

CHAPTER IX

ECONOMIC TRENDS

LIVELIHOOD PATTERN

In the beginning of the 20th century, almost three quarters of the population of the district were engaged in agriculture and in occupations auxiliary thereto or were dependent for their means of subsistence upon persons so engaged. Excluding the persons in the service of the state or railways, all the remaining quarter earned their livelihood by supplying the wants of the agricultural population.¹

There was hardly any change in the livelihood pattern till the Independence when according to the 1951 Census 75.9 per cent of the population of the then district depended on agriculture, 5.4 per cent on production and the rest on commerce, transport and other services. The irrigation from the Bhakra Nangal Project was first provided to the district in 1952-53 and extended progressively to more and more areas. The agricultural pattern of the district underwent transformation into an improved agricultural pattern and there was a shift in the system of land utilisation. The intensity of cropping also increased which in turn provided more employment at the farms throughout the year. Increased agricultural production added to the scope of employment and even necessitated the inflow of labour. The loading of grain and its transport and marketing also provided employment. The increased agricultural production which is a pre-requisite to industrialisation brought the development of industries like flour mills, cotton ginning and pressing factories, textile mills, etc. The 1961 Census revealed that 79.6 per cent of the workers in the then district were actually working as cultivators and agricultural labourers, 6.7 per cent working in industries and 13.7 per cent working in construction, trade and commerce, transport and communication and other services.

The break up of workers' participation into different industrial categories has been worked out for the present district on the basis of 1971 Census. Out of the total population of 11,27,525 persons, 3,19,548 were engaged in some kind of economic activities. The workers were thus 28.3 per cent of the district population as against 26.4 per cent

1. *Hissar District Gazetteer*, 1915, p. 55.

of the state. The district ranked third as regards the labour participation rate. The classification of the workers into different industrial categories as per 1971 Census is given below¹ :

| Industrial Category | Workers | Percentage to Total Workers |
|---|----------|-----------------------------|
| (i) As Cultivator | 1,73,481 | 54.3 |
| (ii) As Agricultural labourer | 54,934 | 17.2 |
| (iii) In Mining, Quarrying, Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Plantation, Orchards and Allied Activities | 7,303 | 2.3 |
| (iv) In Household Industry | 8,448 | 2.6 |
| (v) In Other than Household Industry | 15,351 | 4.8 |
| (vi) In Construction | 4,355 | 1.3 |
| (vii) In Trade and Commerce | 21,616 | 6.8 |
| (viii) In Transport, Storage and Communication | 5,684 | 1.8 |
| (ix) In Other Services | 28,376 | 8.9 |

STANDARD OF LIVING

Towards the close of 19th century the average annual consumption of foodgrains by a family of a man and wife, two children and an old person was reported to be as follows² :—

| Class | Annual Food Consumption (in Kgs) | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|-------|---------|-------|-------|------|---------|
| | Wheat | Gram | Bajra | Moth | Mung | Urd | Total |
| Agriculturists | — | — | 1,188.5 | 236.9 | — | — | 1,425.4 |
| Non-Agriculturists | 221.1 | 110.1 | 335.7 | — | 147.4 | 72.8 | 887.1 |

It was estimated that the ordinary household expenditure of a peasant family in easy circumstances averaged from Rs. 8 to 10 per month while that of a shopkeeper was as much as Rs. 15 or 20³.

The commercial classes were generally well off as they generally managed to turn a monthly profit at least equal to their expenditure.

1. *Statistical Abstract of Haryana, 1978-79*, pp. 31-34.

2. *Hissar District Gazetteer, 1883-84*, p. 28.

3. *Ibid*, p. 32.

On the whole, the agricultural classes were also in fairly comfortable circumstances in spite of the adverse agricultural conditions under which they lived and this was largely due to the absence of any excessive pressure of population on the soil.¹

Around the beginning of the present century, the availability of food was the only measure of standard of living in the absence of educational, health and other essential facilities. After Independence, the increase in agricultural production due to mechanisation, use of fertilizers and improved seeds and increased irrigation facilities led to much improvement in the economic well being of the agriculturist. This, in turn, helped them in wiping out their debts and have an improved standard of living. Slowly and steadily they began to adopt modern facilities. Most of the people now have pucca houses, moderately furnished. Means of transport, electricity, proper clothing, medical care and above all more employment have made a decent rural living. With the extension of educational facilities and awakening, the rural life is coming closer to town life.

