Chapter 3

Changes in the Employment, Wages and Incomes of Agricultural Labourers in Rural Labour Households

Agricultural labourers constitute a large section of the rural population in India. A sizeable proportion of the female workers, 31 per cent in 1983, in rural areas in India worked as casual workers in agriculture (Table 2.14 in Chapter 2). They are drawn from the socially and economically backward classes and constitute the poorest section of rural hierarchy. They are also a less articulate section of the workers mainly due to lack of organisation and low levels of education. In the last chapter, a large increase in the number and proportion of agricultural labourers in the rural work force and of agricultural labour households among rural households was noted. The percentage of agricultural labour households among all rural households for the country as a whole increased from 22 per cent in 1964-65 to 31 per cent in 1983 (Table 2.15 in Chapter 2). In a study of female participation in agriculture, it is important to understand the employment and economic conditions of this large and increasing section of female workers belonging to a most disadvantaged section of society.

This chapter provides a description of the trends in employment, wage earnings and incomes of agricultural labourers in rural labour households during 1956-57 to 1977-78 at the all India level and for the 14 major states of the country. The discussion on the trends in the economic condition of agricultural labour households is placed in the context of the debate
on the changes in the condition of agricultural labourers. Another related concern of the chapter is how the EPRs of these labour households are affected by the large increase in the percentages of agricultural labour households and the changing economic conditions of these households over the period. In other words, is the entry of women into the work force influenced by the changing economic position of these households.

This chapter is divided into four sections. Section 1 summarizes the debate on the changing economic condition of agricultural labourers. In the second section the data base used in the chapter and its limitations are discussed. The third section discusses the changes in the employment situation of agricultural labourers in terms of earner population ratios (EPR) and the days of employment available in agriculture. The employment situation alone, however, does not give a complete picture of the position of these households. The average daily money and real wage earnings together with the days of employment in a year per worker determine the annual money and real wage incomes of the agricultural labourers. In the fourth section changes in the average daily wage earnings, annual wage earnings and total household incomes, in both money and real terms, over the period of study are discussed. And finally the conclusions emerging out of the discussion are summarized.

1. DEBATE ON CHANGES IN THE ECONOMIC CONDITION OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

In the seventies there was an interesting discussion on whether the conditions of agricultural labourers, in terms of
real wage rates and incomes, had improved or deteriorated with
the advent of the green revolution. It started with Bardhan
(1970) who used Agricultural Labour Enquiry (ALE) data for 1956-
57 and 1964-65, and later extended it to 1970-71 NSS data
(Bardhan, 1973), to argue that male real wage rate in Punjab
and western Uttar Pradesh had declined while it had risen in
Kerala. This was in spite of larger importance of landless
people in the latter state and was perhaps due to peasant orga-
nisations.

Krishnaji (1971) and Jose (1974) used Agricultural Wages
in India (AWI) data to make inter-state comparisons and concluded
that agricultural wages are poorly adjusted to and lag behind
the rise in the cost of living. There was considerable regional
disparity which was accentuated by the green revolution.

Deepak Lal (1976) was the major exponent of the view
contradictory to the earlier authors, who arrived at their con-
clusions using (1) AWI data which are unrealistic compared to
the NSS and (2) used as the terminal year some year in the
sixties when there was a tremendous upsurge in prices and wages
lagged behind. Besides, green revolution had not yet gained
momentum to warrant such a conclusion. He argued that (1) wages
do operate within the demand supply framework and respond to
agricultural growth, and (2) consumption levels of rural poor
households indicated a reduction in the percentage of households
below the poverty line between 1956-57 and 1970-71 so that their
condition had improved.
In his reply, Jose (1978) argued that real wage rates alone do not tell us about the real earnings of agricultural labourers which are dependent on (1) the agricultural wage rates, (2) quantum of employment per year available per worker and (3) prices of wage goods consumed by members of the household. He provided indirect evidence on the decline in employment opportunities to agricultural labourers after 1964-65. There was an increase in the real wage rates, but per capita income of agricultural labourers had fallen between 1963-64 and 1970-71 in most states. Jose stressed the need to ascertain whether wage incomes had also increased in regions where real wages had increased. Further, whether the quantum of employment available increased or at least remained constant to increase real income of agricultural labourers. Evidently, the relationship between agricultural output and income levels of agricultural labourers required more detailed probing.

Laxminarayan (1977) also did not agree with the view that wages had not increased and pointed out a major limitation of the earlier studies. He argued that much of the discussion on wages of agricultural labourers was based on income earned by agricultural labourers from agricultural labour alone and conclusions were drawn whether real earnings declined. But income from agricultural labour accounted for only one-fifth to half of the total earnings. Agricultural labourers supplement their wage income with other sources to protect their real income. He indicated that non-wage income had increased faster than wage income.
More recently, Bardhan (1984) attempted another assessment of the so-called 'trickle down' effects of growth on poverty of agricultural labourers using Rural Labour Enquiry data. Over the ten year period 1964-65 to 1974-75 he noted a decline in real daily wage earnings and annual real wage earnings of agricultural labourers in all states except Uttar Pradesh. However, it has been pointed out that the latter year was not a good agricultural year and total annual income including non-wage income may give a different picture (Parthasarathy, 1987).

However, this whole discussion on the conditions of agricultural labourers was based on male wages and incomes only. It would be interesting to explore the links between aggregate output, poverty and employment available to female agricultural labourers in different years, and also the link between output, real wages and incomes of this section of the population over time.

2. THE DATA BASE AND ITS LIMITATIONS

With a view to obtain up-to-date and reliable information on the socio-economic conditions of agricultural labourers the Government of India, under the Ministry of Labour, undertook all India enquiries on agricultural labour households. The first two Agricultural Labour Enquiries (ALE) were conducted in 1950-51 and 1956-57. Later the scope of these enquiries was enlarged to cover not only agricultural labour households but other rural labour households as well. These
enquiries were called Rural Labour Enquiries (RLE) and so far four such enquiries have been conducted in 1964-65, 1974-75, 1977-78 and 1983. The results of the 1977-78 enquiry are yet only partially available and those of 1983 are not yet available. These RLEs also yield separate estimates for agricultural labourer households for purposes of comparative study with the earlier enquiries. The second ALE and subsequent Rural Labour Enquiries were conducted through the corresponding rounds of the National Sample Survey.

