



## AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES IN LAWNGTLAI RURAL DEVELOPMENT BLOCK OF MIZORAM

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### ABSTRACT

Agriculture constitutes one of the major sources of income among the people of Mizoram. The areas used for cultivation in Mizoram are usually slashed and burnt down to ashes and are abandoned for years, the land is used and the same plot is re-use after 3-5 years. More than half of the total population is either directly or indirectly involved in agriculture. However, the income from agriculture is less than 5% of the State Gross Domestic Product (State Economic Report, 2015). In the last few decades Mizoram witnessed several changes in agriculture pattern as many farmers have been shifting from cultivation to small-scale agricultural farming.

This paper highlights the transformation of agricultural practices and the major factors affecting agricultural production and attempt is made to examine the prevailing socio-economic aspects associated with farmers with special reference to Lawngtlai Rural Development Block and a questionnaire method was used for collecting relevant information for the purpose. The research found that there exist major transformations of agricultural practices in the last couple of decades. The cycle of shifting agriculture period has been shortened drastically. It is also revealed that farmers are gradually adopting settled farming from shifting agriculture and that government intervention and assistance has been increasing more and more in this field. It is suggested that agricultural practice be transformed from jhuming to settled farming and from cultivating the traditional crops to cash crops with governmental and institutional support for shifting to higher income in agricultural and horticultural crops.

**Keywords:** Agricultural Farming, Settled Farming, Jhuming, Horticulture, Cultivation, Economic Sustainability, Subsistence.

## **Introduction**

Lawngtlai district is situated in the southern part of Mizoram and the district shared international boundary with Myanmar to the east and Bangladesh to the west. The district is bordered with Lunglei district in the north and Siaha district in the south and on the east. On the west, the Thega River of Lawngtlai district shares boundary with Bangladesh and the Kaladan River on the eastern part shares boundary with the district of Saiha. There are three Sub-Divisions namely: Chawngte, Sangau and Lawngtlai (Sadar) and four Rural Development Blocks which are: Lawngtlai Rural Development Block, Sangau Rural Development Block, Bungtlang South Rural Development Block and Chawngte Rural Development Block. From the erstwhile Chhimtuipui district Lawngtlai district became a separate district on 11th, November, 1998. It is a district covering an area of 2557.10 km<sup>2</sup> (2011 Census). Its terrain is mountainous and sloppy with a small strip of low-lying soggy plain along the western part of Chamdur Valley.

According to 2011 census, Lawngtlai district has a population of 117,444 which makes it the 611<sup>th</sup> district in rank among the districts of India. It has a population density of 46 inhabitants per square kilometer (120/sq.mile) with a growth rate of 59.53% over the past decade of 2001-2011. Lawngtlai district has a sex ratio of 945 females to every 1000 males, and the literacy rate is 66.41%.

Lawngtlai district has a mild and relatively warm climate. It is generally hot in summer and moderately cold in winter.

During winter the temperature ranges from 8°C to 24°C and during summer, the temperature varies between 18°C and 32°C. The western side of the district has lower altitude in contrast to the eastern side, and thus it has a little warmer climate than the eastern part. Humidity is high throughout the south-west monsoon while it reaches to the extent of 85%. The district of Lawngtlai is covered by the south-west monsoon and heavy rainstorm is usually received between the month of May and September annually. It has an average annual rainfall of about 2558 mm. the hottest season starts from March and usually ends up in August. It remains extremely cloudy during the rainy season. Cloudiness reaches its peak from March and calm down in the month of July. A pleasant weather starts from September and generally continues up to January in the next year.

One-third of the total inhabitants of Lawngtlai district largely depend on agriculture farming, which is mostly based on the traditional system of shifting cultivation. Only small groups of the urban population are employed in the government services, banks and schools, and only a few sections of urban people are engaged in small-scale businesses. It is one of the most backward districts in the State and has one of the lowest market productions.

The Agriculture Department, the Horticulture Department and the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (Farm Science Centre-popularly known as the KVK) are the nodal agencies which are responsible for the progress and development of agriculture farming in the district. In order to facilitate

transportation and quick access to agricultural lands and the market the government has undertaken the construction of several link roads within the district under different projects.

