

Farmers' Perspective on Sociological Issues of Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture: A Case Study

Rahul J. Patel^{1*}

ABSTRACT

The paper examined and brought to the fore the typical characteristic of urban and peri-urban farmers in Gujarat which serves as major source of supply of agricultural products into the cities' markets. The social aspect and perception of producers involved in urban and peri-urban agriculture was examined. Descriptive analysis is present in this article. Various groups were verbally analyzed in Gujarat and the results indicate that 56.34% never went to formal school, showing that farming became the alternative means of livelihood support for those groups. Crops grown are purely influenced by market orientation—demand and cost. Potato were commonly used in almost all areas, reason being that it serves as common/major vegetable cooked in every household in Gujarat. Maize and rice were featured in many farms. Findings also revealed that majority of the farmers are resource poor, judging from calculation about their monthly income earning and available household assets and amenities. About 70.4% of the lands the farmers grow their crops on is leased for production. Even though some of these farmers are engaged in organization, many have limited access to micro financial organization that would probably loan them money to upscale production.

Keywords: *Urban Gardening, Sociological Perspective, Farming, Rural Farmers*

Rural Sociology as the name itself indicates is that branch of sociology that studies the social interactions, institutions and activities and the social changes that take place in Rural Society. It is a systematic study of the Rural Society. The interactions and the changes that are seen in the rural aspect of the society are studied under this branch. "Rural Sociology is the science of the law of development of Rural Society" - Dr. Desai.

DIFFICULT TO SEPARATE URBAN AND RURAL SOCIETY

Although Rural Sociology studies the rural life and the development in Rural Society, but it is difficult to separate completely the urban society and the Rural Society people living in Rural Society may be progressive and urban in outlook while people living in cities may have complete rural or village outlook. "Whatever may be pleasant for ruralism, urbanism seems to be a border crossing phenomenon. Every modern community is urban to a degree. One can study a city and

¹Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Sociology, Sardar Patel University, Gujarat, India

*Responding Author

Received: January 05, 2020; Revision Received: February 22, 2020; Accepted: March 21, 2020

Farmers' Perspective on Sociological Issues of Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture: A Case Study

limit the research to the municipal area, but urbanism itself is not so confined. One can study the rural community using the city as a background for rural urban comparison, but a line cannot be drawn between the urban and the rural” – Anderson.

Thus, Rural Sociology does not study the Rural Society from a geographical point of view, but it studies the Rural Society from a particular angle or point of view. There are certain standards of rural and urban society, and rural sociology studies the rural social life and the standards and the factors that influence the social structure of the Rural Society.

DEFINITION OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY

Different sociologists and social thinkers have defined Rural Sociology in different ways. Given below are a few definitions of this branch of sociology,

1. **Rural Sociology as defined by Anderson:** “Rural Sociology is the sociology of rural life in the rural environment”.
2. **Rural Sociology as defined by A.R. Desai:** “Rural Sociology is the science of Rural Society. The laws of the structure and development of Rural Society in general can and as in discovering the special laws governing a particular society. Rural Sociology is the science of the laws of the development of Rural Society.
3. **T.L. Smith has defined the Rural Sociology in the following words:** “Some investigators study phenomena that are present only in or largely confined to the rural environment, to persons engaged in agricultural occupation. Such sociological facts and principles as one derived from the study of the rural social relationship may be referred to as Rural Sociology.”
4. **F. Stuard Chapin has defined Rural Sociology as given below:** “The sociology of rural life is a study of the rural population rural social organisation, and the social processes comparative in Rural Society “.
5. **Rural Society has defined by Lowry Nelson:** The subject-matter of Rural Sociology is descriptive unless of course of various kind as they exist in rural environment.”
6. **Bertrand has defined Rural Sociology as given below:** In its broadest definition, Rural Sociology is the study of human relationship in rural environment”.

Rural Sociology is therefore the study of rural environment and social facts and social interactions that are to be found in Rural Society. It is the study of the country rural population in the mass. It is concerned to answer the large and important questions confronting the country at large and important questions confronting the country at large as they affect to that population. As a scientific study it studies the social organisations, structure and set up. It provides us that knowledge about the rural social phenomena which can help as in making contribution to the development of Rural Society.

