

Case Study

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## Socio-Economic Status of Tribal Farmers of Tinsukia District of Assam: A Case Study

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### ABSTRACT

#### Keywords

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The present study describes the Socio-economic Status of Tribal Farmers of Tinsukia district of Assam. The study area was Kakopathar and Margherita Blocks of the district. The information was collected on the basis of personal interview to each of the farmer through a questionnaire. A total sample of 800 farmers was selected randomly from thirty different villages of two blocks during 2015-16 and 2016-17. The study revealed that they are very poor farmers with low literacy and knowledge about agricultural methods and they grow only rice, tea and oranges and without any awareness about their improved management practices. By introducing facilities of modern technology, their socioeconomic standard can be increased.

### Introduction

Tinsukia is one of the administrative districts of Assam which is located in the northern part adjacent to Arunachal Pradesh. The district has a humid subtropical climate with summer, winter and monsoon forming the seasonal cycle. The major crops grown in the district are tea, oranges, ginger and paddy.

The district has total population of 1,327,929 with total number of 268598 household. The Literacy rate of the district is 70.92 per cent (Anonymous, 2015).

The tribals are socio-economically backward as compared to the non-tribals. A tribe is a social group usually with a definite area, dialect, cultural homogeneity and unifying social organization (Winick, 1956). It may include several sub groups, such as sibs or villages making up the tribe are linked through economic, social, religious, family. Xaxa (2001) rightly specifies that tribes in India are not a homogeneous category. They differ widely among themselves in respect of the regions they live in, languages they speak,

physical features they display, geographical terrain they inhabit, modes in which they make their living, levels of development at which they are placed and size of community they represent. The major communities of Tinsukia district of Assam are Tea tribes (Adivasi), Ahoms, Sutiya, Moran, Muttock, Singpho, Nepali etc. There are also few small tribes like Tai Phake, Khamyang, Nocte etc. Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for the overwhelming majority of the tribal population in the district. Majority of the tribes are engaged in agricultural and livestock rearing activities. The Sonowal Kacharis and Singpho are one of the indigenous ethnic group and major tribes of the North East part of India.

Data pertaining to the contribution of various economic activities among the tribal farmers is mandatory for any economic development programmes for the tribal farmers.

Though various studies on socio-economic conditions of farmers were carried out in India, studies are limited with reference to the tribal farmers. Their lands are dry, alienated and have no irrigation facilities. They do not utilize chemical fertilizers, improved seeds, pesticides etc. in their lands.

Tribal area agriculture is therefore somewhat different from other areas mainly on account of the difference in natural topography. And also the typical topography of undulating and hilly areas has made tribal area agriculture less profitable.

The present study reveals the socio economic status of the tribal farmers of the district with the following objectives:

To appraise the socio-economic condition of tribal farmers in Tinsukia district of Assam.

To study the existing cropping and resource use patterns to locate the specific socio-

economic weaknesses in their production organization.

To find the social constraints that inhibits the adoption of new technology.

### **Materials and Methods**

The study was conducted with a sample of 800 farmers of thirty different villages of Tinsukia district of Assam. A multistage purposive cum random sampling design was followed for selection of the respondents. The investigation was carried out with various problems faced by the tribal farmers in Kakopathar and Margherita blocks of the district.

The data were collected by personal interview method using both structural schedule and semi-structured interview during 2015-16 and 2016-17 by supplying the questionnaire mentioning in the Appendix-1 salient points.

After completion of survey, a total of 800 filled in questionnaire were received and were analyzed to find out the socio economic condition of the tribal farmers of the blocks.

### **Results and Discussion**

In the present study, it was observed that the tribals are socio-economically backward as compared to the non-tribals of the studied area. Agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for the overwhelming majority of the tribal population. So as to eradicate the problems of tribal people, it is necessary for the policy makers to identify and quantify the socio-economic factors which are inhibiting their growth and development. The tribals owing to their life style and community habits and habitats have not been able to keep pace with the modern society. Tribals are not as advanced as the people of rest of India. The base line information gathered as part of study is included in table 1.