PRICES AND WAGES

Prices

No authentic record of prices is available for the period prior to 1861. Prices of the principal foodgrains are available for the subsequent years which show the price trends prevailing in the then Hisar district during the second-half of the 19th century and the first-half of the 20th century. These prices can be seen in table XI of the Appendix which gives retail prices from 1861-65 to 1953. The prices rose considerably over the period and the rise was more than 600 per cent. The World War I in 1914, caused a sudden rise in prices. The upward trend of prices continued up to 1929 when the general depression brought a big slump in the market accompanied by unemployment. Due to successive failure of harvests from *kharif* 1928 onward, the district was in the grip of famine in 1929-30. The catastrophic fall in the prices of agricultural produce coupled with failure of harvest during 1931-1936 reduced the resources of the agriculturists to a very low level. In 1936-37, the prices of all important crops rose to some extent and the price rise was steep after the outbreak of World War II in 1939 but the district was shattered by famine which continued upto 1941-42. After 1941-42, the district was free from famines and the prices of agricultural commodities rose appreciably. The central government imposed price control in December, 1941 which continued up to January,

1. *Hisar District Gazetteer*, 1892, pp. 113-114.

1943 when decontrol on prices was announced. The state government fixed the maximum wholesale price of wheat of average quality in 1944. In 1945, statutory control over prices of wheat, wheat products, barley, paddy, *bajra* and *jowar* was announced by the state government. The control over the prices of barley, *bajra* and *jowar* was lifted in 1947 and of wheat and gram in 1948.

The prices during the First Five Year Plan (1951-56) showed a zig-zag movement. The prices of foodgrains and other articles showed an upward trend in 1952 and continued steady thereafter with a dip in 1954-55 when almost all major crops except wheat registered a steep fall. The prices in the Second Plan period (1956-61) exhibited an upward trend till the government adopted the policy of state trading in foodgrains from April 1, 1959 and the price rise was arrested. However, the state trading was abandoned in 1961-62 owing to improvement in the food situation and the central government in collaboration with the state government adopted a policy of procurement to build up a buffer stock with a view to stabilise the prices of the foodgrains.

The prices of agricultural produce increased enormously during the Third and Fourth Five Year Plans, the increase being unprecedented during the Fourth Plan. The comparison of prices of basic commodities prevailing during 1957-58 and 1977-78, as given in the following table, would reflect enormous increase in the prices during the last two decades :—

| Commodity | Prices in Rupees Per Kg. | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| | 1957-58 | 1977-78 |
| (1) Wheat flour | 0.45—0.46 | 1.40—1.60 |
| (2) Pulses | 0.42—0.82 | 3.00—4.10.. |
| (3) Mustard Oil | 2.19 | 8.00 |
| (4) Milk | 0.44 | 2.00 |
| (5) <i>Desi</i> Ghi | 5.00 | 25.00 |
| (6) Sugar | 0.81 | 2.85 |
| (7) Coarse Rice | 0.52—0.62 | 2.00 |

The Economic and Statistical Organisation, Haryana has worked out consumer price index of working classes taking price index as 100

for the year 1972-73. The price index of Hisar district was 134 in 1975 and 144 in 1978 as compared to 141 and 151 of the state.

WAGES

During the last quarter of the 19th century, the wages of the skilled and unskilled labour per day were 25 to 30 paise and 12 to 15 paise respectively. The hired labour were generally employed in weeding and harvesting and the labour were in nearly all cases village menials. The wages varied, when the harvest was good and the work plentiful. The labour got comparatively high wages, sometimes up to 25 paise plus a meal per day. The agricultural labour were by no means dependent on field labour alone but practised other handicrafts such as weaving, curing skins, etc. During the beginning of the 20th century, the labourer in dry years usually got 20-25 paise and one meal a day but during good harvest the wages rose to 50 paise and one meal a day. These high wages were, of course, prevalent at the harvest time. The wages of skilled and unskilled labour rose in the subsequent years and varied between one rupee 15 paise to one rupee 40 paise for skilled labour and 40 paise to 60 paise for unskilled labour in 1927. There was a steep fall in the wages after 1929-30 and the skilled labourer was available between 40 to 50 paise per day and unskilled labour from 12 to 25 paise per day during the year 1932.

In 1937, the common rate of daily wage in the Hisar district was 25 paise per day. The masons were paid at the rates varying from 50 paise to one rupee. The wages of blacksmith also varied from half rupee to one rupee. The ploughman got monthly wages between Rs. 6 to Rs. 10. The outbreak of the World War II in 1939 caused a rise in wages of both skilled and unskilled labour. When the wage census was taken in December 1943, the rate of daily wages for unskilled labourers in the district was 75 paise and that of carpenter and blacksmith was Rs. 2.10. The daily wages of mason varied from Rs. 1.50 to Rs. 1.56. The minimum monthly wages of ploughman were Rs. 13 whereas the maximum were Rs. 27.

