PART - II

FIELD STUDY
MAP OF ASSAM

RAILWAY
ROAD
HEAD QTR

GOURIPUR
MANGALDOI
JURIA
BORPETA
CHAPTER - I
SELECTED AREAS AND SAMPLE CULTIVATORS

I. Introduction:

Areas: For the purpose of this study, four districts of Assam were selected. These districts are Goalpara, Kamrup, Nowgong and Darrang. Both autumn paddy and jute are cultivated in these four districts. Further, these two crops act as competitive crop for each other. Therefore, to make the sample more representative, cultivating households were selected from all these four districts. Autumn paddy (Ahu) is a food crop but jute is a cash crop. Jute is cultivated by the farmer mainly for the purpose of meeting his cash needs.

 Villages: Four villages were selected from all the four districts. One village was selected from each district. Each village was selected from a mauza which is considered to be 'good' in respect of cultivation of both autumn paddy and jute.

The village Beguntali is selected from Gerabari mauza of Goalpara district. The village Bhera is located in Jonia mauza of Kamrup district. The other two villages namely, Mhakhunda and Baghpuri Chapari are situated within Juria and Rangamati mauzas of Nowgong and Darrang districts respectively.
Location and communication : The village Beguntali is located in Gerabari mauza under Dhubri sub-division of the Goalpara district. The village is situated at a distance of about 8 kilometres from Dhubri. Gouripur is the nearest market for the farmers of this village. Gouripur is one of the important assembling and baling centre of jute in Assam. The village is located on the southern bank of the river Gadadhari. Gouripur is located on the northern bank of this river. Gouripur is linked with Dhubri, the district headquarter both by road and railway, the railway station is on the Fakiragram-Dhubri branch line of the North-East Frontier Railway.

The village Bhera is situated at a distance of four kilometres from Barpeta town, and is in Jonia mauza under Barpeta sub-division. Barpeta is the nearest market for this village. Barpeta is an important assembling and baling point of jute in Kamrup district. The village Bhera is located at a distance of about 106 kilometres from Gauhati, the district headquarter. The village is linked with Barpeta by a motorable road. Barpeta is fed by the Barpeta Road Railway station under the North-East Frontier Railway. It has a very convenient road link with Gauhati.

The village Baghpuri Chapari is located in Rangamati mauza of Mongaldoi sub-division under Pargang district. The village is located at a distance of about 113 kilometres from Tespur,
the district headquarter and is connected with both Tespur and Gauhati by road. Mongoldoi is the nearest market for the village and is also fed by Tangla railway station under Rongia-Mikongchelek branch line of the North-East Frontier Railway.

The village Adhakhunda is situated in Juria Tazua under Nowgong sub-division of Nowgong district. The village is located at a distance of about 10 kilometres from Nowgong, the district headquarter of Nowgong district. Juria is the nearest market for the village. Juria is an important market for paddy and jute and feeds the terminal market of Nowgong. Juria is linked with Nowgong town both by road and railway. It is fed by the Chaparmukh-Birabari branch line of the North-East Frontier Railway.

Population: A study on the population characteristics of the sample farm households reveal some important facts. The total number of population of the sample households stands at 1,530. The Table II-1.2. shows the number of population of the sample households under different villages surveyed. The villages covered under the study are thickly populated. The total number of population of 200 sample households was 1,530. It indicates that the average population of each household is more than 7. This number of population is too high for one household considering their economic position. Because on the one hand, there is the pressure of continuous
growth of population while on the other hand, total land under cultivation remains constant. Thus there emerges subdivision and fragmentation of land. Therefore, the number of population plays a very important role in the economy of farm households. It may be observed that a household with small number of members may be a surplus producer while a household with larger number of members with the same size of operational holding becomes a deficit producer.

soil Type: The soil of the areas surveyed is very fertile and alluvial. These were mostly low-lying land. Therefore, the soil is very suitable for cultivation of both autumn paddy and jute. Besides these, there are some upland areas in the villages and these land is used for the cultivation of mustard seeds, pulses and other crops.

