

## SCENARIO OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN UTTAR PRADESH

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### ABSTRACT

*The performance of agriculture in Uttar Pradesh has been perceived to vary considerably across districts & regions and has strong linkages with the provision of employment, income and poverty reduction. Around 55 per cent of population are depending on agriculture for their livelihood, whereas the agricultural sector contributes only 27.5 per cent to gross state domestic product with the datum that growth of agriculture is below 5 percent in Uttar Pradesh state. There is an elementary shift of workers from agriculture to other activities which are very casual in nature; consequently it fetches low income to the workers in the state. The volatility in accessing secured job on regular wages is also a bitter reality for agricultural labour of Uttar Pradesh. Agricultural labour is increasing in Uttar Pradesh but their wages are stagnant. Therefore, with the high intensity of precariousness, agrarian labourers of U.P. have been anguishing on the socio-economic ground during the recent decades. The dynamics of agricultural labour have been changing rapidly and this present study is an attempt to inspect the growth pattern of agricultural labour in U.P. The Study utilises secondary data of major districts of UP., where agrarian labour has found to be the highest. Descriptive statistics has applied to fulfil the objectives of this paper. It is strongly evident in the analysis that agricultural labourers in U.P. has been persistently up surging beside the fact that precariousness of the job is dominating in the state. The study also explicates that the agriculture as the prime component of sectoral composition has been enacting swiftly during the period of 1991 to 2011 in Uttar Pradesh. Other recent studies also revealed that the growth of employment in agriculture has declined in absolute terms for the first time both in Uttar Pradesh and India between 2004-05 and 2011-12. Construction sector has emerged as a major growth driver in employment in the state, registering an annual growth of about 12 per cent since 1993-94. Though mining and quarrying and electricity sectors have a very small share in total employment, they witnessed a fairly high annual growth of about 16 per cent in the period between 2004-05 and 2011-12. It is obvious that the casualization of the labour is increasing in the state of Uttar Pradesh after new economic reforms in India. It has observed in the study that utmost agrarian labour prone fifteen districts of Uttar Pradesh flaunting a dominance of female agricultural labour in the following districts Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Bulandshahr, Jaun pur, Gonda, kheeri, Unnao, Barabanki and Bahraich.*

**Key Words:** Agricultural labourers, Casual labourers U.P. Agriculture, Livelihood & Well-being

Uttar Pradesh is the extremely populated state in the country and it has long been the cradle for the country's economic, social and political development. Uttar Pradesh has made highly a sluggish growth in the spheres of economic, social and cultural well-being, particularly since early 1990s. Around 55 per cent of workers are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood, whereas the sector contributes only 27.5 per cent to gross state domestic product. Though there has been an elementary shift of workers from agriculture-allied activities and such opportunities are casual in nature also, consequently it fetches low income to a large majority of workers in the state. The economy of Uttar Pradesh lags behind in generating adequate quantity of good quality jobs for surplus labour associated with agriculture. The incidence of distress-induced migration has increased over the years, which is yet another major issue that could be addressed simply by improving employment opportunities in the state. Basic aim of the paper is to analyse the agricultural input labour in Uttar Pradesh state.

Some of the studies have also highlighted the facts of pattern of growth of agriculture and labor in the state of UP. Jens Lerche (2008) in his study "Politics of the poor: Agricultural laborers and political transformations in Uttar Pradesh", author expounds the echelon of stress and struggle of local agrarian laborers in Uttar Pradesh. Study also put a picture of caste and class based emancipatory processes, relates to the wider development of the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Lalmani Pandey & A. Amrender Reddy (2012), Farm Productivity and Rural Poverty in Uttar Pradesh: A Regional Perspective; study has highlighted the need for strengthening the non-farm employment and income opportunities along with improved farm productivity through resource diversification towards high-value crops like fruits and vegetables. Region-specific development strategies of generating non-farm activities along with improving land productivity are required for reducing rural poverty in Uttar Pradesh. The policy imperatives

