

# Changing Agrarian structure and relations in Assam: A Review

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## Abstract:

*Any significant change in agrarian structure has an impact on the size distribution of land holdings. Similarly, distribution of land holding showing the no. of ownership and operational holdings and area operated along with the trends in tenancy of land reflect an agrarian structure prevailing in an economy which has a close bearing on its agricultural development and hence on the overall development of the economy. The size distribution of ownership holdings in India is characterized by predominance of landless households and marginal holdings. In case of both ownership and operational holdings, the data provided by the NSSO from 17<sup>th</sup> round onwards are on the comparable and is observed that the broad, highly skewed nature of size distribution of ownership holding has by and large remained unchanged overtime, notwithstanding the progressively downward shift in the distribution. Rise in the no. of operational holdings and marginalisation of land holding has become an important general feature of the size distribution of operational holding in India. Similarly, the degree of concentration in size distribution has increased since 1960-61, but the increase has slowed down since 1981-82 and may not be continuing. The economy of Assam is predominantly agrarian. Different agriculture census reports showing an increasing trend in the no. of operational holdings signifies the progressive fragmentation of operational holdings in the state and thus a declining trend in average size of holding from 1.47 hectare in 1970-71 to 1.11 hectare in 2005-06. Tenancy being a component of agrarian relations reflects the demand and supply position of land in agriculture. There has been a sharp increase in the share of leased-in area of marginal holdings during the period of 1971-72 to 1992, while that of other size group declined sharply. Sharecropping and fixed –rent tenancies are the main terms of lease in most of the states. In Assam, sharecropping is found to be the predominant form of tenancy. The present study is an attempt to review and analyse the existing land holding pattern and use in respect of both owned and operated along with the trends in the nature, extent and incidence of tenancy at national and state level especially with reference to the state of Assam. The study is based on secondary data which are*

*collected from different organisations such as NSSO and its various reports, govt. departments and their published data viz. agriculture census reports, various related Journals and other published sources. All collected data are tabulated and analysed. Since our interest is more on existing land holding pattern and use and tenancy. So, here our data refer to the period from 1970-71 to 2005-06.*

*Key words: Agrarian structure, tenancy.*

## 1.1 Introduction

‘Agrarian Structure’ and ‘Agrarian Relations’ are greatly interrelated. The system of land tenure (social agrarian structure) and land management (technical and economic agrarian structure) determine ‘agrarian relations’ (Kuhnen, F; 1995). The agrarian structure prevailing in an economy at a point of time has a close bearing on its agricultural production and development and hence on the overall development of the economy. Similarly the agrarian relations existing at a point of time reflect the influence of historical, political, social and economic factors. (Singh, J.P.; 2006) .Any significant change in agrarian structure has an impact on the size distribution of land holdings. No. of ownership and operational holding and area operated along with the incidence and extent of tenancy reflect an agrarian structure prevailing in an economy .The agrarian structure in our country seems to have undergone changes under the impact of demographic, institutional and technological factors as well as overall development of the economy ( Kapila,U;2008).The size distribution of ownership holdings in India is characterised by predominance of landless and marginal holdings .Data provided by the NSSO for different rounds from 17<sup>th</sup> round onwards are on the comparable and is observed that the broad, highly skewed nature of size distribution of ownership holdings has by and large remained unchanged overtime, notwithstanding the progressively downward shift in the distribution. Rise in the no. of operational holdings, decline in area operated or marginalisation of holdings is an important general feature of the size distribution of operational holding in India. Similarly, the degree of concentration in size distribution has increased since 1960-61, but the increase has slowed down since 1980-81 and may not be continuing. (NSSO Report No. 492). Over the last four decades, the average size of a holding came down by nearly 60% from 2.63 hectare in 1960-61 to 1.06 hectare in 2002-03. The percentage of holdings with partly or wholly owned and operated area changed little between 1960-61 and 2002-03, the proportion of holdings with partly or wholly leased-in land declined sharply from around 24% to 10% during the period after 1970-71. This trend indicating a

continuous shift from tenant cultivation to self-cultivation, has been a characteristic feature of Indian agriculture during this period.