The basic aim of the enquiries was to evaluate the changes in the socio-economic conditions of agricultural labourers. In the second ALE, data was collected on various aspects such as employment, unemployment and earnings of individual workers and indebtedness of agricultural labour households. The later RLEs have also collected similar information for all labour households and also data on the consumption expenditure of the rural labour households to help compile a new series of consumer price index numbers for rural labour.

The ALE and RLEs together provide temporal data for the period 1956-57 to 1977-78, i.e., more than two decades.¹ Data on days of employment available to agricultural labourers, daily wage earnings and total earnings over this period can be used to assess the changing condition of this section of workers during the period under study.

¹ Data from the first ALE (1950-51) are not comparable with the later rounds, as discussed below, and are therefore not used in the analysis.
**Sampling Design**

In the second ALE and RLES the broad sample design was a stratified two stage design with villages as the first stage units and households as the second stage units. The whole country was divided into a number of strata, basic units, so as to represent a group of districts homogeneous in respect of rural population density, cropping pattern, agro-climatic zones, etc. The sampling frame for the selection of villages was the Census list of villages. Sample villages within each basic stratum were selected with probability proportional to size. The sample households were selected with some sampling interval from the list of rural and agricultural labour households in the villages.

**Limitations of the Data**

**Definition of Agricultural Labour Households:** Data from the first ALE are not comparable with data from the second ALE due to a change in the criterion for identifying agricultural labour households from work to income. In the first ALE the criterion for identifying an agricultural labour household was whether the head of the household or 50 per cent or more earners reported agricultural labour as their main occupation. In the second ALE, however, agricultural labour households were identified on the basis of their deriving a major portion of their income from agricultural labour (Rao, 1962:50).

In the RLES, a household was classified as a rural labour household if it derived the largest share of income from wage
paid manual labour in agriculture or non-agriculture. Of these households, those which derived a major portion (more than 50 per cent) of their total income during the 365 days preceding the date of enquiry from wage paid manual labour in agricultural operations only, were regarded as agricultural labour households. Thus, data from the second ALE are comparable to the latter RLEs, whereas data from the first ALE are not. The first ALE is, therefore, not included in the analysis in this chapter.

Definition of Usual Occupation: In the second ALE and first two RLEs, the usual occupation of a person was identified as the gainful occupation which he usually pursued irrespective of what he may be doing at the time of interview or during the reference period of the preceding week. In the RLE of 1977-78, however, the 'major time' criterion was introduced. A person's usual occupation was identified as the occupation he pursued over the major time of the 365 days preceding the date of interview. This change in the definition is likely to have reduced the number of usually occupied persons captured in the RLE 1977-78. The changes observed in WPRs between the earlier ALE/RLEs and RLE 1977-78 have to be interpreted keeping this limitation in view.

Definition of Intensity of Work: In the second ALE and later RLEs, the time spent on different economic activities in which the members of the household were engaged during a reference period of one week was recorded in terms of number of days for which a particular activity was pursued. Intensity of employment
was also taken into consideration. In the second ALE and first two RLEs a full day's work meant three fourth or more of the normal working hours. One fourth or more and less than three fourth of the normal hours was considered as work with 'half' intensity. Less than one fourth was recorded as 'nominal' with one eighth intensity and 'nil' intensity signified no work during the reference period (Labour Bureau, 1973, RLE 1963-64: 15). The days of employment with varying intensities were aggregated into days of full intensity work. In the RLE of 1977-78, however, the intensity of work was defined only in terms of full and half day intensities. The concept of 'nominal' intensity was dispensed with. A person was considered as working for the entire day if he had worked for four hours or more on the day. If he had worked one hour or more but less than four hours he was considered working for half day.

Computation of Days of Employment in RLE, 1977-78: Data on employment in the second ALE and first two RLEs relate to full days of employment available per agricultural labourer in agriculture/rural labour households in a full agricultural year. The ALE of 1977-78, however, gives the distribution of estimated number of person-days per day of gainfully employed persons. This has been converted into full days of employment per agricultural labourer in a year in a region, to make them comparable with data from the earlier ALE/RLEs. The following method was used for this purpose.
\[ x_i = \frac{(D_u AL_i) \times 365}{AL_i}, \text{ where} \]

\( D_u AL_i = \) Persondays per day of usually occupied agricultural labourers and \( AL_i = \) total number of agricultural labourers in the region.

Computation of Average Daily Wage Earnings: The ALE/RLEs do not report wage rates for agricultural operations. They provide information on average daily wage earnings of agricultural labourers. Information on earnings was recorded for a week for each of the activities in which usually occupied members of the household were engaged in as wage paid labourers. The average daily earnings was arrived at by dividing the aggregate earnings for each activity by the corresponding number of days of employment with full intensity in that activity. Payments in kind are valued at wholesale prices in the second ALE and later RLEs (Labour Bureau, 1973, RLE 1963-65: 26). These data therefore do not relate to the prevailing wage rate in a region, but show only an average based on the days of employment and the total wage income.

3. Employment Situation of Agricultural Labourers in Agricultural/Rural Labour Households

As noted in the last chapter, the commercialisation of agriculture and the demographic process of the division of households has led to a relatively large increase in the persons and households dependent of agricultural labour for their livelihood. In this process persons who were not earlier working may be forced into the work force leading to an increase in the labour
participation of such households. This is likely to be true particularly of the intermittent labour force consisting of women and children. Thus, a steady increase in the participation rates of females in the labour households is expected corresponding to the increase in the proportion of agricultural labour households.

**Earner-Population Ratios in Agricultural/Rural Labour Households:**

Labour participation in these households can be measured in terms of earner-population ratios (EPR) from the enquiries of 1956-57, 1964-65 and 1974-75 and in terms of worker population ratios from the enquiry of 1977-78. Earner population ratios for rural labour households are a close approximation to worker population ratios since non-working earners, such as rentiers and pensioners, would be negligible in such households.

In 1977-78 male and female non-working earners, above the age of 5, constituted 0.19 and 0.20 per cent of the population.

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1/ EPRs are estimated indirectly using information on earners per household and average size of household given in the enquiries. While the first two RLEs give estimates of earners per household, the second ALE gives estimates only of wage earners per household, i.e., information on earners other than wage earners are not available. This would render EPRs between 1956-57 and the later RLEs non-comparable. Therefore the EPRs for 1956-57 are computed indirectly by assuming the ratio of wage earners (\(WE\)) to earners (\(E\)) in agricultural labour households constant for the two years 1956-57 and 1964-65, \(\frac{WE}{E}\) 1964-65 = \(\frac{WE}{E}\) 1956-57.