ORIGIN OF RURAL SOCIOLOGY

Rural Sociology, comparatively speaking is a new branch of sociology which saw its origin in United States of America around 1820. Within the century a good deal of literature had been produced about this branch of knowledge and main contributions to the development of Rural Sociology and Charles Anderson of the Chicago University, Butterfields of the Michigan University, Ernest Bornholm of the Michigan state college, John Morris Gillian of the North Dakota University and unarkim H. Giddings of the Columbia University.

Farmers' Perspective on Sociological Issues of Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture: A Case Study

It was President Roosevelt who through the appointment of country life commission gave a good encouragement and filling to the development of the Rural Sociology in the 20th century. The report of this commission was aimed at encouraging the studies of the rural society and can rightly be called 'Magna Carta' of the Rural Sociology'.

In 1917, the development of Rural Sociology was set up by the American sociological society and in 1919. 'A Rural Sociology Department was established under the aegis of the Bureau of Agriculture Economics Dr. C.J. Golpim headed the department and the department and the Bureau. Later on, its name was changed to rural population and rural life. The social science Research Council not only encourages but helps the research of the study of the Rural Sociology. In 1930, due to depression this branch of sociology got a good deal of fillip and encouragement. In 1936 a quarterly (magazine) called: Rural Sociology was published in 1938 Rural sociological society was established then came the Second world War which brought a good deal of devastation and destructing. This destruction had to be mending and reconstructed. This reconstruction work brought further encouragement of Rural Sociology. America under its point a programme sent-rural sociologist to work in under developed countries and science then Rural Sociology has been growing and growing ground every day.

ORIGIN OR RURAL SOCIOLOGY IN INDIA

India is basically a country of villages of the 110 Crore people, who constituted the 2011 population 77 crores or about 70 percent live in villages and 33 crores or 30 percent in cities and towns. If this country has to develop, a good deal of progress has to be made in the villages. Real progress of the country lies in rural reconstruction. This was realised even when India was slave but after in dependence the study of the rural social structure and rural reconstruction became imperative in the country.

Since 1947 a good deal of attention is being paid, to the development of Rural Society of this country. Planning commission has introduced several projects for it. Community development project national extension services, co-operative movement Rural Institutes and such other programmes have contributed a lot to the development of Rural Sociology in India. A good deal of literature has been published but to be very frank, the development of Rural Sociology in India is progress is going and the day is not far off when it shall have attained proper scientific form in this country.

Urban and peri-urban agriculture is a common practice benefiting millions of people residing within the cities before and after independence. Intensification of urban agricultural activities emerged during the massive rural-urban migration as a result of the division of the countries. A significant proportion of the population who had sought refuge in urban communities decided to remain in those areas in search of jobs with the hope of improving their living conditions. This resulted in an unprecedented increase in urban populations creating high pressures on food supplies, urban facilities and services.

The bulk of these refugees were rural migrants with a strong agricultural background. In the absence of regular employment, many of these migrants entered into urban and peri-urban agriculture, cultivating leafy vegetables and marketing fruits and vegetables within and near the urban centers, especially Delhi, the capital city.

Farmers' Perspective on Sociological Issues of Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture: A Case Study

Young displaced people, were engaged in the production and marketing of agricultural products as their major source of livelihood. These factors contributed to a significant expansion of urban and peri-urban agriculture as an essential coping strategy for providing the vital augmentation of food stocks.

In order to mitigate the impending earning crisis, the Ministry of Agriculture of India carried out exercise and collected the data using a data entry form developed to form a data base of major actors. Primary data were collected from a total of 71 urban farmers. A sample of at least 3 farmer's sites was selected from the survey areas based on the proportion of sites listed: Urban, Rural and Bo Urban. A purposive sampling was used for the selection of the study area based on the size of land area under cultivation followed by simple random sampling for the site selection (These communities are representatives of urban and peri-urban environs predominant for growing crops that are sold to the cities for consumption) and household interviews.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected from a total of 71 urban farmers through personal interviews with the use of android devices programmed with Census and Survey Processing System (CSPro 6.3) Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) data entry application. Data collected included socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, growing space of farmers, major crops cultivated, irrigation information, inputs (*e.g.* fertilizer and pesticides), their types, quantity use and sources. The survey also covers perception of crop growers on the impact of their respective growing patterns on their environment. Also the type of livestock and poultry domesticated, household agricultural assets owned and other basic household assets and amenities were captured.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the electronic data capture process was uploaded into the computer and analyzed using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS 9.4), Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Office Excel 2007. Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents were summarized by the use of frequency distribution tables and proportion/percentages. The other set of data collected were analyzed using purely descriptive statistics, bar and pie charts were also used during the analysis of other variables.

