

# AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN KARNATAKA – TRENDS AND PROBLEMS

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## Abstract

Agriculture labourers have become the most significant component in Indian agriculture. A little less than half of the total cost of manufacture of field crop is of labour. Economic expansion of any countries leads to structural changes in the work-related allocation. It meant that employment in the agricultural sector declined and it rose in the secondary and tertiary sector. Agricultural labourers naturally work long hours in physically difficult conditions, and their wages may be low down compared to other types of work. They may work on a recurring or temporary basis, and may be working by individual farmers, agricultural cooperatives, or larger agribusinesses. In spite of the challenges and uncertainties of agricultural labour, it is a vital component of worldwide food production, providing the necessary labour force to hold up the farming and harvesting of crops and livestock. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the significance of agricultural labourers, who have sustained to work throughout the pandemic to make certain a steady supply of food. However, the pandemic has also uncovered vulnerabilities in the worldwide food system, particularly with respect to issues of food uncertainty and labour rights. In the present study is seeks to understand the trends, problems and prospects of agricultural labourers in Karnataka as well as in India. Present study purely on the basis of secondary data collected for various census reports, journals, government records and related website, result of this study was the percentage of agricultural labourers in Karnataka has increased from 16.65 % to 28.74 % in 1991; gender wise analysis of agricultural labourers showed that the male agricultural labourers were greater than before in both rural and urban areas; The growth in genuine wages for male and female labour at the national level was 0.33 % and 0.45 % during 2014 to 2022 correspondingly.

**Keywords** – Agricultural labour, decadal growth rate, agricultural trends, Karnataka

## Introduction

Agricultural labourers are persons who are working to work in the agricultural segment. The work of agricultural labourers can differ depending on the crop or animal being produced, as well as the size and type of farm. Some labourers may concentrate in a particular task, such as planting or harvesting, while others may have a broader range of farm duties. In many parts of the world, agricultural labourers are informal and unregulated, with workers lacking lawful protections and basic reimbursement such as health insurance or sick

leave. This can make it not easy for workers to supporter for their rights and get better their working conditions. Some governments both central and state and organizations have implemented programs to get better working conditions and hold up the rights of agricultural labourers. For example, some initiatives focus on improving access to education and training, providing legal protections and benefits, and promoting sustainable and evenhanded farming practices. Overall, agricultural labourers are a complex and versatile sector that plays a dangerous role in global food production. While there are many challenges in front of agricultural labourers, there is also growing gratitude of the need to get better working conditions and hold up the rights of workers in this sector.

### Classification of Agricultural Labourers

Agricultural labourers can be classified into four groups such as,

1. Landless Labourers, who are emotionally involved to the land lords
2. Landless labourers, who are working for other individuals
3. Little farmers with miniature bits of land who dedicate the majority of their time working for others and
4. Farmers who have economic assets but who have one or more of their sons and dependants working for other wealthy farmers.

The first groups of labourers have been more or less in the place of serfs or slaves, they are also known as *bonded labourers*.

Agricultural labourers can also be separated in the following way,

1. Landless agricultural labourers
2. Very little cultivators whose key source of earnings due to their small and sub-marginal holdings is wage employ.

Again landless labourers it can be secret into two extensive groups;

1. Enduring Labourers attached to cultivating households.
2. Informal Labourers.

The second group can yet again be divided into three subgroups;

- a) Cultivators b) Share croppers c) Lease holders.

### Significance of the study

Agriculture labour has become the most imperative component in Indian agriculture. A little less than half of the total cost of manufacture of field crop is of labour. It is much more for labour concentrated crops such as sugarcane, cotton, vegetables etc. Agricultural labourers are communally and inexpensively poorest section of the society. Employees in the agricultural sector are classified into three main categories such as, cultivators, agricultural laborer and workers occupied in forestry, fishing and livestock etc.

