

LAND REFORMS AND AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
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INTRODUCTION

Land reform is concerned with changing the institutional structure governing man's relationship with the land. At present, the livelihood of more than half of mankind depends directly on agriculture. Nine tenths of this total agricultural population is in the developing countries, where questions of access and rights to land are of para-mount interest to more than 2000 million people.¹

It also includes all measures aiming at readjustment of the various rights and obligations connected with the ownership and use of land with a view to (i) Increase its productivity (ii) ensure higher standard of living and improve social status to those engaged in cultivation.²

Pakistan had inherited the agrarian system at the time of independence in which ownership was concentrated in the lands of a minority of landlords who neither managed nor cultivated their land and the majority of peasants cultivated the lands over which they had hardly any rights. That system held the cultivator down to the level of bare subsistence more or less regardless of the effort and skill exerted by him, had been rightly called "the dead hand of feudalism".³

It suffered from various evils and drawbacks which hampered agricultural production. The yields were low and the estimated area was less than 40 percent under cultivation.⁴ Besides, the other basic defects of the agrarian

systems were: (i) Small and fragmented land holdings (ii) Primitive methods of cultivation (iii) Insecurity and routing of tenure. A radical change in the agrarian system was therefore, considered imperative in the interests of increased productivity and greater social Justice. A phased programme of land reforms, therefore has been attempted since the establishment of Pakistan.

Ist phase	1950 to 1958
2nd phase	1958 to 1972
3rd phase	1972 to 1977
4th phase	1977 to date
(not implemented in real sense.) ⁵	

Thus, this paper is worked out on the basis of three phases and 4th phase is included into the third phase.

MUSLIM LEAGUE LAND REFORMS 1950 - 1958

The Muslim League Agrarian Reforms Committee proposed in 1949 some short term and some "Long term" measures. The short term proposals were:⁶ (a) abolition of occupancy tenacious (b) Security of tenure to tenants-at-will, (c) reduced rents from share croppers, (d) abolition of illegal exactions. The long term proposals suggested: (a) Ceilings of individual holding was to be 150 acres of irrigated land or up to 450 acres of unirrigated land, (b) distribution of land released among the cultivating tenants (c) Owners of resumed land were to be paid compensation. These so called longterm measures were postponed, but in the Provinces of Sindh, Punjab and North West Frontier tenancy laws were enacted in 1950 and 1952 along the lines of the short term proposals.

THE RESULTS OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM ACTS OF 1950/1952

The Agrarian Reform Act of 1950/1952 did not effect any major changes in the rural ownership relations. The socio-economic relations in the country influenced substantially by the tenancy acts of the years 1950/1952.

The concentration of land ownership was in a few hands. They lived in towns, leaving the management of their lands to agents, who had little interest in the tenants. Landlords enjoyed high economic and social status and with their influence were able to exploit the tenants in various ways and tenants could not raise their economic and social status. It showed clearly the polarization in the socio-economic structure of the agriculture of Pakistan. The extent of concentration of big landlords could be assessed as under:-

One thousand big landlords were in ownership of farms exceeding 500 acres and covering 10.3 percent of the total farm acres and another twelve thousand landlords each owning between 100 and 500 acres, together owned 11.2 percent of the total farm area. In other words one half of one percent of the landlords owned about one fifth of the total area under farms. The concentration indices for Sindh were higher. The total land occupied in Sindh was 8.6 million acres, of which 124 Jagirdars hold 1.1 million, 13% of the total area. About 3000 landlords hold 6.0 million acres, and of these 294 persons each hold of 5000 acres or more, 70% of total area of land⁸ In North West Frontier Province large owners holds 1.2 out of 2.5 million acres of cultivated land, which accounted about 50% of total land.⁹ The situation of the Province of Baluchistan was similar to that in Province of Sindh.