The Economy of Assam is predominantly agrarian where agriculture constitutes a more significant component of the economy which is the major contributor to the state economy providing livelihood to a significant proportion of the population of the state. A comparative study of the different Agriculture Censuses shows that there is an increasing trend in the no. of operational holdings which signifies the progressive fragmentation of operational holding in the state. It indicates the intensity of population pressure on the land area and fragmentation of land holdings which leads to a declining trend in average size of holding from 1.47ha in 1970-71 to 1.11ha in 2005-06. Similarly there has been a sharp increase in the share of leased-in area of other size group. By the terms of leasing, sharecropping and fixed-rent tenancies were the main terms of lease in most of the States in India. In Assam Sharecropping is found to be the predominant form of tenancy.

## 1.2 Objective

The present study is an attempt to analyse and review the existing land holding pattern and use in respect of both owned and operated along with the trend in the nature, extent and incidence of tenancy at national and state level especially with reference to the state of Assam.

## 1.3 Methodology

The study is based on secondary data which are collected from different organisations such as various reports of NSSO, govt. departments and their publications viz. agriculture census reports, various journals and other published sources. All collected data are tabulated and analysed. Since our interest is more on existing land holding pattern and use and the tenancy, so here our data will relate to period from 1970-71 to 2005-06.

## 1.4 Distribution pattern of land holdings under ownership and Operation

The increasing pressure of rural population on the limited land base is reflected in the steady decline in the average area owned per household over the years in India. In 1961-62, the average area owned per household was 1.78 hectares. Gradually and steadily, it came down to 0.73 hectare in 2003. Excluding the landless households, the average area owned was estimated to be 0.81 hectare in 2003, which is nearly 40% of the estimate (2.01hectare) obtained in 1961-62. To examine whether there has been any significant change in the agrarian structure, apart from the observed decline in average size of holdings, it is necessary to study the nature and extent of temporal variations in the size distribution of ownership

holdings. The size distribution of ownership holdings in India is characterised by predominance of landless households and marginal holders. During 2003, the marginal holdings ( $\leq 1$ ha) and the landless ( $<0.002$ ha) constituted about 80% of the rural households but owned only 23% of total area. The medium (4-10 ha) and large holders ( $>10$ ha) accounted for only 3.6% of the households but had a combined share of about 35% in the total land owned by all households in 2003. Thus over a period of four decades since 1961-62, the size distribution of ownership holdings has progressively shifted downwards. The proportion of marginal holders has risen from 66% in 1961-62 to 80% in 2003 and the proportion of small holders (owning 1 to 2 ha), has increased from 9% to 11%. This rise in the proportion of marginal and small holders has been accompanied by a steady decline in the proportion of medium and large holders.

Considering the country as a whole, the large and medium holdings, at the top 10 percent bracket, owned 54% of the total land in 1971-72, their share declining to 35% in 2003 while their proportion declined to 4%. At the bottom, the proportion of marginal holdings increased from 63% in 1971-72 to 80% in 2003, while the proportion of area under marginal holdings rose from about 10% in 1971-72 to 23% in 2003. In fact, the proportion of marginal holdings to total number of holdings increased in all the states during the last decades. This is the marginalisation of operational land holdings.

Table-1.1: Percentage distribution of households and area owned for all India (Rural)

Size group of ownership holding	Percentage of Holding				Percentage of Area Owned			
	1971-72	1982	1992	2003	1971-72	1982	1992	2003
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Marginal	62.62	66.64	71.88	79.60	9.76	12.22	16.93	23.05
Small	15.49	14.70	13.42	10.80	14.68	16.49	18.59	20.38
Semi-medium	11.94	10.78	9.28	6.00	21.92	23.58	24.58	21.98
Medium	7.83	6.45	4.54	3.00	30.73	29.83	26.07	23.08
Large	2.12	1.42	0.88	0.66	22.91	18.07	13.83	11.55

Source: Government of India (2006), *NSS Report No. 491: Household ownership holdings in India, 2003*, MOSPI.