Earner-population ratios were also not available by sex for 1956-57.
respectively in all rural households for the country as a whole. Thus the difference between worker-population ratios and earner-population ratios is small even among all rural households. The difference is likely to be even smaller in rural labour household. However, agricultural labour households may receive some remittances from persons who have migrated to other areas. This unfortunately cannot be estimated.

The data on earner population ratios in rural labour households do not show a consistent rise between 1956-57 and 1977-78 as was hypothesized on the basis of the large and steady increase in the proportion of agricultural labour households over the period. Total earner population ratios (males and females of all ages) fell between 1956-57 and 1964-65, rose in 1974-75 and fell again in 1977-78 at the all India level (Table 3.1). Between 1956-57 and 1974-75, earner population ratios rose at the all India level and in eight states; between 1964-65 and 1974-75 it rose in all but two states; between 1956-57 and 1977-78, however, it fell at the all India level and in all but one state.

Earned population ratios by sex show a considerable increase between 1964-65 and 1974-75, particularly among females (Table 3.2). In 1977-78, however, labour participation declined, again quite considerably among females. As noted earlier the

1/ EPRs of female children at the all India level show similar fluctuations as for adult females, but EPRs of male children do not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EPRs of Children, All India</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
major activity criterion was introduced in 1977-78. Prima facie, any such change should not make any difference to WPR of workers in rural labour households since they would mainly be wage workers whose activity is more easily identified and captured. While changes in male WPRs are small and perhaps occur due to random fluctuations, this is not the case with female WPRs. Though some under-enumeration of workers cannot be ruled out due to the change in definition, this cannot account for the large decline in female WPRs between 1974-75 and 1977-78 (65 to 49 per cent at the all India level).

There was, therefore, no clear cut long term increase in earner population ratio. Besides the increase in proportion of agricultural labour households, there appears to be some factor which influences year to year variation in labour participation. One possible explanation for this phenomenon of fluctuating labour participation in different years in spite of a large increase in the proportion of agricultural labour households could be the link that exists between agricultural output and the income levels of agricultural labourers. This relationship can impinge on the labour participation of labour households in the following way. In a year of bad monsoon the agricultural output declines leading to a decline in the general levels of living. The effect of such decline in the general level of living is felt sharply by labour households which have no reserve of resources to support themselves. It could force a large number of otherwise non-workers, such as women and children, into the work force.
Table 3.1

Earner Population Ratios of Both Sexes Together, All Ages, in Rural Labour Households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>1956-57</th>
<th>1964-65</th>
<th>1974-75</th>
<th>1977-78</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All India</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>44.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>53.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>39.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>45.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab/Haryana</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>35.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>49.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>45.2</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>38.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1/ See footnote on p.74
2/ Refer to worker population ratios

Source: 1. NSSO, Eleventh and Twelveth Rounds 1956-57, Number 33, Tables with Notes on Wages, Employment, Income and Indebtedness of Agricultural Labour Households in Rural Areas; Table 8.1.2 & 1.3
2. Labour Bureau, RLE 1963-65, Final Report, Table 2.4
4. NSSO, 32nd Round, 1977-78, Number 301/2, Wages and Earnings of Rural Labour Households, Table 3.

It has been noted that the risk of poverty extends much above the poverty line, so that many of those who manage to stay above the poverty line in one year fall below it in another (Gaiha, 1981, quoted in Agarwal, 1986). This tendency is strong in wage dependent households. Women's entry into wage labour is essentially a result of poverty (Agarwal, 1986). There is tension between the low economic status, which requires women
to engage in economically productive activity outside the home and high ritual status, which calls for seclusion. "In times of severe economic need women will enter the labour force as agricultural labourers or in other capacities, but when conditions improve they withdraw to their home" (Dixon, 1978:118). Thus, in a year of scarcity, when more households are pushed into poverty, one would expect a larger proportion of females to enter the wage labour force.

The index number of cultivated area and agricultural production at the all India level between 1949-50 and 1982-83 (Table 3.3)
gives a clear picture of the ups and downs in agricultural activity during the period. It is seen that cultivated area and agricultural production rose above the previous year in 1956-57 and 1964-65. The year 1974-75, however, proved to be a bad agricultural year with a sharp decline in both cultivated area and agricultural production. On the other hand, 1977-78 was an exceptionally good year with agricultural production increasing considerably over the previous year.

These fluctuations in cultivated area and total agricultural output help to explain the phenomenon observed earlier. Labour participation is obviously affected by the agricultural production in that particular year, with earner population ratios rising sharply in 1974-75, a year of agricultural scarcity and falling in 1977-78, an agriculturally prosperous year. Female participation, however, appears to be more severely affected by these fluctuations in agricultural output. In 1974-75, female earner population ratios rose much more than male earner population ratios in all the states; while in 1977-78 female earner population ratios declined considerably even below the earlier normal agricultural year, 1964-65. The earlier hypothesis of an increasing trend in earner-population ratios due to the increasing proportion of agricultural labour households in total rural households has to be modified. Obviously, the increase in earner population ratios is not monotonic and is influenced by year to year fluctuations in agricultural production.
Table 3.3

Index Numbers of Agricultural Production and Cultivated Area, 1949-50 to 1983-84, All India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Index of agricultural production</th>
<th>Index of cultivated area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>78.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>78.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951-52</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>79.7</td>
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<td>1952-53</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>82.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953-54</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>87.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954-55</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-56</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>90.0</td>
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<td>76.2</td>
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<td>80.1</td>
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<td>1960-61</td>
<td>86.7</td>
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<td>1965-66</td>
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<td>1974-75</td>
<td>108.8</td>
<td>100.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>1975-76</td>
<td>125.0</td>
<td>105.9</td>
</tr>
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<td>1976-77</td>
<td>116.2</td>
<td>103.2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>142.7</td>
<td>105.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1982-83</td>
<td>137.0</td>
<td>104.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983-84</td>
<td>154.4</td>
<td>105.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1/ CMIE estimates
Source: Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE), 1984, Table 13.4
At the cross sectional level, however, between 1964-65 and 1974-75 the sharp increase in female EP Rs is higher in states with a greater increase in agricultural labour households during the same period (correlation coefficient being 0.52 which is significant at 10 per cent level). In an agricultural year of scarcity such as 1974-75, therefore, there is some association between the increase in agricultural labour households and the entry of women into the work force. Thus a larger proportion of women appear to enter the work force in a scarce year and withdraw in a good agricultural year.