The primary objects of the Five Year Plan to make certain fuller opportunities for work and improved living to all the sections of the rural society and, in particular, to give a hand over agricultural labourers and backward classes to come to the level of the relax. One of the most unique features of the rural financial system of India has been the growth in the number of agricultural personnel, cultivators and agricultural labourers occupied in crop production.

It is a recognized trend that as a financial system matures; there is a movement of agricultural personnel from low output agriculture to higher efficiency sectors. However in India, the trend has not been incomplete to just declining share of agriculture in total employment but also has led to an important decline in complete number of people employed in the agricultural sector. It is really worrying that the quantity of agricultural laborers has augmented and the cultivators have indicated a refuse. In this regards present study is an analysis of the trends in agricultural labourers in Karnataka as well as India throughout the last decades using Census data. It is an attempt to identify the agricultural labourer's problems and prospects and also ensures the changes in agricultural labourer's livelihoods.

### Objectives

1. To investigate the trends in agricultural labourers in Karnataka
2. To identify the problems and Prospects of agricultural labourers in Karnataka
3. To study the initiatives measures of the Government to improving the livelihoods of agricultural labourers in Karnataka.

### Conceptual framework of the study

- **Agriculture** – The word Agriculture is resulting from two Latin words 'ager' or 'agri' means 'soil' and 'cultura' sense cultivation. Agriculture is an functional science which encompasses all aspects of harvest production as well as horticulture, livestock rearing, fisheries, forestry, etc. agriculture means, it is the put into practice of cultivating vegetation and livestock to supply food, fiber, medicinal vegetation, and other foodstuffs.
- **Agriculture labourers** – An agricultural laborer is a human being who workings on a farm for a livelihood, first and foremost earning their profits through physical labour, such as tilling the soil, rising crops, or managing livestock.
- **Agricultural wages** – Agricultural wages are the wages salaried to populace who work in the agricultural sector, which includes farm personnel and labourers in crops, nurseries, greenhouses, and farms, ranches, and aquaculture. Agricultural wages are a issue that contributes to the price fluctuations of agricultural products.

### Methodology

- **Design of the study** – The present study is based on descriptive analysis to explain the trends; initiatives to be taken for improve the livelihood, problems and prospects of agricultural labourers in state of Karnataka.

- **Data source** – Present study is based on secondary sources data; Secondary data have been collected from census reports published by Registrar General of India, different published sources like books, journal articles and other relevant websites.
- **Statistical techniques** – In this study used simple average, percentage and growth rates as analytical tool for analysis and comparison of the collected data.

**Analysis of the data**

**1. Trends in agricultural labourers in India and Karnataka**

Economic progress of any nation leads to structural changes in the occupational allocation. It meant that employment in the agricultural segment declined and it rose in the secondary and tertiary sector. It was experiential from the census data that the occupational allocation in the total labor force was still more than half of the workforce was intense in agriculture. Though, an important trait of the trend was that there was a sharp rise in the size of agricultural laborers at National level, but there was a spiky decline in the state of Karnataka.

**Table 1**

*Trends in agricultural labourers in India and Karnataka*

Year	India	Karnataka
	Total Agricultural Labourers (% to total workers)	Total Agricultural Labourers (% to total workers)
1961	19.56	16.65
1971	26.98	26.69
1981	26.02	26.78
1991	27.16	28.74
2001	26.69	26.40
2011	30.00	25.67
2021	45.5*	--

*Source: Registrar General, Census report-2011*  
*\*Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation*

