Agric Res J **60** (5) : 775-778, *October* 2023
DOI No. 10.5958/2395-146X.2023.00110.2

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF A VILLAGE IN AGRICULTURALLY DOMINANT CENTRAL PUNJAB REGION

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Socio-economic change reflects changing aspects of the society at large and has implications for future development. The purpose of this study was to gauge the process, pattern and pace of changes taking place in rural society of Punjab. The village studies are carried out with varied objectives pertaining to rural societies in the world like household income (Seini and Nyanteng, 2003), farming systems (Gangwar, 2004; Nithya *et al.,* 2018), ecological uncertainty and associated risk (Singh and Sidhu, 2004), pattern of rural development (Winter *et al.*, 2010), employment and earnings (Bhoumik, 2007), farm vs. non-farm households (Toor *et al.,* 2014), etc. In this light, the ' survey study' of 'Sohian' village in Ludhiana district was undertaken to set up as base line survey, which has brought out the basic profile of the village, implementation of development schemes along with issues and perceptions on various aspects.

Punjab is considered an agriculturally developed state having three distinct agro – climatic zones. The Central zone is having the largest proportion of area (62%) and having the dominant paddy-wheat rotation. Thus, it was pertinent to select a village for the study which reflects the dominant characteristics of state agriculture. Considering this, a village named ' Sohian' falling in Jagraon block of Ludhiana district was selected for the study keeping in view the moderate size of area and population, location, approachability, thus representing the zone.

Two schedules were designed to undertake the village survey. The first one was at the village level to collect information about overall status of the village by personally visiting the households. The collected data was supplemented with some secondary information obtained from Economic and Statistical Organization, Ludhiana. Second aspect of the survey was based on 'group discussions' which covered the issues related to temporal changes in various spheres along with general perceptions of the villagers.

The current village site was earlier an uninhabited area covered under forests. Ancestors of village migrated from Bhanbora-Bhanbori village falling in Malerkotla tehsil of Sangrur district. These people were mainly belonging to Jat Sikh community with ' Sohi' surname/ caste, so the village got the name 'Sohian'. Sohian is located 48 km towards west from district headquarters Ludhiana. Geographically it is located at an altitude/elevation of 237 meters above sea level. The latitude 31.724481 and longitude 75.666576 are the geo-coordinates of the village.

Sohian features a humid sub-tropical climate with three defined seasons; summer, rainy and winter. On an average, it sees roughly 890 millimeters (35.6 inches) of precipitation annually. The average annual temperature is 24.2 ◦ C here. and average rainfall is about 587 millimeter per annum. There is no forest area except for the four acres under 'Kamb' trees which are used for making 'Rudrakhsh' beads. There is one pond in the village. Canal is at a distance of two kilometres from the village.

The official figures showed that number of households in the village has declined but total population of the village has steadily increased from 2452 in 2001 to 2714 in 2019. Male population has decreased, whereas that of females has increased. The scheduled caste population was found to be 34.71 per cent of total population in the village (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic profile of village Sohian

Particulars	2011*	2019
No of households	509	495
Male	1370	1242
Female	1249	1472
Total population	2619	2714
Child (0-6)	246 (9.39)	-
Male	134 (54.47)	-
Female	112 (45.53)	-
Scheduled Caste	909 (34.71)	-

Source: *Economic and statistical organization (ESO), Ludhiana

The village was found to be having almost equal proportion of 'general' category (48%) as well as scheduled caste category (45%) households. About 4 per cent households belonged to other backward castes/backward caste (OBC/BC) category and 2.82 per cent comprised of scheduled tribes (STs) mainly belonging to 'Gujjar' community.

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Date of receipt: 12.09. 2022, Date of acceptance: 31.10.2023

Table 2. Education profile of the village

Literacy Level	81.75%
Males	85.76%
Females	77.40%
Years of Establishment of School	1954
Number.of Teachers	16
Supporting Staff	04
Mid day meal Schemes	Yes
Other Private Schools	01
Coaching Centers	01

Source: Economic and statistical organization (ESO), Ludhiana

The village predominantly follows the Sikh religion, as about 96 per cent of the total households belonged to it irrespective of caste. There were only 6 Hindu households in the village and 14 (2.82%) Muslim households as well.