In 1951, the lowest rate of wage of unskilled labour was Rs. 1.50 per day in Hisar district which was six times the rate of 1937. The daily wages of carpenter and other skilled labour varied from Rs. 3 to Rs. 5.

The wages remained constant during fifties but after 1959-60 the wages began to rise and rise was steep after 1969-70. The maximum daily wage of a labourer in 1957 was Rs. 4.00 which increased to

Rs. 6.42 in 1967 and Rs. 10.43 in 1972. In 1978, the highest daily wage of a skilled worker was Rs. 16.33 and that of agricultural labour Rs. 13.25. The wages in the district were higher than the state average. It may also be noticed that wages of an unskilled labourer increased about three times in the district between 1960 and 1978 while in the same period the wages of skilled labourers increased by more than four times.

GENERAL LEVEL OF EMPLOYMENT

In the absence of any data, it is difficult to arrive at the magnitude of unemployment or under-employment in the district. However, some idea of employment situation can be gathered from working of employment exchanges in the district.

Employment Exchanges .—The District Employment Exchange was established at Hisar in 1947 and upgraded to Divisional Employment Exchange in 1974. A University Employment Information and Guidance Bureau, Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar and a Town Employment Exchange, Hansi were opened in 1971. In 1977-78, there were three employment exchanges in the district. The statistics maintained by these employment exchanges is the only source of assessment of employment situation although the data is subject to a number of limitations. The relevant figures are set out below :

| Year (ending December) | No. of Employment Exchanges | No. of Registration during the Year | No. of Vacancies Notified | No. of Applicants placed in Employ- ment | Applicants on the Live Register |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|--|--|
| 1976 | 3 | 18,623 | 3,690 | 1,838 | 19,880 |
| 1977 | 3 | 21,362 | 5,989 | 2,687 | 23,935 |
| 1978 | 3 | 22,406 | 6,770 | 3,218 | 26,070 |

The problem of unemployment in the district is complex. Generally, there is shortage of experienced skilled work force and on the other hand there are large number of applicants having no work experience. On December 1978, there were 26,070 applicants on the live register of the employment exchanges functioning in the district. Out of these applicants only 790 were skilled workers and the remaining were un-skilled. Of the un-skilled workers 10,308 were matriculates 2,439

graduates and 335 were post-graduates and the remaining were non-matriculantes. Thus there was an acute problem of unemployment for the un-skilled educated applicants. The number of persons seeking employment (as per live register) has increased from 19,880 in 1976 to 26,070 at the end of December, 1978.

However, the employment exchanges functioning in the district have improved quality of services with the help of employment market information and vocational guidance facility. The employment information is collected from all the establishments in the public sector and those establishments in the private sector which employed 10 or more persons. The industry-wise data is tabulated quarterly. This data indicates the employment trend in various industries.

In 1978, there were 416 establishments in the public sector and 209 in the private sector on the record of the employment exchanges in the district. The employment in the public and private sector has increased from 35,443 in 1976 to 36,451 in 1978.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The community development programme in the district was launched in 1953 when the first block at Hansi was established. By 1962, the entire rural population of the district was covered by the development blocks. The district has 10 blocks and the number of villages, rural population covered and the area of each block as in 1978 is given as under :—

| Block | No. of Villages | Population Covered | Area (Sq. Kms) |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|
| 1. Hisar I | 27 | 65,165 | 433.73 |
| 2. Hisar II | 58 | 1,15,591 | 981.27 |
| 3. Tohana | 79 | 81,684 | 554.40 |
| 4. Barwala | 37 | 94,597 | 533.74 |
| 5. Hansi I | 40 | 99,104 | 619.19 |
| 6. Hansi II | 29 | 88,249 | 439.83 |
| 7. Narnaund | 34 | 79,099 | 412.00 |
| 8. Fatehabad | 56 | 1,08,526 | 854.02 |
| 9. Bhuna | 53 | 1,39,949 | 781.00 |
| 10. Ratia | 77 | 94,940 | 704.22 |

The community development programme in the district has embraced multifarious fields like distribution of chemical fertilizers among the farmers, reclamation of land, pavement of lanes, inoculation/vaccination of animals and opening of adult education centres. These community development programmes have a great impact on the community life in villages. It has helped to bring significant changes in their life pattern and thinking. Villagers have shed their earlier opposition to modern techniques of agriculture. They now unreservedly take advantage of the facilities provided by the development institutions and are actively participating in the cooperative movement, small savings, health and sanitation, cattle development and similar other activities.