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**Figure 1**

*Trends in agricultural labourers in India and Karnataka*

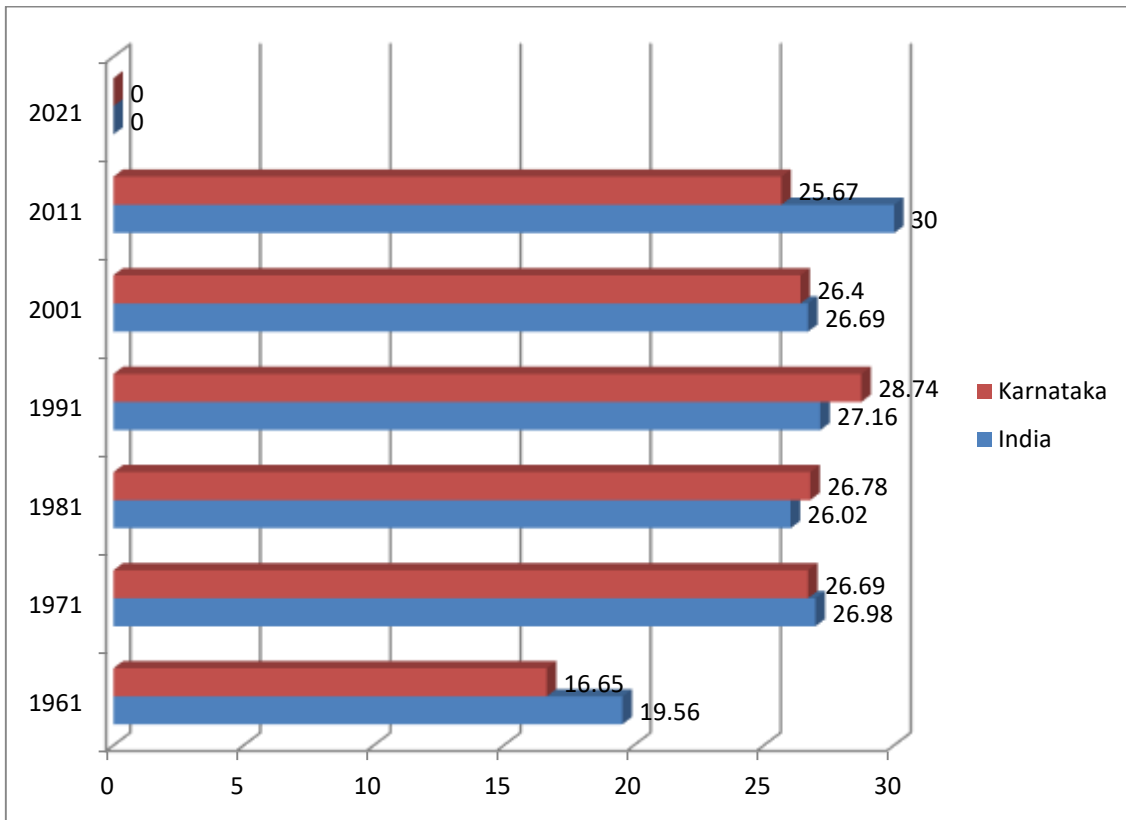


Table 1 and figure 1 clearly showed that the % of agricultural labourers in India increased since 1961. It has better than before from 19.56 % in 1961 to 30.00 % in 2011. On the other hand, though the percentage of agricultural labourers in Karnataka has increased from 16.65 % to 28.74 % in 1991, after 1991 agricultural labourers has started to decline progressively in Karnataka. It is declined from 26.40 % in 2001 to 25.67 % in 2011, in 2021 progressively increased agricultural labourers in India.

