CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the foregoing chapters we discussed the nature and extent of labour inputs in agriculture, in general, and in crop production in particular, and also the two aspects of unemployment; namely, seasonal and disguised unemployment of the labours, engaged in crop production. We are now in a position to summarise briefly the whole discussion on these aspects as follows.

1. There has been a regular increase in the proportion of the working force engaged in agriculture since 1900 and in 1961 the ratio stood at 69.51 per cent as compared to 62.50 per cent in 1901. The ratio of agricultural workers to total cropped area, when examined shows that it varies widely from State to State. The extent of variation is from 0.13 per acre in Rajasthan to 0.43 per acre in Jammu and Kashmir. The States showing low density of agricultural workers per cropped area are Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Mysore, Punjab and Rajasthan. Assam and Jammu and Kashmir are the only regions where density is very high. In Bihar, Madras, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Himachal Pradesh also the density is comparatively high.

2. Agricultural workers consist of cultivators and
agricultural labour. Proportion of agricultural labour to agricultural workers also shows a wide variation from State to State. The proportion is very small in Jammu and Kashmir (2.06 per cent) and Himachal Pradesh (2.12 per cent). If we exclude these two hilly areas which incidentally have special soil climatic features, the States showing the lowest and highest proportion of agricultural labour turn out to be Rajasthan and Kerala, where it is 5.19 per cent and 36 per cent respectively. Broadly examined, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Madras, West Bengal and Orissa are the States where there is a high incidence of agricultural labour in total agricultural worker, while Assam, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab are the regions where its incidence is small.

3. Considering the two factors together, namely, density of agricultural workers per cropped area and the incidence of agricultural labour among agricultural workers it is seen that, except in the States of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh and Mysore the density of agricultural workers per cropped area is not directly related to the proportion of agricultural labourers. Hence, the general impression that wherever the density of agricultural worker per acre of cultivated area is high the proportion of agricultural labour is also high, does not seem to hold good.
4. An examination of the wages paid to the hired labour and the proportion that it forms of the gross produce, obtained from the All India Rural Credit Survey brings out that the proportion of gross produce paid as wages to hired labour compares favourably with the proportion of agricultural labour obtained from the earlier estimate. A comparison of each of these proportions as the proportion of agricultural labour to total agricultural worker as appearing in the census, shows that excepting in a few regions, the proportion of gross output given as wages is high in the regions where proportion of agricultural labour is also high and vice versa.

5. An analysis of more direct source of data on the utilisation of labour input in crop production indicates that in the regions of Hooghly-24 Parganas, West Godavari, Monghyr, Salem and Sambalpur, labour input per acre in crop production is considerably high. Incidentally, in all these regions, paddy is reported to be one of the major crops. The regions where labour input per acre is small are Ahmednagar-Nasik, Coimbatore, Akola-Amravati, Amritsar-Ferozepur and Rohtak-Karnal-Sangrur. This is about the total labour input per acre of cropped area used in crop production. Proportion of hired labour input in it shows a different picture. West Godavari appears to be the region using exceptionally high amount of hired labour input. In contrast, in the districts of Rohtak-
Karnal-Sangrur, the proportion of hired labour input is very low. Apart from West Godavari district, there are a few more districts using considerable amount of hired labour input. These districts are Sambalpur, Hooghly-24 Parganas and Akola-Amravati. Incidentally, all these districts showing higher proportion of hired labour input, except Akola-Amravati, are rice growing. Regions showing smaller proportion of hired labour are Rohtak-Karnal-Sangrur, Amritsar-Ferozepur, Meerut-Muzaffarnagar, Ahmednagar-Nasik and Monghyr.

6. Nature of crops grown is one of the factors affecting the use of labour input in crop production. It is observed that among irrigated crops gram is least labour consuming in all the regions, while, potato is the most labour intensive crop, grown only in Hooghly and 24 Parganas out of all the districts under study. Proportion of hired labour use is found to be high in the case of paddy, jute, potato and tobacco. Regions showing high proportion of hired labour in crop production are found to grow some or all of these crops. Among unirrigated crops, jowar, bajra and pulses and wheat to a certain extent use more labour per acre. It is found that, on an average, the labour requirement for irrigated crops is three to four times that for the unirrigated crops. An examination of cropwise utilisation of labour days per acre thus gives an idea of the extent to which the hired labour is used for different
crops both under irrigated and unirrigated conditions. This, in turn, together with the area under irrigated and unirrigated crops, explains partly the regional variation in labour input per acre, both hired and total.

7. Among other factors, farm size is believed to be one of the important factors influencing the utilization of hired labour. It is found that in the districts of West Godavari, Sambalpur, Amritsar-Ferozepur and Hooghly-24 Parganas, the total number of labour days per acre do not change much by farm size. Use of hired labour, however, is found to be more in the bigger farms than in the smaller ones. There is another set of districts in which labour input per acre shows a decrease with the increase in the farm size. The districts are Ahmednagar-Nasik, Salem-Coimbatore, Akola-Amravati, Rohtak-Karnal-Sangrur and Monghyr. Proportion of hired labour input, in these districts shows a small but regular increase with the increase in farm size. General notion of inverse relationship between farm size and labour input per acre is not fully supported by this analysis.