The proclaimed aims of the Muslim League Agrarian Reforms Committee and various acts did not achieve their objective in practice due to the highly entrenched position of landlords in Pakistan of the fifties.¹⁰ The output of foodgrains was from 5.956 million tonnes to 6.046 million tons during the period 1950/51 to 1958/59 and could not meet the requirement of the country. This was the cause of the lack of progress in the solution of the agrarian issue.¹¹

2. THE AGRARIAN POLICY FROM 1959 TO 1972

2.1 THE PROVISION OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM ACT OF FEBRUARY, 1959.

After General Ayub Khan became head of the Government in October 1958, the pre-conditions for initiating a land reform were created. The main reasons for this attempt were the fact that the situation in the agriculture of Pakistan had aggravated due to the backward relations of production and the developing industrialists of Pakistan considered the backward agriculture as an obstacle to industrialisation. More-over Ahmed (1974), described the situation in the following words:

"More than 50 percent of the available land in the Punjab, little less than 50 percent in the North-West Frontier and over 50% percent in Sindh was in possession of a few thousand absentee land owners. 12

To begin with, a land reform Committee was constituted and its report then became the basis for the land reform Regulation No.64 passed on 07.02.1959.¹³

The main provisions of the regulation were: 14

- a) According to the regulation, a ceiling of 500 acres of irrigated and 1000 acres of unirrigated land was fixed or average equivalent to 36000 produce index units (PIU).

- b) Compensation to landowners whose land was resumed by the Government under the above provision would be paid in the form of interest free twenty five year maturity bonds.
- c) Land resumed by the Government would be sold to the tenants already cultivating the land at reasonable terms of payments.
- d) All occupancy tenants would become the owners of the land which they were cultivating already.
- e) All tenants would be protected against ejection by landlords.
- f) In the case of share cropping, the share of landlord and tenant would be fifty percent each.
- g) The landlord would be debarred from imposing any other Taxation on tenants either in service or in cash.
- h) All Jagirs would be abolished without payments of any compensation to the Jagirdars.
- i) 12 1/2 acres or 16 acres served as a standard for the subsistence level and 50 or 64 acres served as a standard for an economic holding.

2.2 THE RESULTS OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM OF 1959

The Agrarian Reform of 1959 provided for the possibility of curbing the feudal and semi-feudal elements in the agriculture of Pakistan for laying the socio-economic foundation for a speedy development of agricultural production and for the improvement of the rural living conditions. As a result of this measure, the size distribution of farms was unequal, with excessive concentration of ownership on the one hand and a below subsistence on the other. This is evident from Table.1.

Table- 1

LAND OWNERSHIP PATTERN IN PAKISTAN 1958

Farm size in acres	No.of owners	% of Total	Area owned in acres.	% of Total
Less than 5	3266137	64.2	7425614	15.0
5 Less than-25	1452421	29.0	15438138	33.6
25 Less than-100	286470	5.6	10616308	21.0
100 less than-500	57287	1.1	7671537	15.4
500 & above	6061	0.1	7490933	15.0
Total	5068376	100	48642530	100

Sources: Report of the land reforms commission for West Pakistan, 1959.

Table 1 indicates clearly the continued polarization in the socio-economic structure of the agriculture of Pakistan in 1959. On the one hand 64.2 percent of all landowners owned only 15.0 percent of the arable land. On the other hand there is minority of 0.1 percent of all land owners owing just as much land. Adding also the last but one farm size group we shall find that 1.2 percent of all landowners owned more than 1/3 of the total arable land in Pakistan i.e. almost double as much as 64.2 percent of the small farms.

Further more it is pointed out that the total area of land declared by 6061 land owners was 91,59,74 acres.¹⁵ Out of this the landlords were allowed to retain 63,64,744 acres while 4,65,384 acres were gifted to heirs of the owners and 7.48 acres.¹⁶ The surrendered land was .2 million acres which was distributed among .1 million tenants for which

landlords were compensated handsome amount to Rs.80 million".¹⁷ Grassroots

For economic purpose, therefore, the reforms practically failed. They neither served an egalitarian purpose nor did they promote efficiency in agricultural production. There are reasons to believe, as pointed out by an FAO: (Food & Agricultural Organization) report, that there was an increase in the agricultural proletariat as a result of volumes. The effective implementation of the ceiling law induced many absentee landlords to go over to self cultivation. This set into motion evictions and curtailment of tenant rights. The process was compounded by the increasing prospects of profitability of cultivation with modernization of agriculture and the privileges granted by the Government to them (cheap) inputs and high prices for output.¹⁸

While assessing the development of main crops, it is pointed out that the output wheat increased from 3.909 million tonnes to 6.8902 million tonnes, rice rose from 0.995 million tonnes to 2.262 million tonnes Sugar cane went up from 10.662 million tonnes to 19.963 million tonnes and Cotton increased upto 0.292 million tonnes during the period 1959/60.¹⁹