**Table 2**

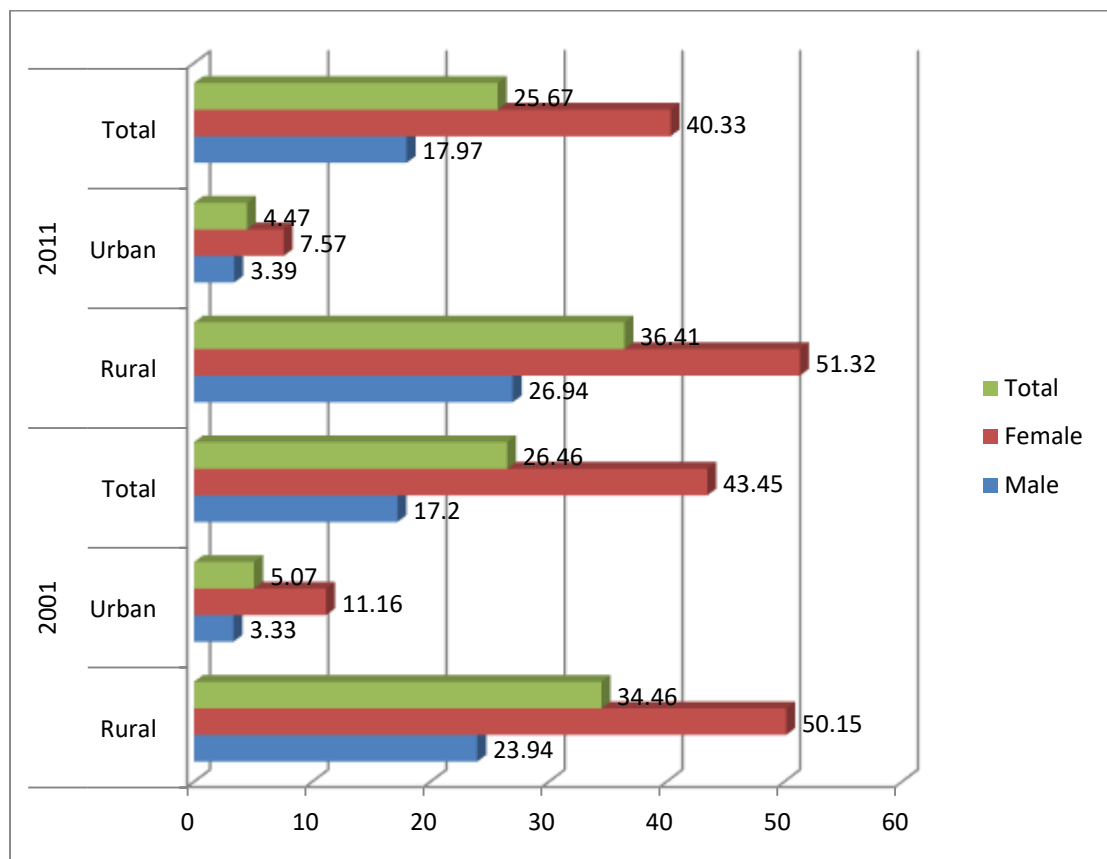
*Decadal changes of agricultural workers in India*

Agricultural Labourers	2001			2011		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Male	23.94	3.33	17.20	26.94	3.39	17.97
Female	50.15	11.16	43.45	51.32	7.57	40.33
Total	34.46	5.07	26.46	36.41	4.47	25.67

Source: Registrar Genera, Census report-2011

**Figure 2**

*Decadal changes of agricultural labourers in India*



The table 2 and figure 2 discovered that the data related to two decades of agricultural labourers data by gender and spatial changes. The total agricultural labourers were 26.46 % in 2001 but it is decreased to 25.67 % in 2011. Though, the rural agricultural labourers were greater than before from 34.46 % in 2001 to 36.41 % in 2011. On the other hand urban agricultural labourers were decreased. The gender wise analysis of agricultural labourers showed that the male agricultural labourers were increased in both rural and urban areas. On the other hand, the female agricultural labourers increased in rural areas but decreased in urban areas.

**Table 3**

*Details of Decadal changes of agricultural labourers in Karnataka*

Agricultural labourers	2001	2011	Changes
Rural	43.73	44.33	0.6
Urban	5.13	5.07	-0.06
Total	34.54	33.81	-0.73

*Source: Registrar General, Census report-2011*

Table 3 revealed that, agricultural labourers’ growth has seen some radical changes. The agricultural labourers’ % to total % has decreased. It has negative grade. The rural agricultural labourer has just grown at just 0.6 % which is still less than 1 %. On the other hand, it has decreased slightly in urban agriculture labourers with -0.06 %.