The greater part of the areas under study has alluvial soil which consists of a mixture of clay and sand. The alluvial soil of the four districts is very suitable for jute cultivation. Jute is the most important cash crop of the cultivators. It is also a good foreign exchange earner. There is some variation in the mixture of clay and sand in different areas. There is pure sand on the bank of the rivers but in the rest of the areas the soil consists of a greater proportion of stiff clay than pure sand. Paddy is grown in the alluvial plains. Further, there are swampy natural depression called 'Deels' and marshes in different places.
Irrigation: It has been found that the sample cultivators did not practise irrigation system. In fact, they had no irrigated land. The whole of Assam is fed by heavy rainfall during the summer season. Besides, the river Brahmaputra has rendered the soil fertile on both the northern and southern banks of the river. There are many small rivers in Assam which feed the agricultural land of the state.

It has been observed that the sampled farming households had neither public nor private source of irrigation. In the whole of Assam, the provisions of irrigation facilities are very limited. Although some irrigation projects are started only recently, its coverage of irrigated land is very limited.

To sum up, the irrigation projects started in Assam could not bring satisfactory response from farmers to practise modern irrigation systems. Besides, the majority of the farmers feel that irrigation is not essential for farming operation in Assam. This may be due to the high fertility of the soil of Assam.

II. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF SAMPLE FARMERS:

Caste composition:
Community-wise distribution of the sample farmers is shown in the Table II-1.2.

The selected households represent different communities of the areas. The Table shows that out of 200 sample agricultural households 53 are Hindus, 145 belong to Islam and
2 are Tribal (Boro). Thus, it is apparent that Muslim, Hindu and Tribal (Boro) farming households constitute 72.5%, 26.6% and 1% of the sample respectively.

Table II-l.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Tribal (Boro)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Beguntoli</td>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Bhera</td>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Baghpuri Chapari</td>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Adakhuda Nowgong</td>
<td>Nowgong</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It may be mentioned here that the sample does not proportionately represent the communitywise distribution of the total population for the whole state of Assam. In the context of selection of farmers, this might appear to be strange.

The criteria followed for the selection of the areas for the purpose of this study was based on the degree of agricultural progressiveness. The progressiveness was based on the degree of adoption of commercial crop i.e. jute besides autumn paddy, and increased income from commercialization of agriculture. The areas selected for this study come under this category.
Educational status of Farming population:
The educational status of the heads of the households is quite satisfactory. Only 15% of the farmers in the whole sample are illiterate. But the educational attainment of the farmers, however, is not very high because 50% of them have educational attainment below primary standard. Not a single head of the households is found to be a graduate.

The educational attainment of the adult population of the sample farming households is shown in Table II-1.3.

Table II.3
Educational status of the Adult population
(Above 14 years of age)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational status</th>
<th>Number of persons</th>
<th>Percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Illiterate</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Below Primary level</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>17.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Class II to below 6th level</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>11.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 6th to Below 10th level</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. S.L.C. passed</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Preparatory to University</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Graduates</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>930</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Table shows that the educational attainment of the population of above 14 years of age is satisfactory. 25% of the population of the sample are illiterate. It is interesting to
note that 35% of the sample have educational level between 6th to 10th standard. There are 18 graduates in the sample. Most of them serve as school teachers while some of them are serving in some offices of the state Government.

**Distribution of the population according to Age-groups**: The total number of population of 200 sample farming households is 1,530. The distribution of total population according to different age-groups is shown in the Table II-1.4.

**Table II-1.4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age-Groups (Years)</th>
<th>Number of population</th>
<th>Percentage of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Below 14</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. 14 to 25</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. 25 to 35</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 35 to 45</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 45 to 55</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 55 and above</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,530</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Table indicates that out of the total population of the sample 37% are below the age of 14 years. Similarly, the population within the age-group of 14 years to 35 years represent 35% of the sample. However, there is a sharp fall in the percentage of population above the age of 45. The
persons within the age-group of 46 to 55 form as low as 9% of the sample, while those above the age of 55 years represent only 5% of the entire sample. However, it is very interesting to note that the potential working force of the population constituted 58% of the sample, being in the age-group of 14 to 55.