This speedy progress was achieved in agricultural sector simultaneously with the introduction of requirements of the country and food grain imports aggregated 9.2 million tonnes during 1969-70 - 1971-72.²⁰

3. THE AGRARIAN POLICY FROM 1972 TO THE END OF THE SEVENTIES.

3.1 THE AGRARIAN REFORM ACT OF MARCH 1972.

On 1st March 1972 the Government announced a new series of land reforms and rural development meas-

ures. These were embodied in Martial Law Regulation No.1115 of 1972. It covered the following terms:-²¹

- i) The maximum acreage per owner was reduced from 500 to 150 acres irrigated land and from 1,000 to 300 non-irrigated land.
- ii) Resumed land was allotted to the peasants free of cost.
- iii) Distribution of land as donation by the big land owners was prohibited.
- iv) Landless peasants wanting to buy state owned land could acquire it through a system of partial credits.
- v) Taxes and cost of seed to be paid by landlord.
- vi) Tenants could not be ejected on a decision by revenue Court.
- vii) The farmers were required to pay their taxes directly to the Government.
- viii) The Landlords were prohibited from levying any cess or taking free labour from their tenants.
- ix) Agricultural production was to be increased by an 'integrated rural development programme'.

With the aid of measures fixed (granting of credits, sale of fertilizers, high grade seeds, marketing, advisory service etc) the peasants were to be offered the possibilities of increasing production.

By the middle of 1972 the government of Pakistan proclaimed the implementation of an "Intergrated Rural Development Programme" (IRDP) in accordance with the establishment of the land Reform Act of March 1972. This programme was worked out in conformity with the recommendations of the "Food & Agricultural Organization"(FAO). In the framework of the UN Development Programme Pakistan was granted 5.6 million dollars from the IRDP.²² The centres (Markaz) for areas of 50 to 60 vil-

lages each,²³ 68 of such centres were initially planned.²⁴ The IRDP comprises four key goals of agricultural development:

- i) Increased training of specialization for individual advisory service for the small peasants.
- ii) Improvement in the supply of the means of production for the small peasants.
- iii) Improved access to credits particularly for small peasants.
- iv) Provision of storage and marketing facilities adapted particularly to the needs of the small peasants. This meant the step by step replacement of efficient marketing routes and the arrangement of additional marketing facilities, for example, in the form of co-operatives. Public education, supply and market establishments were to be concentrated in the agricultural developing centres. The IRDP was to be accompanied by a so-called 'Agrovilles Development Programme' (developing programme for agrocentres). The public, social and cultural establishments concentrated here were intended to improve the living conditions in these areas, the agricultural services and the supply with agricultural means of production.

The institution of the advisory programme constituted an important item in the framework of the IRDP. At present there is an average of one professional agricultural advisor for a group of 200 to 250 villages in Pakistan. The plan envisaged ten advisers for each of an area of 60 villages. This would allow more intensive advisory services which would be a great help for the masses of the peasants. Mainly University graduates of the agricultural colleges and from related fields were to be employed as advisers. Since, the present time, there are no other possibil-

ities for employing these graduates, there should be no problems as far as personnel are concerned, nor should it constitute any difficulty to start the advisory programme on a large scale without any delay. Existing advisory centres should be fully integrated into the IRDP. The IRDP was to be financed by the central and provincial governments.

3.2 THE RESULTS OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM OF 1972

For an assessment of the new land reform started in the middle of 1972 provided for a considerable reduction in the maximum land ownership as compared with the reform of 1959. About 1.82 million hectares of land were resumed by 30th June 1977 and distributed to 295 thousand peasants.²⁵ According to the 1980 agricultural census, 68 percent of the operational farms in the country fall below the minimal a subsistence holding size as shown in the table 2.

TABLE NO.2
SIZE OF FARM IN PAKISTAN 1980

Size of Farm Hectares	FARMS		FARM AREA	
	No.(Million)	% of Total Farm	Total Million Hectares	%
Under 0.5	0.33	8	0.10	
0.5 to under 1	0.37	9	0.28	1
1- 2	0.69	17	0.97	5
2- 3	0.68	17	1.69	9
3- 5	0.92	23	3.57	19
5- 10	0.71	17	4.70	25
10- 20	0.25	06	3.39	18
20- 60	0.10	3	2.80	15
60-	0.01	x	1.62	1
Total	4.07	100	19.06	100

X = Less than 0.5 percent.

