

Sustainable Livelihood Index of Paddy Farmers in Kole Lands

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Abstract: This paper focus to assessing the livelihood elements of the rural poor households using a standard tool of Sustainable Livelihoods Index (SLI). This index was based on Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) framework. Livelihood assessments were done for paddy farmers in kole lands. A total of 20 livelihood assets indicators were identified from the data and broadly grouped into five groups of assets namely human, physical, natural, social, financial assets. Then, an aggregate SLI for each household was constructed by averaging all the seven groups of livelihood assets and outcomes indices with an equal weight. A sample of 30 farmers were selected from Muriyad kole lands and 40 farmers were selected from Arimpur kole lands and conducted a comparative study of livelihood capital index of farmers from both area. No significant difference is identified between two kole land areas with respect to sustainable livelihood. There were large amount of volatility in different capital assets among kole farmers in two regions, but 82.11% of the households in kole farmers were obtained SLI below 0.5 indicating that low income kole farmers have equal over all sustainable livelihood assets. This is an insight to the policy makers that promoting kole farming is the way to achieve sustainable livelihood to the rural people.

Key words: Sustainable livelihood index, Kole lands, Paddy farming, Padasekhara Samithies

Introduction

A sustainable livelihood can maintain or enhance the different assets which determine living of an individual or group of people. In addition to assets, capabilities, activities and the access to these capital were equally significant aspect in the sustainable livelihood approach (Amartya Sen 1999). Sustainable livelihood is derived from people's capacity to exercise choice, access resources and the ways in which they do not deter the opportunities for others to make their living either now or in the future.

Agriculture is the major contributor of employment and livelihood both at the national and state levels. India is an agrarian economy and majority of the individuals are engaged in this sector for the sustenance of better livelihoods. Agriculture with its allied sectors is the largest livelihood provider within the country. Understanding economics of being poor is a method of understating economics of agriculture. Majority of the poor people lives in rural areas depends on agriculture for their income employment and livelihood (Schultz 1964). Paddy is the largest agricultural crop cultivated in Kerala. In Kerala, 95 % of the paddy cultivators are marginal and small farmers, who produce 78% of the total rice production of Kerala (Kannan 2011). Kerala is well known for its Kole wetlands paddy production. These wetlands provided livelihood to the residents in the area in the forms of agricultural produce, fish, fuel, fibre, fodder, and most of other day-to-day necessities. Wetland systems directly and indirectly support lakhs of people, providing goods and services to them. Paddy fields provide a number of additional ecosystem services.

Wetlands are important in the development process as they can contribute in several ways to the MDGs – through food security, water and sanitation and the ecologically sustainable use of natural resources. The MA reformulates the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) into a well-being concept and identifies four areas where ecosystem services can contribute:

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