose of the study the "concept of the size of a farm is taken into account. Mere physical acreage is not the sole criterion for judgement of size of a farm due to the difference in productivity of land according to the type of the soil. A hill farmer might have vast area under his command, but his farm income may be lesser than a cultivator in the plains having a smaller land holding. An irrigated area will produce better yield than a dry area. But for the purpose of the study the productivity of soil is not taken into account. Moreover, the problem of small farmers is focussed in this paper from the direct field experience of this region.

3.2. The definition of a small farmer according to physical size of his holding is corroborated by the fact that all the households having less than 5 acres of land have deficit family budgets. Table 6 shows that the farms of below 5 acres could not provide the subsistence income for the maintenance of the family. But the average family budgets of the households above 5 acres of land are found

*Problems of Small Farmers, Seminar Series VII - Indian Society of Agricultural Economics, Bombay, 1968.

to be marginally surplus. It may be noted that the family income is counted from all sources of income, and not limited to farm income only.

4. The Problem of Tenancy :

4.1. The general feeling that the several means of agrarian reform, have not helped the small farmers in any way, is found to be, by and large, true in this part of the country. In these five villages and in two other ad-hoc studies* conducted by this Research Centre it is revealed that the share-croppers have to pay very high rent to the land owners. Table 7,8 and 9 show the pattern of rent paid by the tenants to the land owners. Owing to the fragmentation of agricultural land holdings the farm sizes are becoming smaller and smaller. Consequently, the number of share-croppers and agricultural labourers are gradually increasing. Owing to the heavy demand on land a land owner can easily extract very high rent. It is reported that in certain areas a tenant is required to render free service for some days in the land-lord's house, in addition to the high rent.

4.2. In most areas a tenant farmer considers himself to be lucky to get a plot of agricultural land on lease even at a prohibitive rent. In such a situation a tenant is not expected to resort to land reform act. In certain aspects the land reform acts reported to have worsened

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- * 1. Saikia P.D. and Bora C.K. - Farmers' Response to Use of Improved Agricultural Practices under I.A.D.P. Cachar District, Assam - Agro-Economic Research Centre for North East India.
2. Saikia P.D. and Bora C.K. - Farmers' Response to Use of Fertilizers in Nowgong District of Assam. Agro-Economic Research Centre, for North East India, 1963.

Table - 5.

Distribution of Annual Income and Expenditure of Five Plains Villages in Assam According to the size and ownership holding.

| Size Groups (In Acres) | No. of H.H. | Income (Rs.) | Expenditure (Rs.) | Average income per H.H. (Rs.) | | Average Expenditure per H.H. (Rs.) | | Surplus (+) or Deficit (-) per H.H. |
|---------------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|---------|------------------------------------|---------|---|
| | | | | (Rs.) | (%) | (Rs.) | (%) | |
| Land less | 58 | 47539.00 (10.09) | 53750.00 (11.54) | 819.64 | 926.72 | (-) | 107.03 | |
| Sub Total | 58 | 47539.00 (10.09) | 53750.00 (11.54) | 819.64 | 926.72 | (-) | 107.03 | |
| Below 1 Acre | 76 | 77516.00 (16.44) | 88141.00 (18.92) | 1019.95 | 1159.75 | (-) | 139.80 | |
| 1 - 2.5 | 77 | 92304.00 (19.58) | 99574.00 (21.38) | 1198.75 | 1293.17 | (-) | 94.42 | |
| 2.5 - 5.0 | 62 | 79109.00 (16.78) | 82654.00 (17.75) | 1275.95 | 1333.13 | (-) | 57.18 | |
| Sub Total | 215 | 248929.00 (52.80) | 270369.00 (58.03) | 1157.91 | 1257.53 | (-) | 99.72 | |
| 5 - 7.5 | 32 | 57392.00 (12.24) | 52302.00 (11.23) | 1802.88 | 1634.44 | (+) | 168.44 | |
| 7.5 - 10.0 | 19 | 37549.00 (7.96) | 32440.00 (6.97) | 1976.26 | 1707.37 | (+) | 268.89 | |
| Sub Total | 51 | 95241.00 (20.20) | 84742.00 (18.20) | 1867.47 | 1661.61 | (+) | 205.86 | |
| 10 - 15 | 17 | 45765.00 (9.71) | 32992.00 (7.08) | 2692.06 | 1940.71 | (+) | 751.35 | |
| 15 - 20 | 6 | 27384.00 (5.81) | 18818.00 (4.04) | 4564.00 | 3136.33 | (+) | 1427.67 | |
| 20 - 25 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | |
| 25 & Above | 3 | 6534.00 (1.39) | 5010.00 (1.08) | 2178.00 | 1670.00 | (+) | 508.00 | |
| Sub Total | 26 | 79683.00 (16.91) | 56820.00 (12.20) | 3064.73 | 2185.38 | (+) | 879.35 | |
| Grand Total: | 350 | 471392.00 (100.00) | 465681.00 (100.00) | 1346.83 | 1330.52 | (+) | 16.31 | |

Note :- Figures within brackets indicate Percentages of Column Total.