include public investment in irrigation and incentives to encourage agricultural diversification and intensive-use of inputs like fertilizer. Study revealed that around 40 percent (male and female) agricultural workers in Uttar Pradesh were engaged in the forced employment during 2012. Besides it, the agricultural workers in all the economic regions of Uttar Pradesh were also facing several problems, for whose eradication, the Government had enacted the Minimum Wages Act 1948 before 64 years. Besides engaged in the forced employment, the female agricultural workers were also facing the gender based discrimination in payment of wages (rate). Through the paper, the attention of the policy makers and the State labour laws enforcement agency is sought for undertaking necessary corrective measures towards the effective implementation of the labour laws. Sharad Ranjan (2009), "Growth of Rural Non-Farm Employment in Uttar Pradesh: Reflections from Recent Data" study divulges employment shift from the farm to the non-farm sector in Uttar Pradesh arises out of prosperity-induced or distress-induced factors. Study draws the link among various factor such as landownership, education and caste affiliation under rural farm and rural non-farm employment. Low levels of education and their status as landless earners devoid of capital resources suggest broad distress-induced circumstances of non-farm workers and incapacity among farm workers to get secured reasonable wages.

Growth of employment in agriculture has declined in absolute terms for the first time both in Uttar Pradesh and India between 2004-05 and 2011-12. Even then, near half of Uttar Pradesh's workforce is dependent on agriculture & allied activities. Construction sector has emerged as a major growth driver in employment in the state, registering an annual growth of about 12 per cent since 1993-94. Though mining and quarrying and electricity sectors have a very small share in total employment, they witnessed a fairly high annual growth of about 16 per cent in the period between 2004-05 and 2011-12.

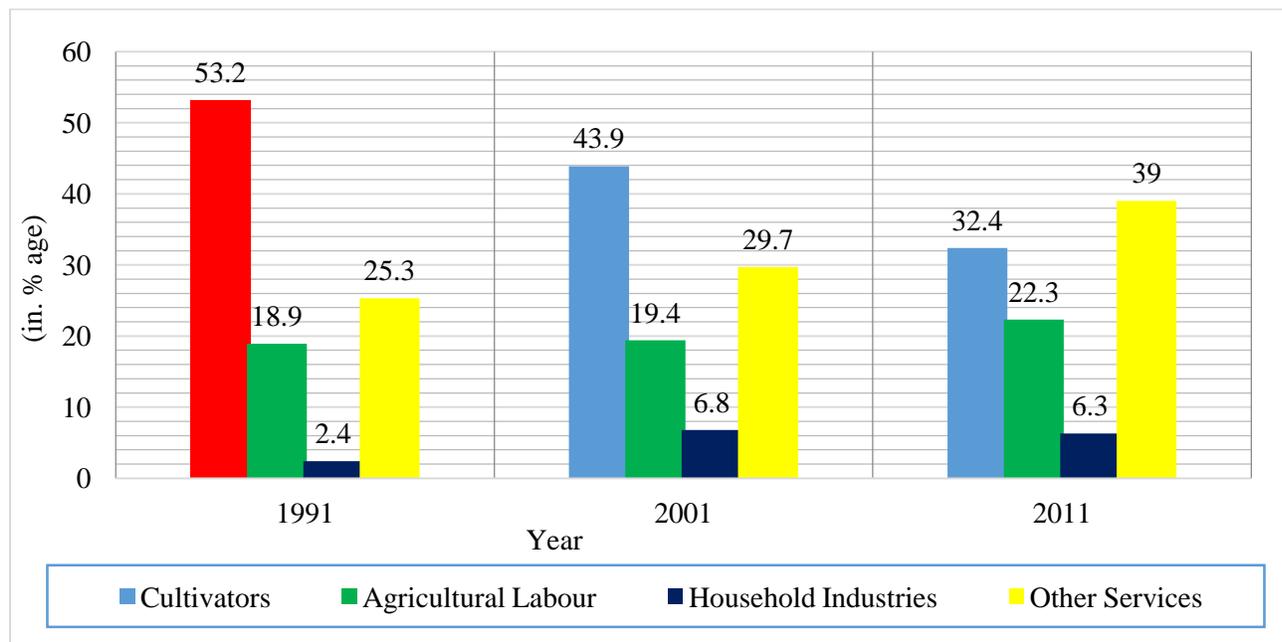
## SITUATION OF AGRICULTURE LABOUR IN UTTAR PRADESH

