ABSTRACT

The green revolution almost affected each and every aspect of households concerned with agriculture sector. It is generally held that production and productivity of Punjab agriculture increased manifold. But all the sections related to agriculture sector were not equally benefited. Agricultural labour did not get its due share in the increased income of the agriculture sector. Consequently, the local agricultural labour started withdrawing from agriculture sector and shifted to non-agricultural occupations to find livelihood or better livelihood. Hence, Bathinda and Jalandhar districts of Punjab state were chosen for studying the selected theme on the basis of various socio-economic parameters. Data were collected by stratified random sampling technique.

In this study, it has been tried to know the structure of employment of withdrawn agricultural labour. This study also throws light on main causes of occupational change by agricultural labour and examines the various types and locations of new occupations joined by them. Besides, an attempt has also been made to know the different attributes of withdrawn agricultural labour.

As regards to the structure of employment of withdrawn agricultural labour households (WALHs), the study highlights that the tilt of most of the withdrawn labour towards the categories of employment, i.e., ‘independent occupations started without taking financial help’ and ‘others’, which include masons, helpers (labourers) to mason, drivers of hired taxies, helpers in shops, in small repairing units, etc. in both the districts taken together. It resulted in relatively increasing the casualisation of labour employment in the new occupations as compared to the old one.

It is found that in Jalandhar district, being relatively developed (i.e., on the basis of higher literacy ratio, industrial set up, etc.) the proportion of occupational change was found to be higher than Bathinda district. Further, in each district, proximity to nearby city became a stimulant for this change.

There remained major role of push factors (‘low rate of wages’, seasonal unemployment’, problem of payment, etc.) behind the occupational
change of local agricultural labour, whereas, some pull factors (worker education and reservation in Government sector, etc.) also contributed in this change but they were found to be more stimulating in Jalandhar district as compared to Bathinda district. Since the literacy rate of labourers in the former district was observed more than that of labourers in later district.

A higher proportion of commuters as compared to the withdrawn labour households working in their native villages indicate that there were not adequate avenues of employment in non-agriculture sector in their native villages.

The withdrawn labour households could not satisfy the terms of credit to get credit from formal sources due to lack of knowledge, inadequacy of documents and weak economic status, hence, they preferred to seek help from their ‘relatives and friends’.

It is found that education level, age at the time of occupational change, marital status and caste (SCs) of withdrawn agricultural labourers remained major attributes during their occupational change. Out of these, education attained by them served as pull factor. While age at the time of occupational change and marital status of workers worked as push factors.

Further, as regards to source of information of new occupation, the results reveal that the sources of information, i.e., ‘relatives’ and ‘friends’ emerged as the highest among all the other sources.

Since there is no more increased intake of labour in agriculture sector and the distressed labour is compelled to leave it. There is need to create new avenues of employment either in agriculture sector itself by the way of diversification or in non-agricultural sector in rural areas. Occupations related to rural artisans should be re-established and/or promoted with the help of Government and its institutions as with the entry of capitalist relations in village economy, the occupations of these artisans almost have been destroyed due to competition of their products with the products of large/foreign big companies. In addition, there should be development of cottage and small scale industries. These cottage and small scale units based on agricultural products should be promoted providing them with the required equipment and training, i.e., these units would develop both
backward and forward linkages in rural areas. The government should help them in getting financial assistance from various financial institutions at low interest rates. Besides, the government should make the procedure and terms of credit, simple and approachable for illiterate and/or less educated households as well as for the development of production units. Further, the government should concentrate on generating employment opportunities along with keeping proper control on private units for better working conditions of labour employment in the economy, even though Government of India had adopted the liberalization/privatization policy.