

It has therefore been suggested that the entire seedfarm area should be concentrated in one or two villages, so that the Agricultural Demonstrator could effectively supervise the various seed farm operations. The entire area cultivators should be brought under seed farms and one strain alone should be in the entire holding, so as to avoid contamination at the nursery and the thrashing floor.

## Rural Economic Conditions of the Coimbatore District

### *A Study of some Cultivators*

*(Summary of a Report on Investigations made during 1951 — '52)*

By

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**The Coimbatore Cultivator:** The agriculturists of the Coimbatore district are noted for their industry and hard work. Of late, they are also noted for their enterprising spirit, which is exhibited by their adoption of modern farming methods. The district receives low and ill distributed rainfall and in fact, some taluks are so defective in this respect, that failures of rains often result in famine conditions. Of necessity, therefore, the cultivator has to be hard working and try to raise some crop to eke out his living. The only remedy to overcome the deficit rainfall, is to tap the underground resources of water supply and conversion of dry land into gardenlands. This process of well sinking has been going on from early times and the total number of wells in the district utilised for irrigation is 1,08,254 and the area covered for irrigation is nearly  $4\frac{1}{2}$  lakhs acres. However, the total area irrigated by wells is only about 17% of the total cultivated area at the present time and therefore the scope for more area coming under irrigation by wells is really very great. Of course, it is a great boon to this district, that the Lower Bhavani Project obviates the sinking of wells, which is a



difficult and costly process, in many taluks and supplies enough water to convert such a large area of dry land (as much as 2 lakhs acres) into gardenland farming. Irrigation by wells, implies the utilisation of the water to the utmost extent, without wastage. A study of the rural economic conditions of this district is of great importance and significance, because it is first a study of the cultivators themselves. It is the study of the cultivator and the circumstances and conditions under which he lives and produces. Rural Economics of Coimbatore District, is bound up inextricably with the fortunes of thousands of the small cultivators of the district. The level of economic prosperity of the district, can be judged truly by the level of prosperity attained by the small cultivators, at any time, and not by the outward prosperity exhibited in the urban areas.

**Study of cultivators in typical villages:** To start with two villages have been selected within five miles of the Agricultural College which are fairly typical of the conditions of the district. One is Vadavalli, situated north-west of the College, about two and a half miles away and the other Goundampalayam north-east about three and a half miles distant. The first can be popularly classified as a garden village some area under gardens and the second a dry village with practically no area under well irrigation. In this district, the majority of the villages in all the taluks can be classified in this manner and it is estimated that more than fifty percent of the villages may be of the dry type, having very little or negligible area under gardens. This would only show how agriculture is really a gamble in large areas of every taluk and how it is a hard task, an uphill one, to bring about agricultural improvements in such areas. These villages, therefore, may be said to represent the two types of villages that we may come across, in this district. They are situated fairly far away to have too much influences of the city and its activities on the agricultural sector. They are, however, benefitted by sale of milk and other occupations and the amenities provided in the town to some extent. A detailed study of the economic conditions of certain number of cultivators of each village would reveal in a convincing manner the economic conditions of the area represented by these cultivators and the villages. But, however, in the villages, in general, there are different types of cultivators who can be classified as small, medium and large according to the area cultivated by them or on land assessment paid by them. We find that this is the case with every village, the small and medium cultivators predominating. Either according to area or according to amount of assessment paid the small and medium cultivators are nearly 90% in each village. Hence, it is necessary to study a larger number of these cultivators to understand the economic position of the majority. The bigger ryot will hold his own in every place and does not represent the true facts of the village, On the whole,



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20 cultivators were contacted in each village including one weaver, making a total of 40 for both villages. The Statement Nos. 1, 2, and 3 give details of the type of cultivators enquired into. Full information was obtained from each of them about the areas held, equipment owned, labour employed, crops grown, costs incurred, yield obtained net profits, family expenses, indebtedness position, interest rates, difficulties experienced, improvements effected, relationship with co-operative or other societies, supplementary incomes etc., etc. The information and data obtained by series of enquiries have been analysed and presented in these statements. The economic position of each class of cultivators is discussed below, separately.

