CURRENT STRUCTURE OF LAND HOLDINGS AND IMPORTANCE OF SMALL FARMS: EVIDENCES FROM PAKISTAN

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Abstract. In agrarian economies like Pakistan, agriculture structure especially, pattern of ownership of land and size distribution are crucial indicator and principal form of wealth and political power. The present study represents an attempt to look in current structure of land holdings, land tenure, and land fragmentation by using Pakistan agriculture census report 2010. Opportunities and challenges faced by small farms in Pakistan are also discussed. Despite two land reforms (1959, 1972), to reform the feudal agrarian structure of the country, agricultural lands are highly skewed in favor of large farms. This dominancy of large farms in owning means of production leads to severe inequalities in the distribution of wealth and income which is major obstacle in provision of basic need to large proportion of population. Tenancy, a problem in the past because poor tenants were handicapped in accessing different institutes and services, is solved somehow. Despite different consolidation programs in the past, the fragmentation issue is there, 34 percent of total farm area is fragmented in Pakistan. Fragments are barrier in investment in farm development projects on farm level. A majority of farms (58%) in Pakistan are small farms, so for the prosperity of country, well-being of small farms is very important. Due to diversification of agriculture from cash crop to high value commodities, and concepts like tunnel farming, organic agriculture, horticulture and livestock, small farms tend to offer some opportunities. On the other hand, natural disasters, pest attacks, access to financial markets, unfavorable macro-economic policies are threatening the prosperity of small farms.

Key words: land holdings, agriculture census report, small farms, high value commodities, Pakistan.