**Table 4**

*Details of real agricultural wages across gender in India (1995 to 2022)*

	(Per cent)	
Period	Male	Female
1995 – 2006	1.22	1.04
2006 – 2014	5.12	7.03
2014 – 2022	0.33	0.45

*Source: Official website of Chief labour commissioner, GoI,*

**Figure 3**

*Agricultural wages with respect gender in India (1995 to 2022)*

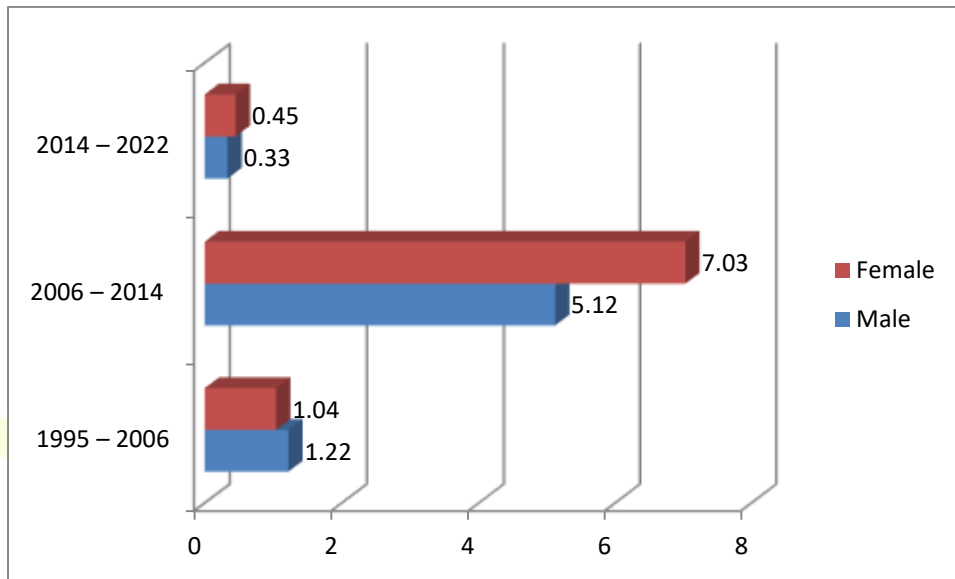


Table 4 and Figure 3 indicate that, the trends in real agricultural wages by gender at national level from 1995 to 2022. At the national level, the regular agricultural wages have been predictable based on three major farm operations- harvesting, sowing, and ploughing. The supposed wages have been articulated in real terms using consumer price Index-Agricultural labourers (CPIAL) as the deflator. It shows that between 1995 and 2006, the genuine agricultural wages increased only slightly, from ` 100 to ` 116 at the yearly growth of 1.22 % for male labour and from 68 to 78 at the growth rate of 1.04 % for female labour at the national level. The male labourers earned considerably higher wages as compared to the female counterparts. During 2006 and 2014 wages for male and female labourers augmented at the annual growth rate of 5.12 % and 7.03 % respectively. One of the main reasons behind the sharp augment in real agricultural wages was the initiation of MGNREGS, during the period 2006-2008. The genuine agricultural wages reached a raised ground in 2014 and are inactive since then for both male and female labourers. The growth in real wages for male and female labour at the national level was 0.33 % and 0.45 % during 2014 to 2022, respectively. No structural smash was observed in the real wages at the collective level on account of lockdown compulsory to check COVID illness in 2020.