**Days of Agricultural Employment Available per Agricultural Labour in Agricultural/Rural Labour Households**

Labour participation alone is not a very efficient measure of the employment available to labour households since it only indicates the proportion of persons who were working during an agricultural year. The intensity of work or the number of days of employment available to each worker during the year is required to obtain a more complete picture of the employment situation. AIE, 1956-57, provides data on days of employment available per agricultural labourer in agricultural labour households only. The data are available from the RLEs of 1977-78 only for all rural labour households, while RLEs of 1964-65 and 1974-75 provide data for both types of households.

Table 3.4 presents the days of employment per agricultural labour by sex for both agricultural labour households and all rural households to give a comparative picture. While there
is not much difference in the days of agricultural employment per male agricultural labourer for these two types of households, in 1964-65 and 1974-75, days of agricultural employment per female agricultural labourer differ at the all India level and in the states of Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal notably in 1964-65.

Days of agricultural employment per agricultural labour in a particular year would be the net result of changes in the demand and supply of labour. One would expect that in a year of low total agricultural output the demand for labour would be much less, thus reducing the total available days of agricultural employment. On the other hand, as observed earlier the supply of labour, in terms of earner population ratios, increased in such a year of agricultural scarcity. The days of employment per agricultural labourer would be expected to fall.

The data more or less reflect this phenomenon. At the all India level, both male and female days of employment per agricultural labour in agricultural labour households rose between 1956-57 and 1964-65, and declined in 1974-75, the year of poor agricultural output and increased earner-population ratios. Among rural labour households also it declined between 1964-65 and 1974-75 and rose again in 1977-78 for both males and females.

As such one would expect the days of employment per agricultural labourer to be the lowest in 1974-75. While this is
### Table 3.4

Full Days in a Year of Wage Paid Employment in Agriculture per Agricultural Labourer in Agricultural Labour Households and Rural Labour Households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Agriculture Labour Households</th>
<th>Rural Labour Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1956- 1964- 1974- 1984- 1977-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>57  65  75  65  75  78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adult Male</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All India</td>
<td>194 217 193 219 192 229</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>211 204 193 216 192 213</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>190 198 186 197 185 206</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>194 278 206 283 205 233</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>198 228 204 227 203</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>156 173 138 169 136 170</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>215 212 198 210 197 247</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>222 239 221 243 220 228</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>175 224 164 225 162 218</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab/Haryana</td>
<td>229 282 218 282 216 251</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>179 210 239 207 238 187</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>173 194 148 195 147 193</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>174 189 200 188 199 213</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>167 269 210 268 210 242</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adult Female</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All India</td>
<td>131 149 138 161 136 186</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>140 104 138 168 137 181</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>115 127 114 126 115 206</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>128 1/ 240 160 241 156 191</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>148 192 175 191 171</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>123 147 108 147 105 158</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>132 147 125 146 123 197</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>166 1/ 183 180 182 178 185</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>70 165 111 164 111 159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab/Haryana</td>
<td>145 173 150 170 149 232</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>117 153 163 151 161 186</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>135 146 118 145 117 174</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>96 102 124 102 122 161</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>138 216 147 206 149 202</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** / Refer to casual agricultural labour days only.

**Source:**
1. NSSO, 11th and 12th Round, 1956-57, Number 33, Table with Notes on Wages, Employment, Income & Indebtedness of Agricultural Labour Households in Rural Area.
2. Labour Bureau, RLE 1963-65, Final Report, Table 3.3 and 8.4.

contd.
true for all India, it is not necessarily true for all states. The days of agricultural employment per agricultural labourer is lower in 1974-75 than 1964-65, for males and females in all states except Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. However, the days of employment per agricultural labour are higher in 1974-75 than 1964-65 in a number of states, particularly among females.

In 1977-78, a year of exceptionally good harvest, one would expect the days of employment per agricultural labourer to peak. This is true at the all India level. However, while days of agricultural employment per female labourer in 1977-78 surpasses the 1964-65 level in 9 out of 12 states, days per male labourer does not reach the 1964-65 level in 8 out of 12 states. This should be juxtaposed with the fact that in 1977-78, female earner population ratios declined below the 1964-65 level in 8 of these states, male earner population ratios were higher than the 1964-65 level in 7 of these states.

In a year of exceptionally good harvest, such as 1977-78, it appears that a larger proportion of female workers withdrew from the work force. This decline in female EPRs cannot be fully explained by the change in definition discussed earlier.

contd.

4. NSSO, 32nd Round, 1977-78, Number 301/3, Employment and Unemployment of Rural Labour Households, Table 4.1
5. NSSO, 32nd Round, 1977-78, Number 301/2, Wages and Earnings of Rural Labour Households, Table 3
Perhaps due to this withdrawal of female workers and/or due to the increased agricultural activity, the female agricultural labourers who remained in the work force obtained a larger number of days of work, as compared to the earlier normal year, than male agricultural labourers in most of the states.

**Days of Employment by Agricultural Operations**

Given these fluctuations in the total days of employment in agricultural operations it would be interesting to see which operations are affected by these ups and downs in agricultural activity. The data on full days of agricultural employment available per agricultural labourer by agricultural operations are, however, subject to certain limitations. Firstly, when viewed across states, there appears to be some amount of instability in the reported days of employment per agricultural labour in certain operations according to the three inquiries (see Appendix Table III.1 for state level estimates of the main operations alone by male and female agricultural labourers). A close scrutiny of the data by operations shows that in a number of cases, the reported days per agricultural labourer in certain operations show a wide inter-state disparity. Different states report the peak or the low values for the same sets of operation in the three inquiries. Secondly, days of employment are available separately only for five agricultural operations viz. ploughing, sowing, transplanting, weeding and harvesting. All other operations are clubbed together under a heterogeneous category "other agricultural operations". Agriculture includes
not only crop production, but also dairy farming, animal husbandry, poultry farming, forestry, etc. The term "other agricultural operations" would include manual and non-manual operations under all these categories. A high proportion of the days of employment of male and female agricultural labourers are reported under the residual category.

Besides the residual category of other agricultural operations, ploughing and harvesting are the main operations done by male labourers, while weeding and harvesting are the main operations done by female labourers. Only those operations can be expected to provide relatively stable estimates with large enough sample size.