### Objectives

1. To identify the socio-economic profile of Lawngtlai RD Block.
2. To identify farming practices in Lawngtlai RD Block.
3. To identify problems of farming in Lawngtlai RD Block.

### Methodology

The paper is mainly based on primary data collected by the authors. To understand the conditions of farmers, field survey was conducted through questionnaire using random sampling techniques from 60 samples. Perspectives of the farmers towards their agriculture activity can be illustrated through percentage.

### Results and Discussions

#### Number of farmland

As shown in Table 1, 35% have one farmland each while 65% of respondents have their farmlands/agricultural land in more than one place.

**Table 1: Number of farmland**

Farmland	Frequency	Percentage
1	21	35%
2 or more	39	65%

#### Location of farmland

As shown in Table 2, 12% of respondents have their kitchen farms nearby their houses. 80% of respondents have their

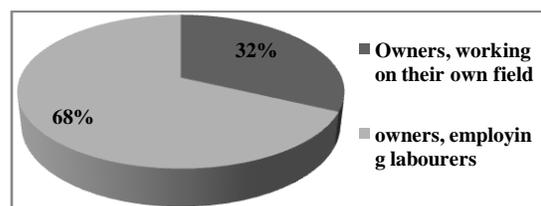
agricultural land outside their localities and 8% of the respondents have their agriculture land in both nearby houses and also outside their villages.

**Table 2: Location of farmland**

Location	Frequency	Percentage
Nearby	7	12%
Outside	48	80%
Both nearby and outside localities	5	8%

#### Employment towards agriculture

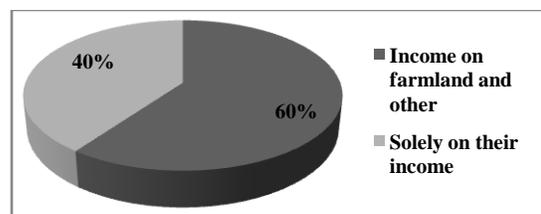
As shown in Figure 1, 62% of respondents are owners of the farmlands who are actually working on their own fields whereas 38% of respondents employ labourers on their field.



**Figure 1: Employment towards agriculture**

#### Source of income

As shown in Figure 2, 60% of respondents mentioned that they depend both on agriculture and other income, while the remaining 40% of respondents depend solely on the income of their agriculture.



**Figure 2: Source of Income**

### Government beneficiaries

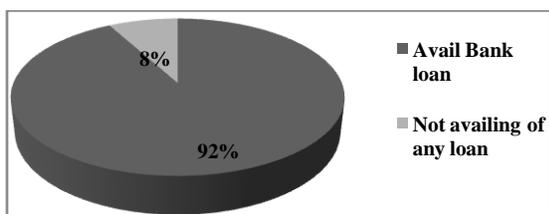
As shown in **Table 3**, 77% of respondents are beneficiaries of government schemes while the remaining 23% of respondents says that they are non-beneficiaries of any government schemes.

**Table 3: Government beneficiaries**

No. of Govt. beneficiaries	Frequency	Percentage
Beneficiaries	46	77%
Non-beneficiaries	14	23%

### Availment of Loans

As shown in **Figure 3**, regarding availment of loans, 92% of the respondents avail bank loans while 8% of the respondents do not avail of any bank loans.



**Figure 3: Availment of Loans**

### Monthly Income

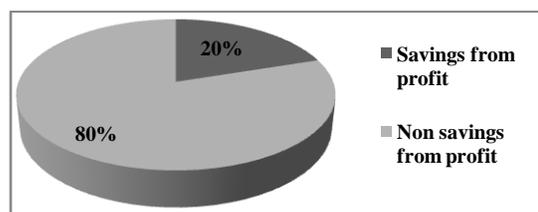
As shown in **Table 4**, 28% of the respondents have an average monthly income of Rs.1000/- to Rs.5000/-, 32% of respondents claimed that an amount of Rs.5000/- to Rs.10000/- is their average monthly income, 25% of respondents says that the amount of Rs.10000/- is their monthly income and the remaining 15% of respondents are not too sure of their monthly income from their products.