An increasing trend in the percentage of area owned by marginal households is also observed in all the major states. (17nos.). The general feature that emerges from the distributions given in the Table-1.1 is that there is a rise in the percentage of households in the lowest category, and a decline in the percentage of households in the categories of semi-medium and upwards. There is no doubt that a declining trend is present in the proportion of

small holders in all the states. The proportion of area under small holdings reveals much more varying trends over the states. Changes in proportion of landless households in Assam are as stated below

Table 1.2: Proportion of landless households in Assam.

State	1971-72	1982	1992	2003
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Assam	25.0	7.5	13.4	8.1

Source: Government of India (2006), *NSS Report No.492: Some Aspects of Operational Land Holdings in India, 2002-03*, MOSPI.

## 2.1 Size distribution of operational holding

Any significant change in agrarian structure should have some impact on the size distribution of land holdings. The following Table-2.1 shows the changes in the size distribution of operational holdings shown by different Land Holding Surveys (LHS) in India.

Table-2.1: Changes in the size distribution of operational holdings shown by different LHS

Category of Holding	Percentage of Operational Holdings					
	60-61 (17 <sup>th</sup> )	70-71 (26 <sup>th</sup> )	81-82 (37 <sup>th</sup> )	91-92 (48 <sup>th</sup> )	02-03( 59 <sup>th</sup> )	
					Kharif	Rabi
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Marginal	39.1	45.8	56.0	62.8	69.7	70.0
Small	22.6	22.4	19.3	17.8	16.3	15.9
Semi-medium	19.8	17.7	14.2	12.0	9.0	8.9
Medium	14.0	11.1	8.6	6.1	4.2	4.4
Large	4.5	3.1	1.9	1.3	0.8	0.8
All sizes	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Government of India (2006), *NSS Report No.492: Some Aspects of Operational Land Holdings in India, 2002-03*, MOSPI.

### 2.1.1 Number of operational holdings

The pressure of growing population on the limited land base and the consequent division of holdings is clearly reflected in the changes in the absolute numbers of operational holdings in different size classes. The numbers of operational holdings in different categories are not changing at the same rate or even in the same direction over time as is evident from the following Table-2.2.

Table-2.2: Number of Operational holdings

Category	Number of Operational Holdings				
	1960-61	'70-71	'81-82	'91-92	2002-03*
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Marginal	19.85	26.14	39.78	58.69	70.99
Small	11.47	12.78	13.71	16.63	16.59
Semi-medium	10.05	10.10	10.09	11.21	9.21
Medium	7.11	6.33	6.11	5.70	4.3
Large	2.28	1.77	1.35	1.21	0.81

Source: Government of India (2006), *NSS Report No.492: Some Aspects of Operational Land Holdings in India, 2002-03*, MOSPI.

\*kharif season estimate

Over the three decades the no. of marginal holdings has multiplied from 19.8 million in 1960-61 to over 71.0 million in 1991-92 –an increase of over three and a half times. The no. of small holdings, too, has been increasing, though at a much slower rate since 1970-71. As against this, the absolute nos. of large and medium holdings has declined steadily during this period. Even the no. of semi-medium holdings which had remained stable at 10 million from 1960-61 to 1981-82 and have shown a sign of an increase, has begun to fall.

### 2.1.2 Distribution of Operated Area

The following estimate gives percentage distribution of operated area by category of operational holdings from the last four land holding surveys. It is seen that the shares of marginal holdings in total operated area which was under 7% in 1960-61, has risen rapidly over the last four decades and increased by 6-7 percentage points since the last surveys( 1991-92) to draw the level with the shares of semi-medium and medium holdings ( around 22.5%). The share of small holdings, too, has been continuously on the rise and is now over 20%, while the share of large holdings has been steadily declining from 29% in 1960-61 to a level of 12-13%.The share of area operated by medium holdings has declined steadily but more moderately, and the share of semi-medium holdings appears to have reached its peak in 1991-92 and begun to dip.