Among male agricultural labourers, the absolute number and proportion of days of employment per labourer in ploughing declined steadily between 1964-65 and 1977-78 at the all India level (Table 3.5). Rather surprisingly in view of the poor agricultural year, the absolute number and proportion of days of employment per male agricultural labourer occupied in harvesting was the highest in 1974-75 for all India and most states. Estimates of days of employment by agricultural operations may be affected also by 'seasonality' in interviewing within the survey years, while 'usual status' estimates may not. This could partly account for such oddities.

For female agricultural labourers, the absolute number of days per labourer in harvesting has reportedly remained more or less constant at the all India level over the three
Table 3.5

Full days of Wage Paid Employment in Agricultural Operations per Agricultural Labourer in Rural Labour Household, All India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ploughing</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(21.9)</td>
<td>(19.7)</td>
<td>(14.8)</td>
<td>(5.0)</td>
<td>(1.5)</td>
<td>(1.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sowing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.2)</td>
<td>(2.6)</td>
<td>(1.7)</td>
<td>(3.1)</td>
<td>(3.7)</td>
<td>(1.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transplanting</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.2)</td>
<td>(4.2)</td>
<td>(4.4)</td>
<td>(8.7)</td>
<td>(9.5)</td>
<td>(10.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeding</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6.4)</td>
<td>(11.4)</td>
<td>(8.7)</td>
<td>(15.5)</td>
<td>(24.3)</td>
<td>(19.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvesting</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18.3)</td>
<td>(23.4)</td>
<td>(17.0)</td>
<td>(31.0)</td>
<td>(35.3)</td>
<td>(25.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(38.8)</td>
<td>(39.6)</td>
<td>(53.7)</td>
<td>(29.8)</td>
<td>(25.7)</td>
<td>(40.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(8.7)</td>
<td>(6.8)</td>
<td>(6.8)</td>
<td>(6.8)</td>
<td>(6.8)</td>
<td>(6.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1. Figures in parentheses refer to percentage to the total days.

Source: 1. Labour Bureau, RLE 1963-65, Final Report, Tables 3.4 and 8.5
2. Labour Bureau, RLE 1974-75, Final Report on Employment and Unemployment of Rural Labour Households, Part I, Table 3.4 b(1)
3. NSS, 32nd Round, 1977-78, Number 301/3, Employment and Unemployment of Rural Labour Households, Table 4.1
4. NSS, 32nd Round, 1977-78, Number 301/2, Wages and Earnings of Rural Labour Households, Table 3.

The proportion of days per labourer in harvesting was, however, highest in 1974-75. The proportion of days per labourer in weeding was also the highest in 1974-75 at the all India level. The absolute number and proportion of days of employment per male and female agricultural labourer in other agricultural operations increased between 1964-65 and 1977-78 (Table 3.5). If the unclassified days, given only in 1964-65
were added to other operations, the number of days in this category was the lowest in 1974-75 and the highest in 1977-78. This was true for both males and females at the all India level.

In view of the limitations discussed earlier and the anomalies noted above the data on days of employment by operation do not appear suitable for any detailed analysis.

Employment of Agricultural Labourers in Other Than Wage Paid Employment in Agriculture

While the major proportion of their time was spent in wage-paid agricultural employment, agricultural labourers also engaged in non-agricultural labour and self employment (Table 3.6). Rather surprisingly, in the case of male agricultural labourers there appears to be a trend towards a reduction in dependence on wage labour and increase in self employment over the period of study. In the case of female agricultural labourers, however, the proportion of days spent in self employment fluctuated. In 1974-75, with a reduction in agricultural activity, the days of wage paid agricultural employment available to female agricultural labourers reduced so that they had to rely on their own resources and undertake self employment for a slightly larger number and proportion of days than the previous normal year 1964-65. In 1977-78, with the increased agricultural production and a withdrawal of women from the wage labour force noted earlier, the number and proportion of days of wage paid employment available to female agricultural labourers in the year increased.
### Table 3.6

**Full Days of Employment in Various Occupations per Agricultural Labourer in Rural Labour Households, All India**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wage Paid Employment</th>
<th>Self Employment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Non-Agriculture</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Cultivation</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(76.8)</td>
<td>(10.9)</td>
<td>(87.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(81.1)</td>
<td>(9.6)</td>
<td>(90.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(79.3)</td>
<td>(9.1)</td>
<td>(88.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(80.1)</td>
<td>(5.6)</td>
<td>(85.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Adult Male**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wage Paid Employment</th>
<th>Self Employment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Cultivation</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(78.0)</td>
<td>(5.9)</td>
<td>(83.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(64.7)</td>
<td>(5.6)</td>
<td>(90.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(79.1)</td>
<td>(6.4)</td>
<td>(85.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(83.8)</td>
<td>(4.1)</td>
<td>(87.8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Adult Female**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wage Paid Employment</th>
<th>Self Employment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Cultivation</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10.9)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(10.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10.9)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(10.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5.2)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(5.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5.6)</td>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>(5.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Figures in parentheses refer to percentages to the total days of employment.

**Source:**
2. Labour Bureau, RLE, 1974-75, Final Report on Employment and Unemployment of Rural Labour Households, Part I, Table 3.3 and 3.5.
3. NSSO, 32nd Round, 1977-78, Number 301/2, Wages and Earnings of Rural Labour Households, Table 3.
4. NSSO, 32nd Round, 1977-78, Number 301/3, Employment and Unemployment of Rural Labour Households, Table 4.1

Information on employment undertaken by agricultural labourers in wage work, salaried work and self employment is available separately for rural labour households with land and those without land for the year 1974-75 and 1977-78 (Table 3.7). The proportion of days spent in self employment by agricultural labourers is
obviously higher (about 20 per cent) in those labour households that possess land, most of this time is spent in agricultural work. In labour households that do not possess land, almost 95 per cent of labour days is spent in wage work. Self employed days in these households is distributed almost equally between agriculture and non-agriculture.

Another interesting feature is that in 1974-75, when the total quantum of agricultural work was probably lower, agricultural labourers in labour households without land engaged in non-agricultural wage work to a greater extent (12 per cent of male days and 15 per cent of female days of employment). It is likely that public works started in this poor agricultural year constituted part of the non-agricultural wage employment available to these agricultural labourers.