## 2. Problems and Prospects of agricultural labourers in Karnataka

### ➤ Problems:

The following problems are facing everyday in agricultural activities;

1. **Climate Change** - Typical weather change is disturbing agriculture, and agricultural laborers are among the most susceptible to its impacts, such as changes in rainfall patterns and tremendous weather events.
2. **Exploitation of Child Labour** - Children are frequently concerned in agricultural work, and are bare to health risks and exploitation, and frequently denied access to education.
3. **Exploitation** - Agricultural laborers are frequently exploited by middlemen and contractors who take benefit of their lack of edification, skills, and bargaining power.
4. **Gender Disparity** - Women agricultural laborers frequently face gender-based prejudice, such as lower salary and limited opportunities, compared to their male counterparts.
5. **Physical condition Risks** - Agricultural laborers are frequently bare to health risks such as chemical experience, heat pressure, and physical injure, leading to long-term health evils.
6. **Casual Work** - Agricultural laborers are frequently informal, leaving personnel without lawful protections, job security, and reimbursement.
7. **Lack of Access to Credit** - **Agricultural** laborers frequently lack access to credit, making it hard for them to spend in their own businesses and get better their livelihoods.
8. **Lack of Association** - Agricultural laborers often lack association and representation, making it hard for them to good deal for better wages and working circumstances.
9. **Lack of Social Safety** - Lots of agricultural laborers do not have access to social safety reimbursement, such as healthcare or retirement reimbursement, leaving them susceptible to fiscal unsteadiness and insecurity.
10. **Landlessness** - Lots of agricultural laborers are landless and have to work for others as pay laborers, leading to a lack of manage over their livelihoods and reliance on others.
11. **Incomplete Access to Markets** - A lot of agricultural laborers have imperfect access to markets, and are frequently forced to sell their produce to middlemen at low prices, leaving them with slight bargaining power.
12. **Limited Service Opportunities** - Regular agricultural work can lead to joblessness during off-seasons, making it hard for laborers to maintain themselves throughout the year.
13. **Low Pay** - Agricultural laborers are frequently salaried low wages, which are not sufficient to cover their basic requirements. This leads to scarcity and a lack of access to basic requirements such as healthcare, education, and appropriate housing.
14. **Relocation** - Many agricultural laborers wander to cities or other areas in search of enhanced job opportunities, which can lead to communal and economic displacement, as well as family division.
15. **Deprived Working Conditions** - Agricultural laborers frequently work in challenging conditions, such as severe weather, experience to chemicals and pesticides, and physically demanding tasks, leading to health troubles.

### ➤ Prospects:

1. **Right of entry to Land** - Governments can supply land access to agricultural labourers, moreover through land redeployment or land tenure reform, enabling them to control their have livelihoods and get better their income.
2. **Right of entry to Technology** - Access to contemporary technology such as mobile phones, climate forecasting, and accuracy farming tools can help agricultural labourers to get better productivity and decrease risk.
3. **Capability Building** - Capacity building programs can help to construct the skills and knowledge of agricultural labourers, and improve their competitiveness and output.
4. **Supportive Farming** - Supportive farming can help agricultural labourers' access resources and split costs, making it easier to start their own businesses and get better their livelihoods.
5. **Diversification** - Diversification of agricultural manufacture can generate new opportunities for agricultural labourers to work in dissimilar crops and livestock, reducing their reliance on a single crop or activity.
6. **Edification and Training** - Education and training programs can assist agricultural labourers obtain new skills and knowledge, improving their employability and earning possible.
7. **Pale Trade** - Fair trade schemes can assist to make certain that agricultural labourers get fair wages and better working circumstances.
8. **Gender Mainstreaming** - Gender mainstreaming can assist to address gender disparity among agricultural labourers by empowering women and promoting their contribution in the agricultural sector.
9. **Administration Initiatives** - Governments can apply policies and programs to offer better working conditions, social safety, and pale wages for agricultural labourers.
10. **Marketplace Linkages** - Improved market linkages can assist agricultural labourers access improved prices for their produce, raising their profits and improving their economic status.
11. **Automation** - With the progression of technology, there is a growing tendency towards mechanization in agriculture, which can decrease the need for physical labour and get better competence.
12. **Social safety** - Governments can put into practice social security programs such as money transfers, health cover, and retirement fund schemes to provide a safety net for agricultural labourers.
13. **Sustainable Agriculture** - Sustainable agricultural practices, such as natural farming, can generate new opportunities for agricultural labourers to work in a better and more environmentally gracious way.
14. **Sustainable Livelihoods** - Hard work towards sustainable livelihoods can assist to generate substitute income opportunities for agricultural labourers, such as eco-tourism, handicrafts, and foodstuff processing.
15. **Value-Chain Expansion** - Value chain development can get better access to markets and allow agricultural labourers to imprison more value from their manufacture.