Education level is an important development criterion. As per the 2011 census, the village was having a high literacy rate of 81.75 per cent. 85.76 per cent of total male population was literate and for females it was 77.40 per cent. There are two government schools in the village, one is 'Primary' and the other is 'Senior Secondary' having three streams of 'Arts', 'Science' and 'Commerce'. There is also a private school in the close vicinity of the village. Mid-day

Occupational profile showed that villagers were predominately engaged in non-farm activities and about 37 per cent were having farm based activities as their main occupation. Only two per cent of the households were engaged in petty trade/shops and another two percent were doing caste based occupation/artisans like jeweller, carpenter etc. Five households were undertaking other works like; running of tempo/truck/ rickshaw etc. So, with changing times, people have started migrating to other towns of state/ country as well as abroad in search of greener pastures. In line with trend in Punjab, younger generation of the village is mainly migrating to Canada/ Australia/ New Zealand for study purposes. Members of scheduled caste households have also gone to Arab countries like UAE, Iraq and are employed in manual jobs. In all, 15 families were reported to have gone abroad in last 7-8 years, but none was found donating anything for the village. Two families have also settled down in nearby towns after their retirement. Ten families of the village were also undertaking agriculture in different parts of the state.

Total area of the village is 594.5 hectares or 1469 acres. Out of this about 202 acres are under non-agricultural use. So, about 1267 acres of land is under cultivation. The village is not having any fallow land and no area is under pastures. Whole of the cultivated area is under irrigation and source of irrigation is tubewells while about 98 acres is having canal irrigation (Table 3). The soil in the village is combination soil mix of sandy loam and clay loam type.

Table 3. Land utilization pattern and irrigation status of the village, 2018-19 (Acres)

Total geographical area	1469
Area under agricultural use	1267
Area under non-agricultural use	202
Area under forest/pastures	4
Waste land	-
Net irrigated area	1267
Gross irrigated area	2546
Area under canal irrigation	98
Area under Tube well irrigation	1169

Source: Economic and statistical organization (ESO), Ludhiana

As the village is lying in the central zone of the state, so cropping pattern mainly pertains to paddy in the Kharif season and wheat crop in the Rabi season. Also, 112 acres of gross cropped area was under fodder crops. As far as vegetables are concerned mainly potato is grown on 30 acres(Table 4). Leasing operations were also undertaken by the farmers. The prevailing land rent in the village was found to be Rs. 50000-52000 per acre per annum.

Table 4. Cropping pattern of the village 2017-18 (Acre)

Wheat	1209
Rice(Paddy)	1168
High yielding variety wheat area	1209
High yielding variety Rice(Paddy)	1168
Other crops – Vegetables	30
Fodder	112

Source: Economic and statistical organization (ESO), Ludhiana

Punjab is having capital intensive agricultural operations, majorly being mechanized. But this village was having majority of small land holders so, owning of machinery was found to be less in this village and custom hiring was a common practice. In all, there were 48 tractors in the village and 30 cultivators were there. Farmers were owning only small implements like plough and small tools used in cultivation .

Depth of ground water table in the village was reported to be at 85-90 feet in 2019. However, five years back it was about 60 feet. Dependence on tube wells for irrigation purpose could be the major cause coupled with scanty rainfall witnessed twice during the span of study. Increased cropping intensity has led to depletion of soil health. Farmers in the village indulge in higher fertilizer use to retain the productivity of crops. Pesticide use has increased over time. With declining

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population in the village, usage of FYM has declined over time.

The organic carbon content in the soil was reported in the range of 0.51-0.63 per cent, and is considered adequate for crop production. Major farming systems prevalent in the village were found to be peasant or family system. No cooperative or organic farms were present. Contract farming was being undertaken only in case of potato crop by few farm households. The only livestock enterprise found in the village was dairy. Major proportion of cattle comprised of buffaloes. All cows are cross-bred (HF).There were 3 commercial dairy units in the village along with households having 2-3 cattle for family milk consumption.