Acc No
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the situation. The land owner tries to change tenant year by year for the fear of occupancy right. Some big land holders try to cultivate land to their maximum capacity instead of leasing out for the fear of occupancy right.

4.3. In Package programme district Cachar, it is observed that most of the tenant farmers do not cultivate the leased in land carefully, not to speak of using improved agricultural practices. Most of the tenant farmers are frustrated people and they are very much pessimistic about their future. The prospect of progress being bleak, the small farmers remained apathetic towards development programmes.

Table - 7.

Types of Rent Paid by Tenants in 4 Plains Villages in Assam.

| Types of Rental System. | :Area in: Acres | :Rent paid :in Rupees | : Average Rent : per Acre (Rs). |
|--|-----------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Free of Rent* | 6.24 | - | - |
| 2. Cash Rent | 92.80 | 1853.81 | 19.97 |
| 3. Kind Rent | 283.71 | 11086.00 | 39.08 |
| 4. Share Cropping (50 : 50) | 84.73 | 12966.00 | 153.03 |
| 5. Mixed System (both Cash and Kind Rent on the same Plot) | 14.47 | 254.00 | 17.55 |
| TOTAL | 481.95 | 26159.81 | 54.28 |

*Land Leased out to Relatives.

| <u>Name of the Villages:</u> | <u>Year of Survey:</u> |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Dispur : | ... 1961-62 |
| 2. Morangaon : | ... 1961 |
| 3. Khonajan : | ... 1963 |
| 4. Chalihagaon : | ... 1964. |

Table - 8.

Land Tenure Arrangement in Cachar District.

| Terms Kind Rent | Respondents taking land on lease | | Respondents leasing out land. | |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|----------------|
| | No. of H.H. | Area in acres. | No. of H.H. | Area in acres. |
| 1. 66% to the owner | 1 | 3.33 | - | - |
| 2. 50% to the owner | 23 | 44.67 | 9 | 44.67 |
| 3. 25% to the owner | 1 | 0.67 | - | - |
| 4. 3 maunds of paddy per bigha to the owner | 3 | 7.67 | - | - |
| 5. 4 maunds of paddy per bigha to the owner | 2 | 4.33 | 3 | 18.00 |
| CASH RENT | | | | |
| 6. Rs. 20.00 per bigha to the owner. | 1 | 2.33 | - | - |
| 7. Rs. 30.00 per bigha to the owner | 2 | 4.67 | - | - |
| 8. Rs. 50.00 per bigha to the owner | 1 | 2.67 | - | - |
| TOTAL | 34 | 70.34 | 12 | 62.67 |

Year of Survey : 1965.

Table - 9.

Land Tenure Arrangement in Nowgong District.

| Terms | Respondents taking land on lease | | Respondents Leasing out land. | |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| | No. of H.H. | Area (Acres) | No. of H.H. | Area (Acres) |
| 1. Rent Free* | 1 | 6.66 | - | - |
| 2. 50% to the owner | 20 | 50.05 | 10 | 118.64 |
| 3. Less than 2 maunds of Paddy per bigha | 1 | 2.66 | - | - |
| 4. Between 2 maunds and 3 maunds of paddy per bigha | 4 | 17.35 | - | - |
| 5. Between 3 maunds and 4 maunds of Paddy per Bigha | 1 | 2.00 | - | - |
| Total ... | 27 | 78.72 | 10 | 118.64 |

*The Tenant is related to the Land Owner.

Year of Survey* 1967.

5. Response to Improved Agricultural Practices :

5.1. The Socio-economic surveys conducted by this Research Centre revealed that the farmers in general have failed to accept improved agricultural practices. Only in the Package Programme district Cachar the Farmers' response to improved agricultural practices is found to be somewhat satisfactory. Even in the Cachar district the small farmers have failed to modernise their agriculture though certain facilities are made readily available. Table 10 indicates the extent of acceptance of improved agricultural practices in the Package and non-package districts.

Table 10.

Improved Agricultural Practices taken up By the Farmers of Package and Non-package Districts of Assam.

| Nature | :No.of :Dist- :riets : : : : : | :No.of :vill- :ages : : : : : | :No.of :farm- :ers : :inter :viewed : : : | :Percentage of Far- :mers using | | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|---|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|
| | | | | :Per- :tili- :ser: : : | :Pes- :tic- :ides: : : | :Imp- :ro- :ved: :se- :eds: | :Pro- :tec- :tion: : : : |
| Under Package Programme | 1 | 20 | 100 | 80 | 83 | 57 | 25 |
| Non-Package Plains Districts | 4 | 6 | 628 | 3.5 | - | - | - |
| Non Package Hills Districts. | 4 | 4 | 126 | - | - | - | - |

5.2. As revealed by Table 6, the small farmers have deficit family budgets and as such they are not expected to invest much in agriculture. Only available resource

* Saikia P.D., Intensive Area Development Approach - A Village Level Plan for Agricultural Development- The Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics, Vol. XXI, No. 4, Oct-Dec, 1966.

is the human labour. But the small farmers more especially those having below 2.50 acres of land, are found to be ill-fed and unhealthy. In the peak season most of the active workers fall ill and their cultivation suffers. In Assam, the period of cultivation of the primary paddy crop (Sali Paddy) is the time of scarcity and thus the small farmers remain both mentally and physically unprepared for hard work under the monsoonic rains.