Agricultural labour is increasing in Uttar Pradesh. They belong to the economically depressed and socially backward section of the rural economy remained neglected. Their social and economic conditions are deteriorating. They have been struggling with low income and low wages. There are many factors responsible for growing agricultural labour in the state. According to Dr. Mukherjee, "Every circumstance which has weakened the position of the small landholders has increased the number of agricultural labour, viz., and the loss of common rights in the rural economy, the decrease of collective enterprise, the subdivision of holdings, the multiplication of rent receivers, free mortgaging and transfer of land followed by a decline in cottage industries". However, there are many other reasons of growth of agricultural labours such as (i) The growth rate of the population in the state is very high and growth of indebtedness due to low productivity of the land as well as transfer of land from the small owners to the creditors. As a result farmers are becoming agricultural labourers, (ii) searching for subsidiary occupations and unequal distribution of money in rural economy, creating agricultural labourers, (iii) the growth of corporate farming and decreasing of domestic industries and handicrafts and disintegration of the village communities and peasantry in rural areas of the state.

Work is defined as participation in any economically productive activity with or without compensation, wages or profit. Such participation may be physical or mental in nature. Work involves not only actual work but also includes effective supervision and direction of work. It even includes

part-time help or unpaid work on the farm, family enterprise or in any other economic activity. All persons engaged in 'work' as defined above are workers. The reference period for determining a person as worker and non-worker is one year preceding the date of enumeration? Workers are classified as main workers, marginal workers, and non-worker. Main workers are those who have worked for major part of the reference period (i.e. six months or more during the last one year preceding the date of enumeration) in any economically productive activity. Marginal workers are defined as the person who worked for 3 months or less but less than six months of the reference period i.e. in the last one year preceding the date of enumeration in any economic activity. And non-workers are those who have not worked at all in any economically productive activity during the reference period i.e. last one-year preceding the date of enumeration (Population Census 2011). Moreover, total workers classification as cultivators, agricultural labourers, household industrial workers and workers in the services area has been done in the present paper. This paper inspects the trend of occupations as a different kind of workers in state particularly in top most agricultural labour populated district of U.P.

The classification of workers in Uttar Pradesh is presented in table 1.00 and Figure 1.00. It is found that the percentage of cultivators was 53.2 percent in 1991 and decreased to 32 percent in 2011 at state level. On the other hand, the percentage of the agricultural labour was 18.9 percent in 1991 and increased to 22.3 percent in 2011 at state level. In case of household industries workers, it grew at the rate of 2.4 percent in 1991 and increased to 6.3 percent in 2011. In the case of other services workers, it grew at the rate of 25.3 percent in 1991 and increased to 39 per cent in 2011 at state level.

**Figure-1.00 Classification of Workers in Uttar Pradesh during 1991 to 2011**

Source: Various reports of Statistical Abstract Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow

The gender wise classification of workers has shown in table 2.00 in Uttar Pradesh during 1991 to 2011. It is found that the percentage of male and female cultivators was decreased from 53.9 per cent and 48.1 percent respectively in 1991 to 31.1 per cent and 22.2 percent respectively in 2011 at state level. On the other hand, the percentage of male and female agricultural labours was 16.6 per cent and 35.8 per cent in 1991 and it further increased to 27.6 per cent & 38.4 percent in 2011 respectively. Similarly, the percentage of male and female household industrial workers was 2.2 per cent and 3.5 percent in 1991 and increased to 4.7 per cent and 9.6 percent respectively in 2011. Further, the percentage of male and female of other service workers was 27.1 per cent and 12.4 percent in 1991 and increased to 36.4 per cent and 29.6 percent in 2011. This is clear from the table that all types of workers have been increasing in the state during this period. The organised sector could not create adequate employment opportunities to the growing population in the state. The farmers & cultivators are decreased due to lack of profitability from cultivation and the workers with the

engagement in service sector are showing rapid increase during the same period.