### **3. Initiatives measures of the Government to improving the livelihoods of agricultural labourers**

In order to get better the circumstances of agricultural labourers in India both the central as well as the state Governments have taken a range of steps since independence. These measures are as follows:

- a) **20-Point Programme** – Central Government introduced the 20-point economic programme in July 1975 in which steps were taken to get better the economic condition of landless workers.
- b) **Transitory of minimum wage Act** - In 1948, the Minimum Wages Act was passed and the state Governments was advised to fix the minimum wages consequently.
- c) **Elimination of Bonded Labourers** - In order to take away agrarian slavery after independence Indian constitution has undertaken lawmaking measures to abolish the put into practice of bonded labour.
- d) **Providing land to landless labourers** - After transitory legislation for fixing maximum on land assets, state Government acquired excess lands and distributed it among the landless labourers.
- e) **Stipulation of Housing cities to houseless** - Various states have approved essential legislations for providing accommodation sites to agricultural labourers.
- f) **Particular schemes for providing employment** - For providing substitute source of employment among the agricultural labourers a multiplicity of schemes have already been launched by both the central and the state Governments. These schemes comprise;
- i) Collide Scheme for Rural Employment (CSRE)
  - ii) Pilot Intensive Rural Employment Scheme (PIRES)
  - iii) Foodstuff for works programme (FWP)
  - iv) National Rural Employ Programme (NREP)
  - v) Rural Landless Eemploy Programme (RLEP)
- g) **Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (which come in with the merger of NREP and RLEGP)** - The Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) was a centrally sponsored scheme in India that aimed to offer employ for the unemployed and underemployed in pastoral areas. The scheme was restructured in 1999 as the Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY). The JGSY's main objective is to generate village infrastructure that will assist the rural deprived find sustained employment.
- h) **National Scheme of Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSM)** - TRYSEM is a program that provides technological and decision-making skills to rural youth from families below the scarcity line. The program's goals are to assist rural youth find self-employment or wage employment in industries, services, business activities, and agricultural and associated sector.
- The Government both central and state has shown consciousness of the problems of agricultural workers and all plan documents have recommended ways and means to restructure the lot of these people.

### Suggestions

1. The concerned state governments should open labour offices to guide about employment opportunities and wage rates to eradicate the middlemen.
2. The government should pass a legislation to order and standardize the working condition of the agricultural labour. Administrative mechanism should be set up for its successful implementation.
3. Get better- the conditions of agriculture by adopting enhanced rigorous methods and manifold cropping.
4. Recognition at cheaper rates of interest on easy terms of imbursement for undertaking supplementary profession.

### Conclusion

The above analysis on census data associated to agricultural labourers in India and Karnataka reveals that still agriculture segment is the major sector to offer employment. At all India, agricultural labourers have been rising which means, the secondary and tertiary sectors are unsuccessful to take up the agricultural labourers. On the other hand, the situation of Karnataka state with look upon to agricultural labourers has dissimilar from at all India. Even the agricultural labourers have augmented in absolute number the percentage of agricultural labourers to total workers has been lessening in Karnataka. Due to declining of agricultural labour in Karnataka, farmers are facing labour insufficiency for agricultural operations. Government has to create employment to take up the agricultural labourers to secondary and tertiary sectors. In pastoral areas, it has to give self-assurance build non-farm employment. Because educated adolescence is not ready to work in agriculture.

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