SOURCE: Census of Agriculture 1980 quoted in Agricultural Statistics of Pakistan 1987-88, Islamabad, 1988, P.80.

There is evidence to show that a minority of big landlords, with practical influence in occupancy states were able to assert and improve their position under the legislation.²⁶

The historical precedent in Pakistan pointed out that big landlords were still powerful in rural areas and are typically in a far better position than the cultivators to influence officials, including superior financial resources and political contacts. In contrast to landlords, cultivators are far more likely to be un-informed, illiterate and socially depressed. They neither possess political sources and contacts nor enjoy social position for cultivating. Under the provisions of the Punjab Tenancy Act, the landlords share of gross produce was reduced from 50 to 40 per cent.²⁷ However, implementation was ineffective and landlords continued to collect half the harvest from tenants. The tenants did not demand enforcement in order to avoid antagonizing their landlords. More over, the planning commission has noted, that even for those tenants who demanded their rights from the landlord than on the law.²⁸ In reviewing the over all effects of the Sindh Tenancy Act of 1950,- Sir Malcolm Darling concluded that the Hari was typically too helpless to take advantage of the Law's provisions and in many cases totally ignorant.²⁹ He added insightfully, "Formal eviction is not necessary; landlord can always make things so uncomfortable for a tenant that he leaves of his own accord."³⁰

The increased use of fertilizers, high yielding varieties and tractors need more investment in agricultural sector. The big landlords can get benefit of this input but the small farmers are not in a position to use such technology in their farms due to lack of capital. In this regard the public institutions extended credit facilities from

Rs.532.19 million to Rs.5939.83 million for the development of agriculture during the period 1975/76 to 1986/87. But these credits were granted mainly to big landlords (79.3 percent of the total in 1975-76 and 68.8 percent in 1986-87.

While assessing the agricultural production of main crops during the period 1972-73 to 1987-88, it is pointed out that the output of wheat increased from 7.442 million tonnes, at an average growth rate 4.4 percent and yield per hectare rose 2.4 percent.³¹ The output of rice went up from 2.330 million tonnes to 3.240 million tonnes and average growth rate was 2.3 percent.³² But the yield per hectare did not bring good result. The increase in total production of rice was achieved because of more land brought under cultivation. The production of sugarcane increased from 19.948 million tonnes to 33.029 million tonnes with an average growth rate 4 percent.³³ The yield per hectare did not increase. The cotton production rose more than double and the yield per hectare increased at about 4 percent during the same period.³⁴ The output of food grains could not meet the requirement of the country with the result 10.139 million of wheat was imported during this period.³⁵

From 1972-73 onward there were greater efforts by the government to use modern means of input in the agriculture of Pakistan for increasing the output but still the selfsufficiency in food is not achieved.

CONCLUSION.

The agrarian reform acts failed to implement the goals that were proclaimed with these acts. The reform did in fact weaken the position of the feudal lords and big landowners in the country. The socio-economic structure

of the agriculture of Pakistan, on the whole, remained unchanged. The considerable concentration of the ownership of land by a relatively few big landowners is opposed by the mass of the peasants struggling for their subsistence on scattered minimum size farms. In addition to the exploitation of the peasants and tenants by the landlords, the exploitation by trading and usurious capital continued. The greater differentiation in the production relations was in the fact that apart from semi/feudal relations of production have gained a footing increasingly in agriculture. Unemployment and pauperization have increased as a result of this development. In Pakistan, the development of the agricultural productive forces continued to remain at a relatively low level inspite of increasing expenditure by the state since the land reform 1959 to the sixties. Major changes took place only as from the middle of the sixties. The so-called 'Green Revolution', initiated a process of intensification which began with cultivation of high yielding varieties (Wheat, rice). It was accompanied by an increase in the use of modern means of production, especially fertilizers, pesticides and irrigation facilities. The fact that these modern means of production had to be largely imported was of serious disadvantage for the balance of payments of Pakistan. In spite of this development the growing disproportion between the slow development of food production and the rapid growth of the population could not be eliminated and has resulted in permanent and progressing food crisis.