Cropping Pattern:
The pattern of cropping in the areas surveyed is discussed below.
The pattern of cropping indicates that paddy is the most important and major crop of the areas and covers 61.99% of the total cropped area. Autumn paddy occupies 55.77% of the total area under cultivation. The second important crop is jute which covers 17.70% of the total cropped area. Oilseeds (mainly mustard seed) cover 11.05% of the total cropped area. Other Pulses (Rabi) occupy 9.26% of the cropped area.

However, it is observed that there are three varieties of paddy namely, Autumn paddy (Ahu), winter paddy (Gali) and spring paddy (Boro). There are many other varieties of food crops and cash crops but the area under these crops have not been taken into account because each of these crops occupies very negligible portion of the total cropped area. Cropping pattern of the sample farmers under different farm-size groups is analysed in detail in chapter II of the Part II.
of this dissertation.

**Availability of Agricultural Labour**:

It has been found during the field study that all the heads of the sampled cultivating households are directly engaged in agricultural activities. However, there are some big farmers or even medium farmers who engage agricultural labourers for the purpose of their farming operation. The sample farmers have no difficulty in procuring agricultural labourers as these labourers are available at or around their villages.

It is to be noted that a completely distinct class of agricultural labour households completely detached from land is almost an uncommon phenomenon in Assam. Those households which cannot keep their livelihood from the income of land have to take resort to wage-labour as an additional source of income for them. It is therefore, necessary for these households to work as wage-labour. The households of these groups possess land not exceeding 2.50 acres in general. Further, some of the households had no land at all. It is therefore, obvious that the extent of self-employment in their land is not possible for which they become wage-labour.

**Classification of Agricultural Labour**:

The strict classification of labourers of these sampled villages into different categories is not possible because...
A labour may be employed as different types of labour during different seasons. A labour may be employed as agricultural labour during the agricultural season and as non-farming labour in the lean season. However, it is to be borne in mind that the classification should be made on the basis of income from each of the different sources.

On the basis of the said principle, the agricultural labour of the villages studied may be classified into:

(i) Permanent agricultural labour having employment of permanent nature,
(ii) Casual agricultural labour employed on daily wage basis.

Besides these, there are other types of labour like non-agricultural casual labour, domestic labour and other non-agricultural labour all of whom cannot be included under agricultural labour.

**Markets and Market Intelligence**

The markets studied for the purpose of this project are Gouripur in Goalpara district, Barpeta in Kamrup district, Mongaldoi in Darrang district and Juria in Nowgong district about which descriptions are already given in the preceding discussions. All these markets are located near the villages in their respective districts. A detailed discussion regarding the markets is incorporated in the Chapter IV "Geographical Setting and Market Structure" in the Part I of this thesis.
Practically, there is no organised agency for the dissemination of market intelligence to the public and trading community. The most important traditional channel of market intelligence is personal contact. People rely heavily on information gathered through personal contacts. Moreover, crop conditions and prices are reported in newspapers and broadcast on the radio.

In a primary market, a trader collects firsthand reports about crop conditions in his area by holding talks with cultivators from the nearby villages, who often visit the market. A trader in terminal markets sends his agents to various primary markets or collects information about crop conditions and demand conditions from the trader in primary markets. Establishment of such direct contacts enables them to arrive at a mutual understanding about the exchange of market information. This has become a long traditional practice of the foodgrain trade. Traders of primary and terminal markets continue their contact through telephone calls, letters etc. The farmer collects firsthand information about prices and related matters from co-villagers and village traders or village 'mehajans.

It has been observed that the extent of market orientation of agriculture in the villages surveyed is, at least, satisfactory. Many of the sampled farming households, particularly the Muslim farmers supply vegetables, poultry and eggs to the nearby markets. They also keep ducks and poultry
as a business proposition. Some of them also engage themselves during the recreation on bamboo and cane-works. At present, they are found in preparation of furniture made of bamboo and cane. Thus, these have been found to be the supplementary sources of their income for their livelihood.