4. THE ECONOMIC CONDITION OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

The earner population ratios and days of employment per agricultural labourer give a fairly complete picture of the changing employment situation of the agricultural labourers. However, this alone does not indicate the total welfare of this section of the population. The daily wage earnings accruing to agricultural labourers and change in them over time determine the total incomes available to agricultural labourers. Increase in money wage earnings are considerably eroded by inflation. In order to understand the real economic condition of labour households three variables need to be considered:
Table 3.7
Distribution of Days of Employment of Agricultural Labourers in Wage Paid Work, Salaried Work and Self Employment Separately in Rural Labour Households With and Without Land, All India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wage Paid Employment</th>
<th>Salaried Employment</th>
<th>Self Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agri- Non- Agri-</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Agri- Non- Agri-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>culture</td>
<td>culture</td>
<td>culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households with Land</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>81.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>78.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households without Land</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>95.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977-78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households with Land</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>79.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households without Land</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>93.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>91.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>94.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Distribution of days of employment has been computed from days of employment per usually employed worker for 1974-75, while it has been computed from person days per day of gainfully employed usual status workers for 1977-78.

2. NSSO, 32nd Round, 1977-78, Number 301/3, Employment and Unemployment of Rural Labour Households, Table 4.2

(1) daily money wage earnings, (2) the quantum of employment available per worker in an agricultural year and (3) the consumer price index of agricultural labourers over the concerned period. The interaction among these three variables results in the real annual earnings of labour households. None of these three
individual factor can be used as a proxy for long term trends in the real earnings and economic well-being of the agricultural labourers. In this section the position of agricultural labourers over time in terms of money and real average daily wage and annual wage earnings is studied.

**Average Daily Money and Real Wage Earnings for All Agricultural Operations**

The average daily money wage earnings for all agricultural operations by agricultural labourers in rural labour households increased steadily and sharply between 1956-57 and 1977-78 for both males and females at the all India level and for all states (Table 3.8). This increase was much slower during 1964-65 to 1974-75 than during the entire period. However, the average daily money wage earnings of females increased slightly faster than male wage earnings at the all India level and in most states during all the periods.

The sharp increase in average daily money wage earnings during the period of study reflects mainly the price changes. The magnitude of the increase shrinks sharply when the wage figures are deflated by the consumer price index for agricultural labourers (CPIAL) (Table 3.9).

---

1/ Average daily money wage earning in 1956-57 referred to casual agricultural labourers in agricultural labour households only. The attached agricultural labourers were paid for the duration of the working season or the contract agreement period and their daily wage would be difficult to estimate.
### Table 3.8

**Average Daily Wage Earnings (Rs.) of Adult Males and Females of Rural Labour Households in all Agricultural Operations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Average Daily Money Wage Earnings</th>
<th>Average Daily Real Wage Earnings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Punjab/Haryana</td>
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<td>2.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>0.8</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
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<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
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**Adult Female**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>Average Daily Money Wage Earnings</th>
<th>Average Daily Real Wage Earnings</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
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<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
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<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab/Haryana</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
1. 1956-57 data refer to wages of casual labourers in agriculture in all agricultural labour households.
2. In 1956-57 both Gujarat and Maharashtra have been deflated by the combined index for Maharashtra in that year.

**Sources:**
2. Labour Bureau, RLE 1963-65, Final Report, Table 4.1 and 8.8
3. Labour Bureau, RLE 1974-75, Summary Report on Wages and Earnings and Employment and Unemployment of Rural Labour Households, Table 2 (b) (i);
4. NSSO, 32nd Round, 1977-78, Number 301/2, Wages and Earnings of Rural Labour Households, Table 5.
Table 3.9

Consumer Price Index Numbers (General) for Agricultural Labourers

(Base year: 1960-61=10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All India</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>323</td>
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<td>88</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab (including Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh)</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>499</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1. 1956-57-Average for last 4 months in 1956 beginning September
2. 1964-65-Ten month’s average of indices for the period September 1964 to June 1965
3. Annual Indices relate to the agricultural year (July-June).

2. Agricultural Situation in India, Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Government of India.

The consumer price index rose between 1956-57 and 1974-75 with a sharp rise between 1964-65 and 1974-75, and then dropped in 1977-78. This is true for all India and all states. Besides the general inflationary factors affecting this increase in price, the sharp rise in 1974-75 and the fall in 1977-78 can be explained at least partly by the variations in total agricultural production during these years. In a year of scarce agricultural output, prices rose considerably whereas in 1977-78, with a good agricultural output, the prices dropped.
The average daily real wage earnings of male agricultural labourers deflated by the CPIAL did not show a sharp rise (Table 3.8). In fact, between 1964-65 and 1974-75 daily real wage earnings of adult males actually fell at the all India level and in all states except Karnataka, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. In other words, the increase in average daily money wage earnings was less than the increase in prices during this period. In 1977-78 with the fall in prices, daily real wage earnings rose above the 1964-65 level for the country as a whole and all states except Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal.

Average daily real wage earnings of female agricultural labourers remained stagnant between 1964-65 and 1974-75 at the all India level and in Karnataka and Punjab. It rose during the period in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh and fell in the other eight states. Evidently, the increase in female daily money wage earnings equalled the price rise during this period at the all India level and in Karnataka and Punjab, while the increase was greater than the price increase in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh. In 1977-78, daily real wage earnings rose above the 1964-65 level for the country as a whole and in all states.

Annual Money and Real Wage Earnings Per Agricultural Labourer

The annual money wage earnings per agricultural labourer in rural labour households\(^1\) have been computed both in money

\(^1\) Annual Wage Earnings (money and real) in 1956-57 refer to agricultural labourers in agricultural labour households alone.
and real terms by multiplying the average daily wage earnings (money and real) by the full days of agricultural employment available per worker in the agricultural year.

Annual money wage earnings per agricultural labour rose steadily and sharply between 1956-57 and 1977-78 for both males and females in all states (Table 3.10). This increase was, however, much slower between 1964-65 and 1974-75 due to slower pace of increase in average daily money wage earnings and fall in days of employment per worker during this period.

Annual real wage earnings per agricultural labourer, both male and female, increased at a much slower pace than money earnings (Table 3.10). In fact, it fell between 1964-65 and 1974-75 and rose again in 1977-78 at the all India level and in most states. The sharp increase in the prices and fall in days of agricultural employment per worker between 1964-65 and 1974-75 led to a deterioration in the annual real wage earnings in 1974-75. However, the rise in agricultural output and the fall in prices in 1977-78 together with increased availability of employment appear to have boosted the real wage earnings of agricultural labourers in that year.