**Table 4: Monthly Income**

Income	Frequency	Percentage
1000 – 5000	17	28.33%
5000 – 10000	19	31.66%
10000 and above	15	25%
Not sure	9	15%

### Savings from the profit

As shown in **Figure 4**, 80% of respondents mentioned that they do not have savings from their earnings while 20% of them have savings from their profits.



**Figure 4: Savings from the profit**

### Continuation of agriculture

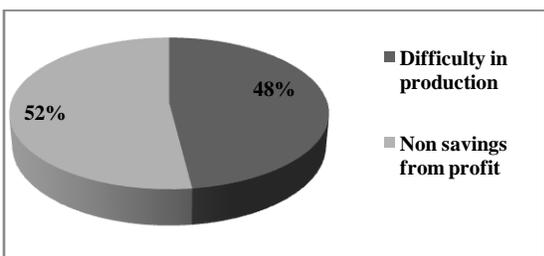
As shown in **Table 5**, 75% of respondents advocated continuing the management of farmland/agricultural land by their children and future generations as their occupation while 21.66% of respondents regarded the same with disfavour, and the remaining 3.33% of respondents are clueless.

**Table 5: Continuation of agriculture**

Farmer's response	Frequency	Percentage
Favour	45	75%
Disfavour	13	21.66%
Undecided	2	3.33%

**Production of agriculture**

As shown in **Figure 5**, 52% of respondents claimed that they can carry out agricultural activity throughout the year but the good products depend upon the harvesting season, while 48% of respondents expressed that they have difficulty in producing agricultural goods throughout the year.



**Figure 5: Production of agriculture**

**Social attitude towards agriculture**

As shown in **Table 6**, 68.33% of the total respondents did not feel any social indifference in their occupation, the other 23.33% of the respondents feels indifference from certain section of the people practicing other occupation and the remaining 8% of the respondents says they are unsure.

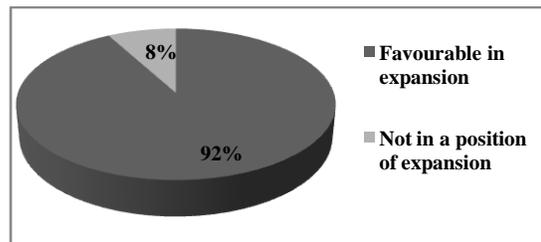
**Table 6: Social attitude towards agriculture**

Attitudes of people	Frequency	Percentage
Indifference	41	68.33%
Difference	14	23.33%
Undecided	5	8.33%

**Expansion of agriculture**

As shown in the **Figure 6**, 92% of the total respondents replied that they would like to expand their agricultural activities while 8% of them were not in a position to

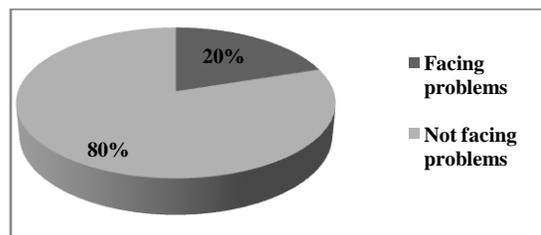
take further steps in the expansion of their agricultural activity.



**Figure 6: Expansion of agriculture**

**Problems faced by the owner**

As shown in the **Figure 7**, 80% of respondents said that they did not face problems in marketing their agricultural product and the remaining 20% of respondents expressed problems in selling their agricultural products.



**Figure 7: Problems faced by the owner**

**Impact on education of children**

From **Table 7**, 80% of the total respondents said that their occupation as farming do not hinder the education of their children while 20% of the total respondents claimed that farming as a profession has a negative impact upon the education of their children.

**Table 7: Impact on education of children**

Farmer's response	Frequency	Percentage
Positive	48	80%
Negative	12	20%

## **Conclusion**

The people of Lawngtlai district mainly rely on agricultural farming. The inhabitants of the town are aware of the significance of agriculture farming and though many of the residents are government employees and have other means of income, they encourage farming as a means of livelihood. Some sections of the farmers not only focused on kitchen garden, they also extended their farming activity to distant areas where they endure hardships for their survival. They cultivate rice and grow different varieties of vegetables.