Table-2.3: Changes in percentage distribution of operated area by category of operational holdings.

Category of holding	Percentage of Operated Area					
	1960-61 (17 <sup>th</sup> )	1970-71 (26 <sup>th</sup> )	1981-82 (37 <sup>th</sup> )	1991-92 (48 <sup>th</sup> )	2002-03(59 <sup>th</sup> )	
					Kharif	Rabi
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Marginal	6.9	9.2	11.5	15.6	22.6	21.7
Small	12.3	14.8	16.6	18.7	20.9	20.3
Semi-medium	20.7	22.6	23.6	24.1	22.5	22.3
Medium	31.2	30.5	30.1	26.4	22.2	23.1
Large	29.0	23.0	18.2	15.2	11.8	12.5
All categories	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Government of India, *NSS Report No. 407*, MOSPI.

### 3.1 Agricultural Holding in Assam

The latest available data refer to the Agricultural Census, 2005-06 which reveals that there are 27.5 lakh operational holdings in Assam covering an area of 30.49 lakh hectares of land compared to 27.1 lakh operational holdings covering an area of about 31.1 lakh hectares of land in 2000-01. The following table depicts the trend of no. of holding and area from 1970-71 to 2005-06.

As per the agriculture census, 2005-06, the marginal holdings with less than one hectare of land accounted for 63.7 percent of the total holdings and 24.9 percent of the total operated area of the state in 2005-06. The small holding with size class (1-2) hectare, shared 21.5 percent of the total holdings and 23.6 percent of the total operational area. On the other hand, the large holdings (10 hectares and above) constituted only 0.18 percent of the total number of holdings and 9.8 percent of the total operated area in the state.

Some important characteristics of Agricultural censuses conducted in the state with reference years 1970-71,1976-77,1980-81,1985-86,1990-91,1995-96,2000-01 and 2005-06 are highlighted as follows-

#### 3.1.1 Increasing trend in the number of operational holdings in Assam

The following table shows that there is an increasing trend in the no. of operational holdings from one census to the other. The increasing trend in the no. of operational holdings signifies the progressive fragmentation of operational holdings in the state from 1970-71 to 2000-01. It also indicates the intensity of population pressure on the area and the proliferation of nuclear families due to disintegration of the joint family system in the state.

Table3.1: Number of operational holding and area operated for all social group of Assam

Size class (in hectare)	Number of Operational Holding							
	1970-71	1976-77	1980-81	1985-86	1990-91	1995-96	2000-01	2005-06
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Marginal	1120405	1343692	1363340	1450310	1520833	1669252	1699107	175298
Small	466691	509820	522974	546456	559863	561078	561039	591431
Semi-medium	275780	296008	313562	324357	342555	351245	351521	317859
Medium	93924	96379	92019	92338	94698	96418	95500	82933
Large	7576	7791	5693	5695	5430	5004	4970	4902
All size	1964376	2253690	2297588	2419156	2523379	2682997	2712137	2750114

Source: i) Government of Assam, *World agriculture census, Assam, 1970-71*; ii) *Statistical Hand Books, 2010 and Economic Surveys, Assam, 2010-11*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Guwahati.

Table-3.2: Distribution of Area operated for all social groups in Assam

Size class (in hectare)	Area operated ( in hectare)							
	1970-71	1976-77	1980-81	1985-86	1990-91	1995-96	2000-01	2005-06
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Marginal	510000	593582	582755.2	600365.04	607121.4	621368	662781.52	760144.64
Small	662000	718065	748395.08	761451.64	784080.50	769698	730513.15	718383.23
Semi-medium	757000	808344	859986.44	874112.65	917996.71	924258	957959.34	846006.14
Medium	520000	528094	487068.17	480913.19	491611.16	494658	498797.27	425402.92
Large	434000	431163	442302.55	444655.19	403940.98	328467	263527.25	298605.95
All size	288300	307924	3120507.4	3161497.7	3204750.7	313844	3113577.5	3048542.8
	0	8	4	1	5	9	3	8

Source: i) Government of Assam, *World Agriculture Census, Assam, 1970-71*; ii) *Statistical Hand Books, 2010 and Economic Surveys, Assam, 2010-11*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Guwahati.