Table 3.00 shows the status of workers in Uttar Pradesh. It is observed that the percentage of self-employed workers was at 71.6 percent in 1993-94 and decreased to 66.28 percent in 2009-10. On the other hand, the percentage of regular wage workers was 8.6 percent in 1993-94 and increased to 9.7 percent in 2009-10. The casual labour grew at the rate of 19.6 percent in 1993-94 and increased to 24.0 percent in 2009-10 at state level. It is obvious that the casualization of the labour is increasing in the state of Uttar Pradesh after new economic reforms in India.

The Government has taken several steps to improve the condition of agricultural labourers at state level. Some of the steps are such as (i) The Government has launched minimum wage act in 1948 to empower the legislation to fix the minimum wages for the agricultural labourers, (ii) Several programmes have been adopted such as Antyodaya and NERGA to improve the conditions of poor agricultural labourers, (iii) The insurance scheme

has been introduced to cover all landless agricultural labourers, (iv) In 1976, the Government passed the Bonded labour Abolition Act to improve the livelihood and uplift from the poverty line in the state of Uttar Pradesh, (v) Some rural employment programmes were launched in 1980 to organize labour for intensive works on a scale. These programmes have been operating such as projects road building, minor irrigation, drainage, water conservation, (vi) The Government has been making effort to establish cottage industries in the rural areas of the state, (vii) The government has been improving the administrative power and creating job opportunities in rural areas, (viii) Regional rural banks have been establishing in the villages. The branches of these banks are providing facilities to agricultural labourers to start tiny business, (ix) the maximum limit of agricultural land holdings to be cultivated by a single farmer have fixed. The excess land of this limit is distributed among the landless labourers at state level. But the reality expounds agrarian labourers are still furthest in improving their socio economic stature in Uttar Pradesh.

Table 4.00 shows percentage of the gender wise work participation rate in Bulandshahr district. Female work participation rate is very low in the Bulandshahr district. In the district, 34 per cent population engaged in either main or marginal work. Nearly 49 per cent of male and 17 per cent of female population are working population. Rural male work participation rate is same as in the urban male work participation rate (48 per cent) while the women work participation rate in urban area is very less in comparison to rural area in the district. In the district, 83.3 per cent of the total male population is main (full time) workers and 16.7 per cent are marginal (part-time) workers. For women, 49.7 per cent of the total female population is main workers and 50.3 per cent are marginal workers.

## WORKERS IN TOP FIFTEEN DISTRICT OF THE UTTAR PRADESH

Industrial workers are classified into four categories namely cultivators, agricultural labourers, household

industry workers and other workers. Cultivators are those who work on another person's land for wages in cash or kind or share is regarded as an agricultural labourer. She/he has no risk in the cultivation but merely works on another person's land for wages. An agricultural labourer has no right on land on which they have work. The household industry is defined as an industry conducted by one or more members of the household at home or within the village in rural areas and only within the precincts of the house where the household lives in urban areas. The larger proportion of workers in the household industry should consist of members of the household. The industry should not be run on the scale of a registered factory which would qualify or has to be registered under the Indian Factories Act and should be engaged in manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairs of goods. The activity relates to production, processing, servicing, repairing or making and selling of goods. It does not include professions such as a pleader, Doctor, Musician, Dancer, Waterman, Astrologer, Dhobi, Barber, etc. or merely trades or business, even if only such professions, trade or services are run at home by members of the household. And other person includes those who have been engaged in some economic activity during the last year of reference period but not as a cultivator or agricultural labourer or worker in household industry. For instance all government servants, municipal employees, teachers, factory workers, plantation workers, those engaged in trade, commerce, business, transport, banking, mining, construction, political or social work, priests, entertainment artists, etc. The percentage share of cultivators among chosen districts is still high which reflect that farming system is still dominating in Uttar Pradesh state. These ten districts have chosen on the basis of highest number of total workers.