**The small or the lower class cultivators :** Twenty-four out of forty examined belonged to this class. These form about 80% of the total pattadars of the villages and own on the average about 5 acres of dry lands. They pay a kist of Rs. 10 or less. It is revealed that one cultivating actually 5 acres of dry land in these villages is on the border, i.e. when rains are normal he is just able to make both ends meet, otherwise he becomes submarginal as has been in the case for the last few years when there had been partial or complete failure of the seasonal rains. Just 10 miles away, in the valley of Thadagam village, it is a different picture where the dryland crops seldom fail as the seasonal rains have been regular and adequate. But this area is an exception, being situated in the midst of two ranges of hills and favourably placed. In the vast areas of dry lands away from the hills, the chances of the small cultivator getting a good crop is 1 to 4 or 5 judging from the situation in recent times.

**Crop production :** The chief crop grown is cholam on the dry land upto about 50 to 70% of the area, the balance being put under Tenai or Tenai and cotton as in the case of Goundampalayam village. When the seasonal rains are favourable, the yield of cholam grain may go upto 6 "salagais" per acre, whereas for the last few years, it has given from nothing to 3 "salagais" only. There is certainly some correlations between grain yield and stalk yield (fodder) in that when grain yields are good, fodder yields are also high. Hence during these bad seasons, the fodder yields have also gone down, though that is the only saving feature, as atleast some cartloads of fodder had been obtained for the cattle, either work or milk stock, which may last a few months in times man has to go away with nothing. This is a sad plight indeed. The black market price of cholam grain had been high as much as Rs. 45/- per salagai and it is a hard lot for these small cultivators to make efforts to obtain their grain requirements from such a market, when their own crops have failed them.



**Family expenses:** The essential needs of the family of the small cultivator are cholam grains for their consumption, and payment in kind to the coolies and mamools to artisans and some cash for other purchases. These can never be met fully from the dry land area held by them as the vicissitudes of the season and pests reduce the yield. Hence, they have to supplement their income by other means. The position is very much improved for the cultivator who owns a small area of garden under this classification. A well is not a natural boon but a hard won reality after spending heavily on that account, which may range from Rs. 3,000, to Rs. 5,000 or more depending upon nature of the strata and size. A well inherited by one is a good acquisition and makes matters easy for the owner to keep it in repair and fit it up with power lifts which will give the family enough grains and cash to keep going under very simple circumstances. An additional two or three acres of dry land would ensure some supply of fodder for his dairy stock. But we come across a very few of such typical cultivators. We find they have either not enough of dry land alone or they own more area of garden than required as in the case of bigger cultivators. Cultivators owning purely dry land are therefore unable to meet the expenses of the family fully from the yields of the land and therefore resort to borrowing.

**Weaver - cum - cultivator:** Among the small cultivators, there are some belonging to this category. There may be a total of about 100 families of weavers in both the villages and among them 20% possess a small area of land each 2 to 5 acres of dry land. It is those who own lands are slightly better off, under the present extremely unfavourable circumstances for the weavers in general. They had no doubt earned a good income during the war years and after and some had even saved and purchased lands or built houses by such savings. But at the present time, a weaver earns Rs. 30/- a month by weaving alone and with this he cannot maintain his family, unless another member in the family earns similarly or by working as a labourer. The weaving industry should be a side industry and when developed is a good source of income for the dry land cultivator, who has got only 4 months' work on land at the most even when seasonal rains are normal. Some of the weavers have also owned one or two buffaloes to augment their income by sale of milk etc. But this has not been a very successful venture as the supply of fodder and obtaining of concentrates are not an easy matter. The margin above cost of maintenance, of the animals, is not very alluring, according to opinions expressed by many of the small cultivators.

**Sources of additional income:** The small cultivator has to supplement his income from land, by other means, if he is to save himself from running into heavy debts. One common method of earning such additional income, is by keeping one or more buffaloes and sale of milk, to milk



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vendors who are regularly taking milk to the city. Most of them are able to earn about Rs. 30/- per month, net income, by this means. But even this has a draw back. Because one cannot own any number of buffaloes to increase the income, as it is not an easy matter to supply adequate fodder to the animals, unless the season has been very favourable and a good crop has been grown on the holding. Concentrates such as cotton seed or cake are regularly fed and cost of feeding has to be kept within reasonable limits. Hence all cultivators are not in a position to own buffaloes or cows and effect sale of milk and milk products. Another way of improving the income is by owning a cart and pair and hiring the same for carting work, carting of building materials mainly to the town. But on the average one is able to get the cart hired only for 3 or 4 days in the week as there is competition even in this line. The average earning per day is about Rs. 5/-. Allowing the maintenance cost of the pair and the cart, there is a net income of about Rs. 30/- per month which will vary according to seasonal conditions and other factors in the locality. This income cannot be regular as the pairs will be utilised for cultivation work whenever there is work in the fields.