### 3.1.2 Percentage variation in the number of operational holdings.

The intercensal variation is seen to be highest in 1976-77 over 1970-71 and lowest in 2005-06 over 2000-01 which is evident from the following table

Table-3.3: The intercensal percentage variation in the number of operational Holdings.

Size class (area in hectare)	Percentage variation						
	1976-77 Over 1970-71	1980-81 over 1976-77	1985-86 over 1980-81	1990-91 over 1985-86	1995-96 over 1990-91	2000-01 over 1995-96	2005-06 over 2000-01
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Marginal	20.0	1.4	6.4	4.9	9.76	1.79	3.17
Small	9.2	2.5	2.8	2.5	0.22	-0.01	5.42
Semi- medium	7.2	6.1	3.2	5.6	2.54	0.08	-9.58
Medium	2.1	-4.2	0.0	2.5	1.82	-0.95	-13.16
Large	14.2	-25.0	0.0	-4.0	-7.85	-0.68	-1.37
All size	14.8	2.0	5.3	4.3	6.33	1.09	1.40

Source: i) Govt. of Assam, *Statistical Hand Book, 2010* ii) *Economic Survey, Assam; 2010-11*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics; Guwahati

### 3.1.3 Percentage variation in operated area

It has been observed from the following table that the increasing trend in operated area continues till 1990-91 censuses. In 1995-96, the operated area decreased by (-2.07) over 1990-91 census and (-0.79) percent over 1995-96 and (-2.09) percent over 2000-01.

Table-3.4: Percentage variation of operated area.

Size class (area in hectare)	Percentage variation						
	1976-77 over 1970-71	1980-81 over 1976-77	1985-86 over 1980-81	1990-91 over 1985-86	1995-96 over 1990-91	2000-01 over 1995-96	2005-06 over 2000-01
Marginal	16.7	-1.9	2.9	1.1	2.35	6.66	14.69
Small	8.5	4.2	1.7	2.9	-1.8	-5.09	-1.66
Semi medium	6.7	6.4	1.6	5.0	0.68	3.65	-11.69
Medium	1.3	-7.8	-1.2	2.2	0.62	0.84	-14.71
Large	-0.7	2.6	0.7	-9.2	-18.68	-19.77	13.31
All size	6.8	1.3	1.3	1.4	-2.07	-0.79	-2.09

Source: i) Govt. of Assam, *Statistical Hand Book, 2010* ii) *Economic Survey, Assam; 2010-11*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics; Guwahati.

A decline of (-2.09) % of area is observed in 2005-06 over 2000-01. Operated area of operational holdings is an indicator of quantum of land under the management and operational control of operational holders of the state. Land is considered as the most vital and physical income generating asset of the rural agricultural household and as such change

in the operated area will act as an indicator of changing the income generating capacity of the common masses.

### 3.1.4 Average size of operational holdings

The most important indicator of fragmentation of land holdings is the average size of holdings which depicts a declining trend in the state since 1970-71 to 2005-06. A gradual decline in average size of operational holdings from 1.47 hectare to 1.11 hectares within a period of three decades leads to small scale agricultural operation which prohibits in reaping the benefits in proportionate to the expenditures involved in the operation. It is evident that the average size of the holdings is decreasing from one census to other.