Wheat and paddy crops are being procured by the state/central agencies as per procurement system prevalent in the state. Potato crop is being sold to 2-3 private companies under contract farming or private traders purchase it. There exist three dairies in the village comprising of one cooperative and two private, one being of private milk giant 'Nestle'. These procure about 60 percent of the milk produced in the village. Cell phones are the main mode of communication. Only 15-20 households were having landline telephone connections in the village. Village has a link road connectivity to state highway. The public bus service is available within 5-10 kilometres. The nearest railway station is Chowki Maan which is 2.5 kilometres away. All the households are having bi-cycles, 80 per cent are owning scooters / motorbikes. Cars are owned by about 70 per cent of households and about 20-25 households are also having SUVs/ luxury cars.

Ration card is an official document to purchase subsidized food grains from Public Distribution System (PDS). Under National Food Security Act (NFSA), two types of ration cards are available for the households. Priority Household (PHH) ration cards and Antyodaya Anna Yojna (AAY) ration cards are issued to 'poorest poor' households. So, in the village there were about 400 PHH card holders and 6 AAY card holders. Except for food grains, no other type of assistance in financial terms was received by these card holders.

The village is having a panchayat since the time of independence. Now there are nine wards in the village, and Panchyat is having nine 'Panches' with 50 per cent representation of females. The village is having a multipurpose cooperative agricultural society since 1926, but was merged with that of neighboring village in 1978. There are 181 cultivators and 60 non-cultivators enrolled members from the village . The society is actively engaged in custom hiring of tools and implements.

There is one branch of State Bank of India providing banking services to the village. Post de-monetization, the number of zero balance accounts has increased in the bank. No organized market was found to be existing in the village except for scattered kirana shop, one shop dealing in clothes and three medicine shops. There is one medical sub-centre located in the village as well as three private registered medical practitioners. There is also one veterinary dispensary, but the facility is not on regular basis.

The whole village is having proper electricity connections with metered power supply. Drinking water is supplied in the village through the government tubewell fitted with RO system. All households are having tap water supply and use of hand pumps was not found. Public distribution system is operational in the village.

By and large people of the village live in Pucca houses except for the Gujjar community. The families of this scheduled tribe live in Kaccha huts. There is no major political establishment in the village. People have freedom to follow their political ideologies and are under no pressure from any group. All public welfare schemes launched by national/state Governments, namely MGNEREGA, PM-Kisan, Old-age Pension, Widow Pension, Mid-day Meal, Anganwari, etc. were operational in the village. There are three ICDS-Anganwari centers in the village. There is one big play ground but no public or private library is present. No major agro-processing unit is existing in the village except for the three flour mills. Three households have commercial dairy units and are selling milk to 'Nestle' after basic processing.

Villagers reported no biasedness on the basis of caste/ gender/political affiliation of individuals. Weather parameters have remained more or less stable in the village during the last five years. There was found no increase in incidence of diseases in the village during last five years. The villagers felt that economic condition of the people had deteriorated over time. The shrinking profit margins in major crops is the reason behind it. Trend of spending more on luxury vehicles with bank credit has increased the burden of indebtedness on the natives. Though the expenditure on social ceremonies has declined in recent years, as village panchayat passed some resolutions regarding it. The status of agriculture in terms of cropping pattern and productivity was reported to be same. The major change witnessed in the village was migration of youth to foreign shores mainly on study basis. Also, there has been increase in non-farm employment. But by and large there was no change in status of farm households. The major problem being faced by village is incidence of drug abuse and alcoholism. Another issue reported by the villagers was regarding stray animals. These animals cause major damage to standing crops.

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Some suggestions for the development/ benefit of the village also emerged in the discussions. These included improvement in the village Primary Health Centre (PHC) especially in terms of availability of medicines; initiating some public transport passing through the village; management of stray cattle to save the crop damage; and some measures to cut down the cost of cultivation and thus increasing profitability of agricultural households.

Authors' contribution

Conceptualization of research work and designing of experiments(AK,KV, JMS, SS); Execution of field/ lab study and data collection(AK,KV, JMS, SS); Data analysis and interpretation of results (AK,KV, JMS, SS); Preparation of manuscript (AK).

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