**Table.1** Base line information at Kakopathar and Margherita block of Tinsukia District of Assam

Sl. No.	Component	Results	
		Kakopathar Block	Margherita Block
1	Average Population of the village	550	430
2	Average Family Structure	Nuclear 70.3% Joint 29.7%	Nuclear 68% Joint 32%
3	Average Educational Status of Family Members	Illiterate 15% High School 73% Graduate 7%	Illiterate 30% High School 70% Graduate 5%
4	Average Housing Conditions	Kachcha 80 % Pucca 20%	Kachcha 85 % Pucca 15%
5	Electricity Facility	Electrified 85.05 % Unelectrified 31.94%	Electrified 68.45 % Unelectrified 13.63%
6	Source of Water	Tube Well 18.05% Hand pump 61.11 % Pond 4.16% River 16.68%	Tube Well 12.05% Hand pump 41.11 % Pond 14.16% River 32.68%
7	Mode of Transportation	Two wheeler and Public transport	Two wheeler
8	Major Land Holdings	Landless 21.21% Marginal 18.89% Small 59.9%	Landless 28.76% Marginal 21.09% Small 50.15%
9	Source of Irrigation	Tube well 55.87% Pond 12% Other 32.13%	Tube well 48.76% Pond 37.41% Other 13.83%
10	Farm Mechanization	Tractor 12% Pump set 8% Sprayer 56% Others 14%	Tractor 10% Pump set 9% Sprayer 63% Others 18%
11	Livestock	Cow, Goat, Poultry and Duck	Cow, Goat, Poultry and Pig
12	Difficulties in Agriculture Improvement	Irrigation 40% Credit 20% Transport 15% Agriculture Knowledge 8% Labour 17%	Irrigation 52% Credit 25% Transport 12% Agriculture Knowledge 8% Labour 3%
13	Source of Agricultural Information	Extension staff, Mass Media and Relatives	Mass Media and Relatives
14	Sources of Credit Supply	Cooperative society	Nil
15	Cropping Pattern	Rice, tea and khasi mandarin	Tea and Khasi mandarin
16	Plant Protection	Use chemical	-
17	Marketing System of Agricultural Produce	Local traders Village market	Local traders Middle man Village market
18	Soil type	Sandy loam	Sandy loam Acidic
19	Average Pesticide used (/ha)	Very rarely	Very rarely
20	Knowledge about IPM	3%	1.5%



From the investigation it was observed that the average populations of Kakopather and Margherita blocks are 550 and 430, respectively. The majority of the farm families were nuclear in both the blocks. As per the education status of the villagers the illiterate percentage was observed 30% in Margherita block which is a bit more than the Kakopather block (15%). The major occupation of the tribal farmers was agriculture and livestock rearing. Majority of the land holdings are landless 21.21% and 28.76%, Marginal 18.89% and 21.09% and Small 59.9% and 50.15% in Margherita and Kakopather block, respectively. The cropping pattern of the studied area includes both rabi and kharif crops in which more than 50% of the total area is covered by tea. In Kakopather block rice, tea and orange are major crops whereas only tea and orange were grown in Margherita block. More than 85 percent and 68 percent households are electrified in Kakopather and Margherita, respectively. The sources of irrigation available in both the blocks were tube wells, ponds etc. Likewise, the livestock population in both the blocks

includes cow, goat, pig and poultry birds which were accounted more in Margherita. The major source of agricultural information in the studied area was extension staff, mass media and relatives. The co-operative societies were major source of credit supply in Kakopather area. However, no such source of credit supply was observed in Margherita. Use of plant protection measures to save the crops from pests and diseases was observed lower in both the blocks.

### **Suggestions**

Policy suggestions based on the findings from field study of tribal farmers are presented for consideration:

Educational facilities should be provided for the tribal people.

Positive steps should be taken to check the exploitation of tribals.

Good, reliable transport and communication facilities should be provided.

Multiple cropping and intercropping should be actively encouraged. The government must make major moves to create permanent assets with tribal farmers and provide infrastructural support for meeting input, credit and marketing needs.

Extension agencies must visit the villages and interact with farmers

Training should be provided to the tribals in different income generating activities.

Suitable steps should be taken by the Government so as to educate the tribal farmers about the importance of crop loan and crop insurance facility.

The role of middle man should be minimized for more benefit to the farmers.

If all the suggestions mentioned above are implemented in the tribal villages, the development of those backward areas can be

seen in near future. By introducing facilities of modern technology, their socioeconomic standard can be increased. Thus this weaker part of the society can be turned into the huge mass of human resource. However, further studies are required to know more about them.

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