RESULTS

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Farmers

Age Distribution

The result showed that 9.86% of the respondents fall within the age bracket of 30 and below. The remaining 90.14% were from ages 31 and above, indicating that urban farming is dominated mainly by adults. Out of the 90.14%, 22.54% of these farmers were within the age bracket of 31-45, forming the more active, energetic and robust group. 67.61% of the farmers interviewed were within the ages of 46-55, these are usually the matured and experienced people within the farming cycle.

Farmers' Perspective on Sociological Issues of Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture: A Case Study

Gender and Marital Status

Majority of the respondents were female (70.42%) while the male respondent accounted for 29.58%. The data also showed that majority (56.34%) of the farmers were married, 33.8% were widow/widower and 7.08% were singles.

Educational Level

Majority of the respondents (56.34%) never went to formal school. Primary and secondary school accounted for 11.27% respectively. Higher secondary school and university pupils were not attracted to urban and peri-urban agriculture and accounted for 7.04% and 4.23% respectively.

Employment Status

Majority of the respondent were full time farmers (97.18%) while 2.82% were engaged in urban agriculture and other non-agricultural activities.

CONCLUSION

The demographic analysis of the current situation of the farmers is tried to be presented through this article. As mentioned above in this article today it is difficult to draw a line of rural and urban farmers or the people. So, in context of the same the author has tried to classified & examine the urban and Pri-urban farmers of Gujarat and has studied the various factors of those farmers.

The study has identified that the level of education is one of the major affecting factors on the farming. The majority of the farmers are under graduate. Thus, lack of education restricts the farmers for selecting the innovative techniques at farming which results at lower production ratio or the lower price of the crops. The efforts of Government Agriculture Department have changed the scenario at certain level, but due to low education the majority of the farmers have still not adopted the modern techniques or neither have tried to understand about it.

Another serious situation of the farming segment is the less interest of the educated young generation towards farming. Though the young generation is also engaged with the farming segment, but the ratio of the graduate farmers is very low and thus the innovation in the farming is still a big issue.

Education also provides an opportunity to the farmers to produce the other income sources along with the farming, which will decrease their income dependency on the farming and so they can think of the diversified usage of the technology at farming.

REFERENCES

1. Barry, S. G., & Foerster, J. W. (2007). Seeking Environmental Stewardship: One Garden at a Time. *Journal of Extension*, 45(1).
2. Bellwood-Howard, I., Häring, V., Karg, H., Roessler, R., Schlesinger, J., & Shakya, M. (2015). Characteristics of Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture in West Africa: Results of an Exploratory Survey Conducted in Tamale, Ghana, and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. *IWMI Working Paper 163*. International Water Management Institute. <https://doi.org/10.5337/2015.214>

Farmers' Perspective on Sociological Issues of Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture: A Case Study

3. Blair, D. (2009). The child in the garden: An evaluative review of the benefits of school gardening. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 40(2), 15-38. <https://doi.org/10.3200/JOEE.40.2.15-38>
4. Glavan, M., Pintar, M., Černič-Istenič, M., Sali, G., Corsi, S., Mazzocchi, C., ... Wascher, D. (2015). Lesson learned on urban gardening phenomenon.
5. Hoogh, I., Osiro, A., Wieggers, E., Fornah, D., Sawi, M., & Rhodes, E. (2011). Improving Nutrition through Agriculture: Challenges and Opportunities. Retrieved from <http://www.slari.gov.sl/reach.pd>
6. Okoth, P. F., Nambiro, E., Kibe, P., Njoroge, S., Macharia, R., Kihara, J., & Huising, J. (2012). A practical guide for collecting farmers' socio-economic and agronomic data: An AfSIS Project field protocol. International Center for Tropical Agriculture. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10568/49625>

Acknowledgements

The author profoundly appreciates all the people who have successfully contributed to ensuring this paper in place. Their contributions are acknowledged however their names cannot be mentioned.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Patel, R.J. (2020). Farmers' Perspective on Sociological Issues of Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture: A Case Study. *International Journal of Social Impact*, 5(1), 07-12. DIP: 18.02.002/20200501, DOI: 10.25215/2455/0501002