

Enhancing the Efficiency of Farm Labour

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There is great contribution of labourers in farming and its share in the total farm expenses is very significant. To make farming more profitable, there is a need to reduce the cost of cultivation. It has been observed that the labour engaged in agriculture is not utilized properly and there exists the scope for increasing its efficiency. In addition to family labour, farmers normally engage casual labour and permanent labour according to the quantum of work. A wise farmer gets more work from the labourers as compared to other farmers. The field surveys revealed that work being got done from labourers is not upto the full capacity of the labourers. Work being done on contract basis is not up to the mark in many cases. It has been observed that the farmers allocate the work of spray of pesticides/weedicides to the untrained workers who do not follow proper spray techniques.

Therefore, the pesticide/weedicide cannot be sprayed uniformly and some spaces/patches may be left without spray in the crop and the farmers do not get the desired results. Similarly, in the month of March, irrigation needs to be given to wheat when there is no heavy wind blowing and this condition can only be assessed by an experienced person. Mostly, the paddy transplanting work is being done by the migrant labour on contract basis. Migrant labour transplants 15 to 23 plants per square metre against the recommendation of 33 plants per square metre. Even the operations like marketing of produce are left to labourers who do not know marketing specifications/norms. Therefore, the farmer should supervise each farm operation to be done by the labour to avoid imperfections in the work and to get the desired results.

Reasons for not using the farm labour efficiently

- Allocation of work not in accordance with the capability of the labourers
- Lack of supervision of the allocated work
- No assessment of the allocated work

- Not keeping the agricultural machinery/implements in order
- Non arrangement of farm inputs prior to its use
- Non adoption of diversified farming and subsidiary occupations
- Lack of proper farm planning
- Less practice of farmers working with the labour

Tips for getting maximum work done from labour

- **Allocation of work in accordance with the capability of labour:** There is great need to allocate the work to labourers keeping in view their capability. Some of workers are specialized in performing a particular work or can be trained. So work needs to be allocated according to their interest and efficiency. Ability for proper maintenance of farm machinery needs to be kept in view while allocating the work related to the use of farm machinery and implements. A trained person can detect any defect in the farm machinery immediately and set it right at proper time. Proper handling of machinery enhances its life. Similarly, the work pertaining to spraying of plant protection chemicals needs to be allocated to skilled labourers only.
- **Supervision and assessment of allocated work:** To get more and proper work from the labour, supervision and assessment of allocated work is required. Some of the farmers having large farm size can not afford to work with labourers engaged but in this situation they should allocate the work to labourers and assess it in the evening whether the desired work has been done properly or not. Labourers performing well needs to be appreciated and less performer needs to be persuaded to work more efficiently.
- **Diversified farming and adoption of allied enterprises:** Paddy-wheat is the main crop rotation in the State which does not provide

enough opportunities to keep the labourers engaged round the year. There is need to diversify the farming and adoption of allied enterprises such as dairy farming, fishery, poultry, bee keeping, etc. Most of the allied enterprises can be run successfully with the existing family and permanently hired labour.

- **Proper planning:** Advance planning for proper utilization of the available resources is must for making farming economical. For proper planning in agriculture, the knowledge about optimum time of different farm operations, required inputs, need of farm machinery, etc. is most urgent. A farmer should think a day ahead about the work to be allocated to the labour during the morning of next day. In this way, there will be no wastage of time of the labourers.
- **Involvement of family labour to work with hired labour:** The tendency of family members working with the hired labour is declining day by day and this is not a healthy practice. If the family members work with hired labour, more work can be got done from the hired labour as this practice creates the sense of competition and the quality of work will also be better.

- **Keep the farm machinery in order:** Usually the farmers set right the machinery in the morning when the labour is about to start the work and resultantly labour time is wasted. Implements/machinery likely to be used next day needs to be checked a day earlier. Combines and threshers needs to get repaired before the commencement of season.
- **Adoption of proper crop rotation:** Crop rotation should be planned in such a way that the farmer can get maximum work from the hired labour. If the available resources permit, prefer to take more than two crops in a year.
- **Kitchen gardening:** For domestic needs, there should be least dependence on the market for vegetables, fruits and pulses. These should be grown in kitchen garden. This practice would keep family labour busy. Proper use of labour would reduce cost of cultivation.

Therefore, it is advised that above points need to be kept in view for efficient management of farm labour.

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