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To improve their income, the small cultivator turns into a casual labourer and works in the neighbouring areas of garden land. His family members, particularly adult males, frequently work as labourers whenever there is no work on their own land and thus improve the income for the maintenance of the family. But even with this, the family income cannot be said to be adequate because the statement of the total expenses for the month or per annum given by them, in most cases exceeds the total income received by all sources. The truth or genuineness of their statements, is proved by the debts they have incurred, in almost all cases enquired into.

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**The Medium cultivators:** The position of these cultivators is only slightly better compared to the smaller class. The amount of assessment paid cannot be a criterion to assess the economic position of the ryot, since even these cultivators, paying an assessment of between Rs. 10/- and Rs. 30/- may not be well off, if they own purely dry lands. Even if one cultivates a hundred acres of dry land, if there had been no timely or adequate rains, there is no guarantee of a normal crop and the family thereby may be put to difficulties in the course of the year. Generally these ryots own some dairy cattle also mainly for the supply of manure and also the milk for household use. They depend upon the dryland cholam and pulse crop for supply of fodder. A few acres of garden land area owned by the medium ryot, will make his position more secure. Only four of the eleven cultivators examined own some garden land area, besides some dry land area and one of them is a tenant who is just managing to make both ends meet, having taken up 6 acres of garden on



lease. None of these cultivators have been able to save anything, as this is revealed by the fact that they have not been able to sink a well in their drylands or own more buffaloes for sale of milk to supplement their income for which there is good scope in the locality.

**The bigger cultivators :** These own varying areas of garden land besides some area of dryland. Their position is decidedly better and even among them those on the lower ranks i. e. paying an assessment of just over Rs. 30/- have to struggle hard in times of unfavourable seasons, as is the case, now to keep them above want throughout the year. They have to maintain not only the members of their families but also a stock of cattle, young and old, the total number of which may be anything from 10 to 30 for each cultivator. As the water level in the wells has gone down, due to lack of rains, many have been spending considerable amounts on deepening. The amount utilised for this purpose has been from their own savings in some cases and in some others from borrowings.

**Indebtedness position :** The total amount of indebtedness of all the 40 cultivators examined, exceeds Rs. 30,000/- as can be seen from the Statement given. Out of 24 cultivators of the smaller classes, only 5 are free from debts. This is because, the number of members of their family has not exceeded three. The average number in the family works out to 5 and the greater the number generally the greater the amount of debt. The maximum debt contracted is Rs. 4,000/- by one who owns 20 acres of dry land and who has to support 9 members in the family. Among the medium class, four out of eleven examined have got debts below Rs. 1,000/- Even among the bigger cultivators, two out of 4 examined have got debts. But in these cases, the debts have been contracted for purposes of repairs to existing wells or fitting up of electric motor and pump. The rates of interest on loans vary from 12% to 20% and loans have been obtained both on pronote basis and mortgage of lands.

There are two co-operative credit societies working in Goundampalayam village, one for the main village and the other for the hamlet of the Edayapalayam. The total amount disbursed as loans so far amounted to Rs. 8,000/- and there are 62 members in both societies. Five of the cultivators examined are members of these societies.

**Conclusion :** The studies during the year relate to different classes of cultivators, selected at random. It was thought essential, that we should first understand the economic position of the cultivators in general, some of the typical ones in fairly typical villages of the district. The rural economic conditions as prevalent in any area is largely those as created by the enterprise and activity of the agricultural community in general. High level of prosperity in the living conditions have been



achieved in places where the cultivators are highly enterprising. The following features as revealed in the study, are noteworthy :

1. The preponderance of the smaller cultivators in the rural areas who form over 80% of the agricultural community.

2. The majority of the cultivators own only drylands which means that they are in an unstable economic position.

3. The absence of any scope for savings in the industry of agriculture and no possibility of improvement of their economic position and the standard of living, so far as the smaller cultivators are concerned.

4. The undependability of dry lands, as the main stay of farming in this district, owing to the vagaries of the Monsoons and the narrow scope for improvements that can be effected in these lands.

5. The urgency of undertaking a drive for well sinking or tapping underground springs by boring on a long term plan, by Government help and liberal subsidies.