At the level of the states, while in general there is a decline in the employment and economic condition of agricultural labourers between 1964-65 and 1974-75, Uttar Pradesh is the only state which registers an increase in male and female days of wage paid employment, daily and annual wage earnings from
agriculture in both money and real terms during this period. It was observed earlier (in Chapter 2) that Uttar Pradesh was the only state which showed relative stability in the proportion of agricultural labourer households over the period.

**Average Annual Household Income (Money & Real) of Rural Labour Households**

The earnings discussed so far refer to wage earnings from agricultural labour only. As noted earlier in the case of the days of employment, the agricultural labourers in labour households also engaged themselves in non-agricultural labour and self employment.

The various inquiries collected information on the income received by the household from sources other than wage labour. Though this information is not available separately by sex, the average annual household income of labour households (both money and real) by source would provide some insight into the adjustments made within a labour household to take care of variations in employment availability and incomes from year to year. The entry of women in these households into the labour force would also be dependent on the level of household income.

1/ In 1977-78 the RLE was not conducted separately and information was collected for a larger sample of labour households in rural areas with the Employment-Unemployment Survey of the 32nd Round. The idea of collecting information on income of these households was, however, dropped. Hence data on total annual income of labour households were available only for 1956-57, 1964-65 and 1974-75. In 1974-75 the data on income by source are available only at the all India level.
### Table 3.10

**Annual Wage Earnings (%) per Adult Male and Female Agricultural Labour of Rural Labour Households in all Agricultural Operations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adult Male</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All India</td>
<td>186 309 626 800 217 169 24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>184 244 511 733 209 194 159 24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>173 276 599 933 186 183 153 27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>211 416 660 955 190 311 207 33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>166 275 583 180 188 168 16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>200 358 812 1160 215 272 212 36</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>163 235 477 674 165 168 114 19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>178 355 581 723 160 236 158 22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>140 299 428 678 142 209 107 19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab/Haryana</td>
<td>453 601 1212 1641 483 431 358 49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>175 339 916 838 183 257 247 26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>145 271 542 751 197 134 24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>160 209 639 765 128 169 22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>267 485 732 1031 275 356 216 32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adult Female</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All India</td>
<td>83 143 310 497 100 84 154</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>82 91 267 427 92 72 82 14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>92 150 316 649 98 99 80 18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>107 297 391 691 97 214 123 24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>86 151 311 97 103 91 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>91 185 448 738 97 140 116 23</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>85 126 333 429 85 90 80 12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>83 140 274 368 75 93 75 11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>50 144 202 374 50 100 51 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab/Haryana</td>
<td>193 240 542 1100 205 172 161 33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>85 163 414 588 88 124 113 18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>68 123 273 409 88 67 67</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>68 96 300 425 88 79 79 12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>165 280 419 753 170 206 124 234</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** 1/ Refer to all agricultural labour households  
**Source:** Computed from Tables 3.4 and 3.8
Non-wage income constitutes less than 20 per cent of the total annual household income of these households in the various years (Table 3.11). The percentage of non-wage income however, fluctuates and is the highest in 1974-75. This is possible in view of the absolute and relative decline in the availability of wage employment in agriculture per agricultural labourer (both male and female) in 1974-75 as compared to the previous normal year 1964-65. Thus, the reduction in wage income is at least partly compensated by the increase in non-wage income in these households in a year of poor agricultural output.

Table 3.11
Percentage of Non-wage Income and Non-Agricultural Income in Rural Labour Households, All India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Non-wage income</th>
<th>Non-agricultural income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974-75</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>35.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: 1. Wage income includes manual labour in agriculture and non-agriculture and non-manual labour. The latter is given separately in 1963-64 and 1974-75.
2. Non-agricultural income refers to all activities other than crop cultivation.
3. RLE 1964-65 does not give income from manual labour separately for agriculture and non-agriculture. The proportion of income from non-agricultural manual labour in 1964-65 is assumed to be same as in 1956-57 the earlier normal agricultural year.
4. Income received from raising and maintenance of livestock/poultry is given separately in 1974-75. This has been included in non-agricultural income on the assumption that in the previous two enquiries it was included in other sources (1956-57) or household enterprise other than farming (1964-65).

2. Labour Bureau, RLE, 1963-65, Final Report, Table 5.1
3. Labour Bureau, RLE, 1974-75, Summary Report on Income and Consumption Expenditure of Rural Labour Household, Table 2.2
The dependence of rural labour households on agriculture for their livelihood also reduced considerably over the period (Table 3.11). While about 20 per cent of the average annual household income came from other than crop cultivation in 1956-57 and 1964-65, the proportion rose to nearly 35 per cent in 1974-75. It is likely that this peculiarly of this particular year of poor agricultural output when these households had to find other sources of income.

The average annual household income in money terms increased steadily over the three years at the all India level and in all states (Table 3.12). While it was observed earlier that the average annual real wage earnings from agriculture fell in 1974-75 for both male and female agricultural labourers, it is interesting that average annual real household income of rural labour households from all sources increased between 1963-64 and 1974-75 (Table 3.13). This would imply that at least some of the reduction of wage incomes from agriculture in real terms in a poor agricultural year is compensated by other sources such as non-wage and non-agricultural activities (Laxminarayan, 1977). While it is not possible to identify the role of scarcity relief in providing non-agricultural income to these households in a poor agricultural year, it was observed earlier that a larger proportion of agricultural labourers in labour households without land engaged in non-agricultural wage work in this year. It is likely that such work was obtained on public work schemes.
It was observed earlier that female EPRs were much higher in 1974-75 than in the other years. It would be interesting to see if there is any relation between the average annual household income (both money and real) and female PRs when viewed across states, though the data at the state level is too aggregative. Average annual household income in money terms is negatively correlated with male EPRs in both 1964-65 and 1974-75 (correlation coefficient was -0.62 and -0.50 significant at five per cent level). They are, however, significantly negatively associated with female EPRs in 1974-75 only (correlation coefficient was -0.52 also significant at five per cent level). In other words, while the entry of females into the work force is not associated with average annual income of the labour households in a normal agricultural year, states with lower average household incomes have higher female EPRs in a year of agricultural scarcity. In order to control for differences in price levels across states, the average annual real household income of labour households is correlated with the EPRs in the two years. Here again female EPRs are significantly negatively correlated only in 1974-75 (correlation coefficient was -0.48 significant at five per cent level). Thus, at the state level the entry of women into the work force in