Table-3.5: Average size of holdings in Assam from 1970-71 to 2005-06

Year	Individual holdings	Joint holdings	Institutional holdings	Total holdings
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1970-71	1.38	2.84	n.a*	<b>1.47</b>
1976-77	1.18	1.71	50.51	<b>1.37</b>
1980-81	1.24	1.88	42.42	<b>1.36</b>
1985-86	1.19	1.88	41.97	<b>1.31</b>
1990-91	1.16	1.83	41.03	<b>1.27</b>
1995-96	1.07	1.78	37.16	<b>1.17</b>
2000-01	1.07	2.05	69.55	<b>1.15</b>
2005-06	1.01	2.04	58.26	<b>1.11</b>

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam.

\*n.a= not available.

Table-3.6: Percentage concentration in the number of operational holdings and area operated.

Size class( in hectare)	Number of Operational Holdings and Percentage Concentration							
	1970-71	1976-77	1980-81	1985-86	1990-91	1995-96	2000-01	2005-06
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(7)	(8)
Marginal	57.04	59.62	59.34	59.95	60.27	62.21	62.65	63.74
Small	23.76	22.62	22.76	22.59	22.19	20.91	20.69	21.51
Semi-medium	14.04	13.13	13.65	13.41	13.58	13.09	12.96	11.56
Medium	4.78	4.28	4.00	3.82	3.75	3.59	3.52	3.02
Large	0.38	0.35	0.25	0.23	0.22	0.19	0.18	0.18
All Class	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam.

Predominance of landless households and marginal holders is evident from the table given above. Marginalisation of land holding is also observed in the table given above.

Table-3.7: Concentration of area operated

Size class (area in hectare)	distribution of area operated and concentration of area operated							
	1970- 71	1976- 77	1980- 81	1985- 86	1990- 91	1995- 96	2000- 01	2005- 06
Marginal	17.69	19.28	18.67	18.99	18.94	19.80	21.29	24.93
Small	22.96	23.32	23.98	24.08	24.47	24.52	23.46	23.56
Semi-medium	26.26	26.25	27.56	27.65	28.64	29.45	30.77	27.75
Medium	18.04	17.15	15.61	15.21	15.34	15.76	16.02	13.95
Large	15.05	14.00	14.17	14.06	12.60	10.46	8.46	9.80
All size	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

#### 4.1: Land use pattern in ownership holdings:

At the all India level, the distribution of land by land use is presented in the following statement.

Table-3.8: Composition of land owned by major use (All India, Rural)

Major use of land	Area ( million)	% Share
(1)	(2)	(3)
1. Homestead	3.37	3.14
2. Land for agricultural purpose	89.91	83.85
2.1 Orchards and plantation	2.77	2.58
2.2 Seasonal crop area	87.14	81.27
3. Other uses of land	13.95	13.01
4. All	107.23	100.00

Source: Government of India (2006), *NSS Report No. 491; household ownership holdings in India, 2003*, MOSPI.

It is seen from the above statement that land for agricultural purpose, particularly seasonal crops was the major constituent of land owned by the rural households of the country. The share of seasonal crop area in the total land owned was 81%, and that of orchards and plantations was 3%. The remaining 16% was distributed among homestead land and non-homestead land put to other (non-agricultural) uses.

#### 5.1 Land utilisation in Assam

As per the land utilisation statistics for the year 2008-09(P), total reporting area (village paper) of the state was 78.50 lakh hectares. Out of the total reporting area, net sown

area constitute 35.80 percent (28.10 lakh hectare), 23.61 percent was under forest, land not available for cultivation 26.26 lakh hectares or 33.45 percent of the total reporting area and other uncultivable area was 4.32 lakh hectares or 5.5 percent .While fallow land constitutes 1.63 percent of the total reporting area with around 1.28 lakh hectares, land under still water and water logged area jointly constitutes 1.78 lakh hectares or 2.27 percent. The area under social forestry was only 0.13 lakh hectares or 0.16 percent of the total reporting area.

The gross cropped area recorded increase from 38.39 lakh hectares in 2007-08 to 39.99 lakh hectares in 2008-09. The area sown more than once and the net cropped area recorded 9.4 percent and 2.1 percent with 11.88 lakh and 28.10 lakh hectares during the year 2008-09 over the figures of 2007-08.