6. The setting apart of a certain amount of funds by Government over a series of years, whenever there is failure of rains and crops, with a view to subsidise by a scheme of crop insurance, if possible, such of the small farmers, who will be in distress due to small size holdings or large size of their families.

7. There are good and bad years and failure of the monsoon in a few years, is usually followed by one or two good years also.

8. Generally, the adverse effects of subdivision or fragmentation are not noticed to any alarming extent that they should constitute a problem to be solved urgently. At best there need be some check upon further subdivision of holdings.

9. There is necessity for liberalising of rules of Co-operative Land Mortgage Banking with reference to these areas, for the purpose of advancing loans to a larger extent to medium cultivators for specific purposes of undertaking sinking of well, in their holdings to convert part of the area into gardens and thus improve their economic position.



STATEMENT No. 1  
Cultivators paying assessment of below Rs. 10/- in the two villages

Name of the cultivator	Area owned in	Approximate income from land for 1951-1952	Supplementary income per year		Approximate annual expenditure for a family	Indebtedness or not—amount	No. of members of the family
			Source	Amount			
1. Nanjappa Gounder	2 Dry	Rs. 200/-	Sale of milk	Rs. 420/-	Rs. 480/-	Rs.	2
2. Nataraja Gounder	5½ Dry	Rs. 400/-	cooly labour	Rs. 300/-	Rs. 1,200/-	Rs. 2,000/-	6 (4 children)
3. Ravanna Gounder	3¼ Dry	Rs. 70/-	Sale of milk cart hire	Rs. 336/-	..	Rs. 1,200/-	7 (5 children)
4. Maruthakutti Gounder	5½ Dry	Rs. 420/-	Boy as post-man cart hire	Rs. 300/-	Rs. 900/-	..	2 member in Co-op. Society
5. C. Venkataswamy Gounder..	3¼ Dry	Rs. 200/-	Sale of milk cart hire	Rs. 900/-	Rs. 900/-	Rs. 1,000/-	5
6. Nanjakutty Konar	4¼ Dry	Rs. 570/-	Sale of milk	Rs. 300/-	Rs. 720/-	Rs. 5,000/-	2
7. Ramaswamy Gounder	6 Dry	Rs. 220/-	do.	Rs. 300/-	Rs. 700/-	Rs. 500/-	3
8. Ramaswami Chetti	2 Dry	Rs. 120/-	Cart hire	..	Rs. 180/-	Rs. 750/-	1
9. Lakshmana Gounder	5 Dry	Rs. 250/-	Cart hire	Rs. 480/-	Rs. 900/-	Rs. 300/-	4
10. Maradappa Gounder	3 Dry	nil	..	..	Rs. 1,000/-	Rs. 2,000/-	6
11. Kutti Gounder	2½ Dry	Rs. 100/-	Cooly work (in rubber firm employed)	Rs. 700/-	Rs. 720/-	..	6
12. Subbanna Gounder (Kaliammal)	2 Dry	Rs. 90/-	Road cooly work	Rs. 240/-	Rs. 420/-	Rs. 150/-	3



10. Maradappa Gounder	..	3 Dry	nil	..	Rs. 1,000/-	Rs. 2,000/-	6
11. Kutti Gounder	..	2½ Dry	Rs. 100/-	Cooly work (in rubber firm employed)	Rs. 700/-	Rs. 720/-	6
12. Subbanna Gounder (Kaliammal)	..	2 Dry	Rs. 90/-	Road cooly work	Rs. 240/-	Rs. 420/-	3

STATEMENT No. I—(Continued)