1/ There is a strong negative correlation between the average household income (both money and real) of agricultural labour households and EPRs of both sexes together in 1956-57 (correlation coefficient was -0.62 and -0.60 respectively, significant at five per cent level).
**Table 3.12**

Average Annual Household Income of Rural Labour Households From All Sources (Rupees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>1956-57</th>
<th>1963-64</th>
<th>1974-75</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All India</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>659</td>
<td>1523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>654</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>477</td>
<td>997</td>
<td>2266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>1790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>891</td>
<td>2171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>816</td>
<td>1863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>1592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>1300</td>
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<tr>
<td>Punjab/Haryana</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>896</td>
<td>2970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>1158</td>
<td>2367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>1721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1935</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Estimates for Gujarat and Maharashtra 1956-57 have been obtained from Eleventh and Twelfth Rounds of the NSS. It has been adjusted for the difference between the estimates in the NSS Report and the second ALE Report. They refer to agricultural labour households only.

Source: 1. NSO, 11th and 12th Rounds, 1956-57, Number 33, Tables with notes on Wages, Employment, Income and Indebtedness of Agricultural Labour Households in Rural Areas, Table 11.


3. Same as sources 2 and 3 in Table 3.11

labour households is associated with the average annual household income, both money and real in 1974-75. Besides, increased dependence on non-wage and non-agricultural sources of income in an agriculturally poor year, it is likely that greater participation of women in the work force is one of the strategies adopted by the labour households in rural areas to prevent reduction in their real incomes.
Table 3.13
Average Annual Real Household Income of Rural Labour Households From All Sources (Rupees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>1956-57</th>
<th>1963-64</th>
<th>1974-75</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All India</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>520</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>572</td>
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Source: Computed from Table 3.9 and 3.12

There is, however, an 'ecological fallacy' involved in this argument. To infer from a negative correlation between the average annual household income and EPRs, at the state level, that women from low income labour households are forced to join the work force in an agriculturally poor year is not quite correct. Data are required at the household level in order to make such an inference. However 'ecological correlations' have their use in studying socio-economic problems. Although it is not valid mechanically to apply conclusions reached at one level of aggregation to another level -magnitude, sign and significance of ecological correlations can be fruitful in generating hypotheses which can be tested at other levels. Eric Allardt, among others, has richly stressed the informative value of aggregate data, even when they are not as good as
'evidence' " (Dasgupta, 1977). Therefore, though one cannot come to any definite conclusion on this issue on the basis of such aggregative data, this can be put forward as one interesting hypothesis that needs to be tested at the micro level.

Conclusions

Labour force participation, in terms of earner population ratios, in agricultural and/or rural labour households did not show a steady increase over the period as was expected. Year to year fluctuations in total agricultural production and their impact on the income levels, appear to influence the labour participation, particularly of females. Thus, in 1974-75, a year of poor agricultural output, female earner population ratios rose much more than male earner population ratios, while in 1977-78, an exceptionally good agricultural year, female earner population ratios declined even below the earlier normal year, 1964-65.

While earner population ratios reflect only the total supply of agricultural labourers, the actual intensity of employment available to them is given by the full days of agricultural employment per agricultural labourer. In a particular year, the latter is the net result of the demand for labour, dependent on the total agricultural output, and the supply of labour. Thus, male and female days of employment per agricultural labourer were low in 1974-75, a year of low
agricultural output and increased earner population ratios.

In 1977-78, a year of exceptionally good harvest, a significant proportion of female evidently withdrew from the work force, so that those who remained in the work force obtained work for a larger number of days than in the earlier normal year. Similar changes were observed for male agricultural labourers also although in relative terms these changes were smaller than in the case of female agricultural labourers.

On the economic front, while the average daily money wage earnings and the annual money wage earnings per agricultural labourer rose steadily and sharply, the advantages of this increase were neutralized by and probably reflected essentially the rising consumer prices. The vagaries of the monsoon and fluctuating agricultural output also affected the economic position of agricultural labourers. The increase in average daily real wage earnings of male and female agricultural labourers over the entire period of study was nominal, with a fall in the year of agricultural scarcity, 1974-75. The increase in average daily and annual money wage earnings was also much slower in the period 1964-65 to 1974-75. Annual real wage earnings per agricultural labourer fell in 1974-75, though they picked up again in 1977-78.

In the context of the debate on the changing conditions of agricultural labourers one might be tempted to conclude that there was an improvement in the economic condition of agricultural labourers during the period of study. However,
the year to year fluctuations in real earnings of these labourers indicate their vulnerability. Variations in total agricultural output and consumer prices have an immedial effect on the standard of living of this section of the population who are on the threshold of poverty.

It also needs to be noted that the choice of end points for comparison determines the conclusions regarding the changes (improvement or deterioration) in the economic situation of agricultural labourers. The links between aggregate output, price levels and standard of living of labour households and their impact on employment and incomes of agricultural labourers need to be borne in mind while drawing any conclusions using data on only two time points.

It appears odd that female annual money and real wage earnings rose faster than those of males during the various periods. This is due to the fact that (a) the average daily money wage earnings of females rose faster than those of males in all periods, (b) in 1977-78, perhaps due to the withdrawal of female workers, the days of employment per female agricultural labourer rose above the 1964-65 level, while those for males fell below the 1964-65 level. Thus, while a greater increase in female annual earnings may appear as an improvement in the female economic position, one must keep in mind the fact that the absolute female average earnings have been far below the male earnings since 1956-57 and the differences have been maintained over the two decades (Seal, 1981).
Moreover, the entry and exit of women from the work force appear to be dependent on the fluctuating income levels of the household. To the extent that this is true, the decision to participate in the work force is probably outside the control of women workers themselves. The primary consideration seems to be the economic benefits for the household as a whole, whose situation is essentially unstable from year to year.
### Appendix Table III.1

**Full Days of Wage Paid Employment Per Agricultural Labourer in Rural Labour Households**

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### Appendix Table III.1 contd.

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**Note:** Figures in parenthesis refer to percentage to the total days of agricultural employment in that year

**Source:**
1. Same as in Table 3.5
2. Labour Bureau, RLE, 1974-75, Final Report on Employment and Unemployment of Rural Labour Households, Part II, Supplement, Table 3.4 b(1).