The big landlord who by owning necessary resources and using their political, social and economic status benefited considerably from the new methods of production. In view of the possibilities of making profits offered by modern method in agriculture for large scale production, this class has increased eliminating the small peasants by driving away the small tenants from their lots and

in this way increased the number of the unemployed. The measures of the land reform initiated in the country did not go along with thorough changes of the social structure in the country. In the interest of the majority of peasants, the introduction of land reforms and the 'Green Revolution' created the opportunities only for the big landlords. It is therefore imperative that through the consistent implementation of the land reform that pre-requisites can be created for the use of the national resources on a larger scale for increasing agricultural production and raising the living standard of the broad masses of the rural population.

NOTES

1. World Bank, Land reform, Washington, 1975, P.3.
 2. Akhtar, S.M. "Pakistan a Development Economy", Lahore, 1966, Vol: P.144.
 3. Adil Akbar, Elements of Economics Pakistan Economy Karachi 1976, First Edition National Book Foundation, p.384.
 4. Khuwaja Amjad Saeed, "Economic Structure of Pakistan", Lahore, 1977, P.298.
 5. Khan Mahmood Hassan, "Under Development and Agrarian Structure in Pakistan", Lahore, 1986, P.140.
 6. Ibid, P.142-144.
 7. GOP, "The First Five Year Plan (1955-60)", Karachi, 1956, Volume II, P.117.
 8. Ibid.
 9. Mushtaque Ahmed, "Government of Politics in Pakistan", New York, P.A. Praeger 1963, P.143.
- 'It should be noted that in the Punjab Assembly, 80 percent of seats were captured by large landowners in the election of 1951. Similarly, in the 1953 election in Sindh, 90 percent of assembly seats were occupied by Landlords. In the National Assembly in the midfifties about 70 percent mem-

bers were Landlords'.

10. Government of Pakistan Economic Survey 1987-88, Islamabad, 1988 Statistical Section P.30.

11. Mohd Ayoub Khan "Friends Not Master's", Karachi (Pak:Branch of Oxford University Press, 1967, PP.68-87.

12. Ahmed S.J. "An Approach to Economic Problem of Pakistan", Karachi, 1974, Third Edition P.174.

13. M.H.Khan "The role of Agriculture in Economic Development" A case study of Pakistan, Washington, 1966, op.cit., 133.

14. Khawaja Ahmed Saeed "Economic Structure of Pakistan", Lahore, 1977, P.305.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Joost, B.W. Kuitenbrouwer, "Self-reliance without poverty", An Analysis of Pakistan Fifth Five Year Plan, 1976-81, Bangkok 1976 (mimeographed), P.79.

18. Akhtar, S.M. "Economic Development of Pakistan", Lahore, 1975, PP.396 and 397.

19. Ibid.

20. Report on the International Seminar on Integrated Rural Development Lahore, Pakistan 3-10 November, 1973, Rome 1975, P.53.

21. Akhtar, S.M. Ibid. P.447.

22. Government of Pakistan, Agricultural Statistics of Pakistan 1987-88, Islamabad 1988, P.81.

23. After the election of December 1970, there were 105 Landlords among 138 members of Parliament in the central Government. In: The Sun and Dawn December 1970 and Jan: and Feb: 1971, Karachi. The Pakistan Times December 1970 January and February 1971, Lahore.

24. Government of Pakistan, "The First Five Year Plan 1955-60", Karachi, 1956, P.126.

25. Ibid. P.127.

26. Darling, Sir Maccolm, Lahore conditions in Agriculture in Pakistan, Karachi, 1956, P.48.

27. Ibid. First Five Year Plan 1955-60. P.315.

28. Government of Pakistan, "Agricultural Statistics of Pakistan 1987-88", Islamabad,1988, P.123.

29. The Land Reforms Act (Act II of 1977) was promulgated on January 9, 1977. There were three significant aspects of this act, at First it reduced the ceiling of holding from 150 acres to 100 acres irrigated. The second aspect was that landowners were to be paid compensation for the surrendered land. Thirdly the resumed land would be distributed without charge in exactly the same way as Prescribed in the 1972 Regulation. By the middle of 1978-84, 459 acres in the Punjab and 23,414 acres in Sindh had been resumed from about 3000 declarants. However, no land has been redistributed.

30. Government of Pakistan, Agricultural Statistics of Pakistan 1980, Islamabad, 1980. PP.5-29.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Government of Pakistan, Pakistan Economic Survey 1987-88, Islamabad, 1988, Statistical section, PP.29-30.

35. Ibid.

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