Thus, it reveals from the above that the ratio of area sown more than once to the net area sown is 42.28 percent during 2008-09 as against 39.45 percent during the year 2007-08. The ratio of net sown area to gross cropped area, on the other hand, was calculated at 70.28 percent during the year 2008-09 compared to 71.71 percent during the year 2007-08. (Economic Survey, 2010-11, Govt. of Assam).

### 6.1 Incidence of Tenancy.

An understanding of the phenomenon of tenancy is essential to have an idea about the agrarian relations in rural areas. Tenancy and its terms and conditions reflect the demand and supply position of land in agriculture. The following estimate will show the incidence of tenancy.

Table-6.1: Estimates of reported incidence of leasing-out and leasing-in of land by households from various rounds of NSS.

Sl. No.	Characteristics	1971-72 (26 <sup>th</sup> rd)	1982 (37 <sup>th</sup> rd)	1992 (48 <sup>th</sup> rd)	2003 (59 <sup>th</sup> rd)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1	Percentage of hhs leasing in land	25%	18%	15%	12%
2	Percentage of area leased-in to total area owned	12%	7%	9%	7%
3	Percentage of area leased out to total area owned	6%	4%	5%	3%

Source: Government of India, *NSS report Nos.: 215, 330, 399 and 491: Household ownership holding*, MOSPI.

The estimate given in the statement above indicates that leasing-out of land was under-reported in the earlier land holding surveys. Since the estimates on leased-out land are generally underestimates, therefore, only the proportion of household reporting leasing in of land and the ratio of total area leased in to total area owned are used as the indicator of the

incidence of tenancy. The estimates reveal that there is a declining trend in the percentage of households leasing in land over the three decades. The ratio of area leased-in to area owned by households has dropped from 12% to 7% during the last three decades and the ratio of area leased-out to area owned, from 6% to 3%.

There are wide inter-state variations in the average land leased-in per leasing-in household. Among the states the highest percentage of leasing-in households was reported in Sikkim (34.48%), followed by Himachal Pradesh (21.58%), Haryana (16.99%) and Tamilnadu (16.31%). At the other end of the spectrum, two states reported percentages of 5% or less i.e. J& K (3.12%) and Rajasthan (4.25%). Similarly, the highest percentage of leasing out households was reported in Haryana (8.28%) and lowest in J & K (0.05%). The case of Assam is shown in the table below.

Table-6.2: State –wise incidence of tenancy.

State	Percentage of hhs reporting		Average area leased in per reporting household	Leased-in area as percent of total area owned
	Leasing out	Leasing in		
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Assam	0.55	7.47	0.429	5.81
India	2.80	11.52	0.444	7.05

Source: Government of India, *NSS Report No. 491; Household ownership holding*, MOSPI.

The ratio of land leased-in to total area owned was 10% or less in most states. The leased-in area as percent of total area owned is 5.81% in Assam.

Table-6.3: Percentage of tenant holdings and area leased-in by broad size-class in 2002-03(All-India), Rural.

Size class	Percentage of tenant holdings	Percentage of area leased in	Percentage share in leased-in area
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
≤0.002	4.7	3.1	0.1
0.002-0.5	10.9	9.3	12.3
0.5-1.0	12.0	8.3	17.9
Marginal	9.8	8.6	30.3
Small	10.7	6.8	22.1
Semi-medium	10.3	6.3	21.8
Medium	7.8	4.2	14.6
Large	13.8	6.1	11.2
Over1.00	10.2	5.8	69.7
All-Size	9.9	6.45	100.00

Source: Government of India (2006), *NSS Report No.492: Some Aspects of Operational Land Holdings in India, 2002-03*, MOSPI,

Note: Data relate to the Kharif season.