5.3. The price of the draught cattle is increasing in such a way that many of the small farmers, cannot purchase them from their low farm income. Cattle diseases are very common and is only partially controlled. The prices of the inputs like fertilizers and pesticides are high for the small farmers and some of them think it to be higher than what it actually is. It appears that their problem is the day-to-day existence and the problem of modernising their agricultural system hardly comes to their mind.

5.4. The psychology that the modern agricultural practices is a rich farmer's job, has gradually been vanishing. It is complained that the officials connected with development programme have contact with rich farmers and the small farmers are generally neglected. The demonstration plots are generally selected in the fields of rich farmers. This sense of neglect and the difficulties stated above have kept the small farmers away from the modern trend of agricultural development. Near stagnancy conditions and even deterioration in agriculture in most of the areas are observed.

5.5. Although the average size of a family in Assam

Table - 11.
Distribution of Yield per acre of major crops according to
Operational holdings in Five Plains Villages in Assam.

| Size Group (In Acres) | No. of H.H. | P.C. of Total Op | | Abu Paddy Area | Yield | Salt Paddy Area | Yield | Rao Paddy Area | Yield | Jute Area | Yield | Total Area | Net area | P.C. of Total area/net area sown |
|--------------------------|----------------|------------------|---------|-------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|---------------|-------|---------------|-------------|---|
| | | H.H. | holding | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Below 1. pp acre | 58 | 18.59 | 17.88 | 1.50 (3) | 20.00 | 12.29 (13) | 21.31 | - | - | 0.13 (1) | 30.77 | 13.92 | 13.09 | 6.34 |
| 1.00 - 2.00 | 53 | 13.99 | 94.24 | 22.43 (27) | 17.94 | 85.03 (51) | 12.10 | 2.34 (4) | 13.38 | 5.20 (13) | 7.28 | 15.53 | 93.89 | 23.05 |
| 2.00 - 2.50 | 105 | 33.35 | 382.95 | 53.02 (48) | 15.06 | 330.75 (106) | 18.44 | 6.36 (7) | 14.26 | 10.77 (21) | 7.93 | 405.21 | 350.46 | 15.91 |
| Sub Total | 216 | 69.23 | 496.07 | 81.98 (78) | 17.32 | 428.07 (173) | 17.26 | 9.50 (11) | 14.00 | 16.10 (35) | 7.90 | 535.35 | 457.44 | 17.10 |
| 5.00 - 7.50 | 53 | 17.95 | 351.92 | 36.50 (25) | 20.95 | 282.43 (48) | 17.45 | 4.00 (2) | 12.00 | 5.33 (10) | 10.88 | 323.29 | 292.79 | 12.12 |
| 7.50 - 10.00 | 14 | 4.49 | 121.58 | 51.30 (15) | 12.85 | 94.47 (19) | 16.44 | 8.17 (3) | 12.31 | 9.90 (11) | 8.59 | 133.84 | 112.50 | 45.34 |
| Sub Total | 70 | 88.44 | 473.50 | 87.80 (40) | 14.72 | 376.93 (57) | 17.20 | 12.17 (3) | 12.41 | 15.23 (21) | 9.39 | 492.13 | 405.29 | 21.43 |
| 10.00 - 15.00 | 20 | 3.41 | 271.10 | 38.74 (9) | 14.09 | 155.50 (17) | 17.50 | 21.50 (5) | 13.30 | 3.53 (9) | 8.21 | 225.27 | 191.85 | 17.41 |
| 15.00 - 20.00 | 4 | 1.28 | 67.83 | - | - | 58.00 (3) | 15.17 | - | - | - | - | 58.00 | 58.00 | Nil |
| 20.00 - 25.00 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| 25 and Above | 2 | 0.34 | 52.53 | 1.33 (1) | 12.03 | 47.00 (2) | 14.70 | 1.33 (1) | 12.03 | 0.83 (1) | 6.02 | 50.49 | 49.17 | 2.68 |
| Sub Total | 25 | 8.33 | 351.59 | 40.07 (10) | 14.03 | 261.50 (22) | 16.48 | 22.83 (3) | 13.23 | 9.35 (10) | 8.01 | 333.75 | 299.03 | 11.51 |
| Grand Total | 312 | 100.00 | 1320.13 | 209.85 (128) | 15.06 | 1035.50 (252) | 17.05 | 44.50 (25) | 13.17 | 40.39 (36) | 8.49 | 1331.51 | 1131.75 | 17.20 |

Note :- Figures within brackets indicate the number of households.