As per the assessment from the questionnaire the importance of agricultural farming has been well outlined as all the respondents conveyed the importance on agriculture as one of the most reliable means of livelihood. Many farmers prefer their children and grandchildren to follow their footsteps and earn a living as a farmer. From the survey conducted it can be concluded that majority of the respondents' favours their children to continue their profession or engage in agriculture/settled farming activities. This is due to the fact that the education of their children is not hindered by the occupation practiced by their parents. It may be mentioned that majority of the parents who are from the farming community encouraged their children to take up agricultural farming as there is a good scope to earn a living by selling/exporting their products in the market both within Lawngtlai district and elsewhere

As per the survey conducted and its findings majority of the respondents feels that they do not face any social

discrimination due to the occupation they practice which is agriculture farming. Lesser percentage of the farming community felt that there is certain degree of social indifference or discrimination by section of the people employed in government job or other profession. Very few percentages of the farmers are of the opinion that there is no discrimination or social indifference whatsoever.

Agriculture remains an unorganized sector consisting of small farmers and agricultural workers. The benefits of technology in agriculture in terms of productivity and profitability vary for different categories of farmers. Farmers practice traditional farming methods and marketing methods. Farmers should be made aware of the availability of raw materials and be provided with market information to increase farmers' productivity and sale of cash crop will also increase.

The quality and quantity of agricultural products are beyond the control of producers. Since product quality depends on favorable weather conditions year after year, changes in climatic conditions cause changes in the quality and quantity of agricultural products, causing price fluctuations and uniform classification systems. Most agricultural products are relatively depending upon customers demand, so agricultural prices rise sharply when they run out of agricultural supplies.

Majority of the farmers have difficulty in selling or exporting their agricultural products in the market. Some of the farmers can sell their produces locally, while some of them even finds it difficult in selling them

in the market. For farmers who only sell their crops locally, sometimes they do feel that their hard work and income do not match.

The main crops grown in the district are rice, corn, sesame seeds, potatoes and ginger. In terms of productivity, average yields are even lower than the state average. Agricultural products and forest products are sold in the primary market at village or block level. Since the village does not have a good marketing base or there are no routine buyers, goods are usually sent to the nearest town or suburb, especially to the capital of the next district. There are no reliable market facilities in the town, with the exception of weekend markets. The market is usually thin, and there are no daily marketing events in the town. Generally, it is only at the weekend bazaar that sellers and buyers come to meet together.

The distributive prices of farmer's agricultural products in the selected RD block are relatively high for the following reasons: 1) There is a difficulty in assembling small output of several producers scattering within the rural block. 2) The lower the frequency of transportation the costlier the rates. 3) Inability to maintain regular production and delivery. 4) The need for storage and processing increases with the seasonal nature of production. 5) The risk of storing and handling products that are not easily damaged is increased.

Since 92% of the respondents availed of bank loans for financial assistance it is obvious that the farmers would undoubtedly seek government to help them to increase their agriculture output to pay back their

loans. Though there are certain schemes from the government to uplift farmers, this is not properly implemented for the benefit of the farmers. From this perspective, farmers and other agricultural workers should build a stronger bond and relationship with the government departments for their upliftment. The government should work efficiently to improve the conditions of farmers. The farmers' effort in an attempt to maintain sustainable economic growth and the initiatives taken by farmers in this Rural Block is still inadequate. It is imperative that the government should take steps by coordinating various departments functioning within the district. In this regard the Horticulture Department, Irrigation and Water Resources Department and the Agriculture Department should conduct comprehensive surveys and intensive research with the cooperation of the farmers for the benefit of the people in Lawngtlai District.

The farmers faced difficulty in selling their products in the local market. This means that the market is not big enough and the scope of selling agricultural product is less. Hence the farmers cannot sell their products with good benefits. Therefore it is recommended that the Government assist the farmers to find bigger market. It is also suggested that the Government provides sufficient fund to the farmers for construction of irrigation channels to supply enough workers to the cultivable land so as to increase farm products.

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