Name of cultivator	Area owned in	Approximate income from land for 1951-1952	Supplementary income per year		Approximate annual ex- penditure per family	Indebted- ness or not— amount	No. of members of the family
			Source	Amount			
	Acre	Rs.		Rs.	Rs.		
13. Subramanyam	..	4 Dry	Sale of milk	Rs. 500/-	Rs. 1,800/-	Rs. 2,500/-	10 (7 children)
14. Rayakannu Mudaliar	..	1½ Dry	Handloom	Rs. 280/-	Rs. 720/-	Rs. 300/-	7 (5 children)
15. Rangaswamy Mudaliar	..	2 Dry	Handloom	Rs. 280/-	Rs. 900/-	Rs. 700/-	2
16. Natesa Mudali	..	6 Dry	do.	..	Rs. 660/-	..	3
17. Subbanna Gownder	..	2 Dry	Cooly	Rs. 400/-	Rs. 600/-	..	3
18. Malla Gownder	..	3 Dry	Sale of milk cooly work	Rs. 360/- Rs. 430/-	Rs. 960/-	Rs. 500/-	6
19. Marathakutti Gownder	..	6 "	Sale of milk cart hire	Rs. 500/-	Rs. 1,200/-	Rs. 700/-	7
20. Kuppanna Mudaliar	..	4 Dry	Sale of milk	Rs. 360/-	Rs. 600/-	Rs. 500/- (not for agrl.)	4
21. Ramanna Gownder	..	2 Dry	Cart hire	Rs. 240/-	Rs. 560/-	Rs. 300/-	3
22. Rajakannu Mudaliar	..	2 Dry	do.	Rs. 500/-	Rs. 1,100/-	Rs. 300/-	6
23. Kuppanna Mudaliar (Tenant)	..	5 Dry	do. weaving	Rs. 480/- + Rs. 240/-	Rs. 1,800/-	..	3
24. Karuppu Gownder	..	2½ (G. land)	..	Rs. 700/-	..	..	3



**STATEMENT No. II**  
**Cultivators paying assessment of over Rs. 10/- and below Rs. 30/-**

Name of cultivator	Area owned (acre)	Approximate income from land for 1951-1952	Supplementary income per year		Approximate annual ex- penditure for family	Indebted- ness or not— amount	No. of members of the family
			Source	Amount			
1. Kalikutti Gownder	..	Rs. 1,700/-	Sale of milk	Rs. 750/-	Rs. 3,000/-	Rs. 2,000/-	7
2. Kallya Gownder	..	Rs. 600/-	"	Rs. 350/-	Rs. 1,000/-	Rs. 600/- (for well)	3
3. Nanjappa Gownder	..	Rs. 500/-	..	..	Rs. 1,800/-	..	5
4. K. Palani Gownder	..	Rs. 1,800/-	..	..	Rs. 2,400/-	Rs. 4,000/-	9 (son College study)
5. Maradappa Gownder	..	Rs. 1,200/-	..	..	Rs. 1,800/-	..	5 Savings Rs. 300/-
6. Nanjappa Gownder	..	Rs. 1,100/-	Cart hire	Rs. 1,200/-	Rs. 1,700/-	..	5
7. Rangaswamy Gownder	..	Rs. 2,000/-	Sale of vegetables	Rs. 800/-	Rs. 1,200/-	Rs. 500/-	4
8. Veera Naidu (tenant)	..	Rs. 4,020/-	..	..	Rs. 1,000/-	Rs. 500/-	3
9. Palaniswamy Gownder	..	Rs. 6,050/-	Sale of milk	Rs. 720/-	Rs. 2,400/-	..	6
10. Ariya Gownder	..	Rs. 1,500/-	"	Rs. 600/-	Rs. 2,400/-	..	6
11. Ravanna Gownder	..	Rs. 960/-	Cart hire	Rs. 400/-	Rs. 900/-	Rs. 500/- (for marriage)	4



STATEMENT No. III  
Cultivators paying assessment of over Rs. 30/-

Name of the cultivator	Area owned in acres	Approximate income from land for 1951-1952	Supplementary income per year		Approximate annual expenses per family	Indebtedness or not Amount	No. of members of the family
			Source	Amount			
1. Karuppa Gownder	.. 23 Dry	Rs. 1,400/-	Sale of young stock	Rs. 200/-	Rs. 1,800/-	Rs. 2,000/-	11
2. Chinnaaswamy Gownder	.. 23 4½ acre g. land 18½ ac. Dry	Rs. 3,000/-	..	..	Rs. 5,000/-	Rs. 2,000/-	5
3. Krishnaswamy Gownder	.. 22 11½ Garden 10½ Dry	Rs. 3,000/- Rs. 2,100/-	..	..	Rs. 3,000/-	..	5
4. K. Ramalinga Gownder	.. 18 10 ac. Dry 8 ac. G. land	Rs. 4,400/-	..	..	Rs. 3,000/-	..	6

10. Ariya Gownder	.. 10 (7 g. land) (3 dry)	Rs. 1,500/-	..	Rs. 600/-	Rs. 2,400/-	..	6
11. Ravanna Gownder	.. 7 Dry	Rs. 960/-	Cart hire	Rs. 400/-	Rs. 900/-	Rs. 500/- (for marriage)	4