8. Availability of farm family worker is a factor which influences the extent of self-employment in a farm. It is noticed that in all the districts number of farm workers per farm steadily increases with the increase in farm size. But, the increase is not proportionate to the
increase in farm size. Labour input in terms of days of work per farm worker gives an idea of the extent to which the farm workers employ themselves in the farm. Size groupwise analysis shows that in most of the districts number of labour days per farm worker neither regularly increases nor decreases with the increase in farm size. In some cases, in fact, the labour input per farm worker is less on bigger farms as compared to that on smaller farms. However, on the basis of the variation in labour input per farm worker, howsoever small or large it is, the districts under study are classified into two groups. The districts falling in the first group are West Godavari, Akola-Amravati, Salem-Coimbatore and Rohtak-Karnal-Sangrur, where bigger farms by and large show smaller labour input per worker. This indicates, therefore, that in these regions farm workers on bigger farms do not put in as much of labour as put in by those in the smaller farms. In other words, the extent of self-employment is less on the bigger farms in these regions. The other group comprising the districts of Ahmednagar-Nasik, Amritsar-Ferozepur, Meerut-Muzaffarnagar, Hooghly-24 Parganas and Sambalpur, shows greater variation in labour days put in by a farm worker over size-groups, indicating progressively larger number of labour days per farm worker on bigger farms. This indicates that in these regions the farmers on the bigger holdings engage themselves intensively in the active physical work of crop production.
9. An analysis of monthly utilization of farm labour input shows that the variation in the farm labour input used is maximum in Sambalpur and minimum in Ahmednagar-Nasik. The other regions show moderate variation in the employment of farm labour from month to month. There is, thus, seasonal unemployment in different regions and it varies from one region to another depending upon the cropping pattern. There are some regions where it appears to be very prominent while there are some other regions where the employment is fairly uniformly distributed throughout the year making the extent of seasonal unemployment less. A measure of seasonal unemployment shows that it is quite high in Sambalpur, Hooghly-24 Parganas and West Godavari, and very low in Ahmednagar-Nasik. The cropping pattern in these regions shows that paddy is the major crop grown in all those regions depicting high seasonal surplus labour. In other regions the cropping pattern is such that it keeps the labour busy fairly evenly throughout the year over months. The seasonal surplus is, therefore, comparatively less.

10. An analysis of the other aspects of unemployment that is disguised unemployment or under-employment, which states that, although all the workers appear to be engaged fully in agricultural operations during the normal busy season, some or all of them may be partially employed, follows next in the discussion. It is examined, if the
per acre labour input with respect to output is more on the smaller farms as compared to the bigger ones. The finding indicates that the labour input per acre does not decrease with the increase in farm size in all the regions under study. In other words, in some regions, smaller farms use as much labour input per acre as the bigger farms, with output per acre remaining more or less the same. The regions or the districts are West Godavari, Sambalpur, Amritsar-Ferozepur and Akola-Amravati; in these regions, therefore, data on labour input do not throw any light on the question of under-employment. There are, however, some regions, namely, Salem-Coimbatore, Hooghly-24 Parganas, Nasik-Ahmednagar and Rohtak-Karnal-Sangrur, where the labour input per acre decreases, while output per acre remains more or less constant. It can be said that to produce the same amount of output per unit of land the smaller farmer in these regions require more labour input than that required by the bigger farms. On smaller farms, therefore, the employment of farm family labour is believed to be pushed to such a point where their application does not result into an increased output. There is, therefore, evidence of disguised unemployment or under-employment among family farm workers engaged in crop production on smaller holdings in these regions.

Return per labour day of farm workers points out
that a farm worker in smaller farms earns less for his labour per day in crop production than that earned by a farm worker in a bigger farm. This can also be taken as evidence of under-employment in small farms, in the sense that high labour input used on small farms does not lead to significant increase in production on those farms.

11. Labour input in agriculture and its nature and extent gives an idea of the employment provided by the agriculture to the population engaged in it. Conditions in this respect are found to vary from region to region. There are some regions where although the density of agricultural worker per cropped area is very low, the proportion of agricultural labour is very high. This is possibly because of the land being concentrated to few big owners.

Proportion of hired labour use in crop production is found to vary widely from region to region. This happens largely because of the type of crops grown and the availability of farm family workers. In quite a few regions the farm workers in bigger farms are found to put in considerably less number of labour days in crop production. The extent of self-employment is thus less in these regions. This is probably because the farm workers on bigger farms mostly do supervisory work and do not lend themselves to the actual physical work in crop production.
Self-employment is believed to be the predominant feature of Indian agriculture, but, it is seen that even the smallest farm uses hired labour to a certain extent. Nature of crops grown, the simultaneous arrival of some operations in crops and the urgency of completing it, compel even a small farmer to hire in some labour. Proportion of hired labour use, however, is higher on bigger holdings partly because the number of farm worker per acre of cultivated area is less in these farms.

It is believed that the agricultural sector of our country suffers from large scale disguised unemployment and that a part of the labour force can be removed from this sector, without adversely affecting the output. Farmers, engaged in cultivation of small pieces of land are supposed to be the worst sufferer of this problem of under-employment. It is said that on some farms the employment of family labour is pushed to such a point where their application does not result into increased output. Our analysis of the data on labour input per acre, however, does not lend support to this general belief fully. There is evidence of under-employment on some farms but it is neither acute nor widespread. In many of the regions, either the small farms use as much labour as the big farms, for a given output, or the higher labour input in small farms is associated with higher output in them. In fact,
unemployment due to seasonality appears to be more. During the peak season, the workload is so much that even the smallest farm has to employ some hired labour. Therefore, under-employment in terms of surplus labour available for transfer from one sector of the economy to the other, appears difficult to be visualized.