Percentage share of agricultural labour in these chosen districts are high in contrast with remaining sixty five districts of Uttar Pradesh. Female agricultural labour is dominating in the following districts Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Bulandshahr, Jaun pur, Gonda, kheeri, Unnao, Barabanki and Bahraich. On the other hand,

cultivators' males are dominating in all the picked district of Uttar Pradesh. In case of households' industrial workers percentage of female workers are high in these fifteen chosen districts. Lastly in the category of other workers, percentage of female workers is high in these districts except Jaunpur, Unnao and Barabanki.

## CONCLUSION

It is strongly evident in the above analysis that agricultural labourers in U.P. has been persistently up surging beside the fact that precariousness of the job is dominating in the state. The study also

explicates that the agriculture as the prime component of sectoral composition has been enacting swiftly during the period of 1991 to 2011 in Uttar Pradesh. Nevertheless, Uttar Pradesh is still lagging behind in providing job opportunities and technical know-how to the human resource with an efficacious structure of organisation at state level. Therefore consequently, individuals are bound to work as agricultural labourers for their livelihood and well-being. With this kind of periodical occupation system and with the dependency on large land-owners, it would be intricate to sustain at reasonable & minimum wages for their survival and future prosperity.

**Table-1.00: Classification of the Workers in Uttar Pradesh during 1991-2011**

Year	Cultivators	Agricultural Labors	Household Industries workers	Other Services workers
1991	53.2	18.9	2.4	25.3
2001	43.9	19.4	6.8	29.7
2011	32.4	22.3	6.3	39.0

Source: Various reports of Statistical Abstract Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow

**Table-2.00: Gender Wise Classification of Workers in Uttar Pradesh during 1991-2011**

Year	Cultivators		Agricultural Labor		Household Industries workers		Other Services workers	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1991	53.90	48.10	16.60	35.80	2.20	3.50	27.10	12.40
2001	42.90	34.30	20.10	41.20	4.30	8.3	32.5	16.16
2011	31.10	22.20	27.60	38.40	4.70	9.60	36.40	29.60

Source: Various Reports of Statistical Abstract, Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow

**Table-3.00: Occupations of Workers in Uttar Pradesh during 1993-2010**

Year	Self-employed	Regular wage	Casual labour	All
1993-94	71.60	8.60	19.60	100
2004-05	74.11	9.00	16.80	100
2009-10	66.28	9.70	24.00	100

Source: State Planning Commission, Government of U.P

**Table: 4.00 Percentage wise distribution of total workers under various categories**

Districts	Cultivators		Agricultural Labour		Household Industry worker		Other workers	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Saharanpur	25.2	12.0	23.7	25.5	2.7	6.3	48.3	56.2
Muzaffarnagar	29.9	17.1	22.9	24.3	2.6	6.4	44.6	52.2
Bareilly	33.4	14.5	21.5	11.3	5.5	22.6	39.6	51.6
Moradabad	30.7	20.2	20.6	17.1	4.7	13.6	44.0	49.1
Bulandshahr	35.2	21.8	15.1	17.5	3.3	14.5	46.5	46.3
Jaunpur	43.7	41.5	20.1	30.1	5.3	7.1	30.9	21.2
Gonda	51.2	32.6	25.9	32.3	3.8	9.8	19.0	25.3
Badaun	61.6	39.1	18.2	15.6	1.8	11.2	18.4	34.1
Shahjahanpur	48.1	22.5	25.6	18.6	2.0	11.5	24.3	47.4
Kheri	52.5	29.3	26.9	27.0	2.2	9.2	18.3	34.6
Sitapur	51.7	29.2	25.6	25.6	3.4	11.1	19.3	34.1
Unnao	49.6	41.2	19.6	26.0	3.4	6.2	27.4	26.7
Hardoi	56.2	33.7	23.6	23.6	3.0	10.2	17.3	32.4
Bahraich	50.7	34.0	29.0	36.4	2.2	5.2	18.0	24.3
Barabanki	49.0	34.2	25.1	35.6	5.2	10.5	20.7	19.8

Source: Statistical Abstract 2013, U.P. Planning Department

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