The incidence of tenancy by broad size class of operational holdings in 2002-03 is evident from the above table. Except that lowest size class showing a much lower incidence of tenancy (only 4.7% being tenant holdings), the percentage of tenant holdings shows no clear pattern of variation with variation in holding size. In most of the classes shown, the percentage of tenant holdings varies between 9% and 12%. The percentage of leased-in area total in operated area, in general, falls as one passes from the marginal category to the categories of larger. Over 47% of the total tenanted land was operated by the top 3 categories, which constituted only about 14% of the total operational holdings. If one considers the holdings larger than one hectare i.e. the top 4 classes, one sees that nearly 70% of the total tenanted land is operated by these holdings, which are found to constitute about 30% of total number of operational holdings.

#### 6.1.1 Nature and extent of Tenancy.

During the four decades from 1960-61 onwards, land tenure status of operational holdings has undergone significant changes. The percentage of holdings with partly or wholly owned operated area changed little between 1960-61 and 2002-03, the proportion of holdings with partly or wholly leased-in land (henceforth called 'tenant holdings') declined sharply from around 24% to 10% during the period after 1970-71. This trend, indicating a continuous shift from tenant cultivation to self-cultivation, has been a characteristic feature of Indian agriculture during this period.

Table-6.4: Tenant holdings by category of operational holdings, All-India, Rural

Category	Percentage of tenant holdings				
	60-61 (17 <sup>th</sup> )	70-71 (26 <sup>th</sup> )	81-82 (37 <sup>th</sup> )	91-92 (48 <sup>th</sup> )	2002-03 (59 <sup>th</sup> )
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Marginal	24.1	27.0	14.4	9.3	9.8
Small	25.1	27.8	17.9	14.9	10.7
Semi-medium	23.6	24.8	15.9	12.2	10.3
Medium	20.5	20.0	14.5	13.1	7.8
Large	9.5	15.9	11.5	16.7	13.8
All size	23.5	25.7	15.2	11.0	9.9

Source: Government of India (2006): *NSS Report No. 407*, MOSPI. Data for 2002-03 relate to the kharif season.

Table-6.5: Distribution of holding according to Tenure and Tenancy Status in each major size group.

Sl. No.	Size class(in hectare)	Wholly owned and self operated Holdings	Wholly Leasing in Holdings	Wholly otherwise operated Holdings	Partly owned partly leased in and partly otherwise operated holdings	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1	Marginal	1665440 (99.77)	66 (0.00)	421 (0.03)	3325 (0.20)	1669252 (100.00)
2	Small	558451 (99.53)	118 (0.02)	243 (0.04)	2266 (0.40)	561078 (100.00)
3	Semi-medium	346843 (98.75)	357 (0.10)	143 (0.04)	3902 (1.11)	351245 (100.00)
4	Medium	94487 (97.99)	23 (0.02)	48 (0.05)	1860 (1.93)	96418 (100.00)
5	Large	4965 (99.22)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	39 (0.78)	5004 (100.00)
6	Total	2670186 (99.52)	564 (0.02)	855 (0.03)	11392 (0.42)	2682997 (100.00)

Source: Government of Assam, *Agriculture Census, 1995-96*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Guwahati

## 7.1 Conclusion

The increasing pressure of rural population on the limited land base is reflected in the steady decline in the average area owned per household over the years. The size distribution of ownership holdings in India is characterised by predominance of marginal holders. An increasing trend in the percentage of area owned by marginal households is also observed in all the major states. There is a rise in the percentage of households in the lowest category, and a decline in the percentage of households in the categories of semi-medium and upwards. There is no doubt that a declining trend is present in the proportion of small holders in all the states. The proportion of area under small holdings reveals much more varying trends over the states. Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Punjab, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh reported perceptible rise in proportion of area under small holdings during the period 1992 to 2003.

During the four decades from 1960-61 onwards Land tenure status of operational holdings has undergone significant changes. While the percentage of holdings with partly or wholly owned operated area changed little between 1960-61 and 2002-03, the proportion of

holdings with partly or wholly leased-in land declined sharply from around 24% to 10% during the period after 1970-71. This trend, indicating a continuous shift from tenant cultivation to self –cultivation, has been a characteristic feature of Indian agriculture during this period.

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