

Role of Agro-Based Industries in Enhancing Rural Employment in Rewari District

Mohit Kumar¹, Dr. Satyaveer Yadav²

¹Research Scholar of Geography, Department of Social Sciences, Baba Mastnath University, Asthal Bohar-124021, Rohtak (Haryana)

²Professor of Geography, Department of Social Sciences, Baba Mastnath University, Asthal Bohar-124021, Rohtak (Haryana)

ABSTRACT

Agro-based industries serve as a critical link between agriculture and the broader industrial sector by transforming raw agricultural produce into value-added goods. This study examines the role of agro-based industries in enhancing rural employment in Rewari district, Haryana. Drawing on data from 150 respondents, the research highlights employment patterns, industry participation, income levels, and workplace benefits. The findings reveal that agro-industries contribute significantly to full-time and semi-skilled employment, with dairy processing and oil extraction emerging as key sectors. Despite their potential, challenges such as seasonal employment, lack of skill development opportunities, and wage disparities persist. The study underscores the need for policy interventions to address these challenges and promote inclusive growth. It concludes with recommendations for enhancing workforce capacity and leveraging agro-industrial development to improve rural livelihoods.

Keywords: Agro-Industries, Employment, Participation, Disparities, Challenges

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture has long been the backbone of India's economy, employing a significant portion of the population and contributing to the socio-economic stability of rural areas. However, with the advent of industrialization and globalization, the traditional agrarian economy has undergone substantial transformation, paving the way for agro-based industries. These industries serve as a crucial bridge between agriculture and the broader industrial sector by processing raw agricultural products into value-added goods. In this context, agro-based industries are uniquely positioned to enhance rural employment, offering various job opportunities and contributing to economic development. The district of Rewari, located in the southern part of Haryana, presents a compelling case for studying the role of agro-based industries in enhancing rural employment.

Rewari, a predominantly agrarian district, has experienced substantial industrial growth over the past few decades. With its fertile lands, proximity to the most important markets, and improving infrastructure, the region has become a hub for agro-based industries such as food processing, cotton ginning, and oil extraction. These industries not only utilise the ample agricultural produce from the region but also create direct and indirect employment opportunities for the local population. Rural employment in agro-based industries comprises jobs in production, packaging, transportation, marketing, and management. This employment diversification is vital in reducing dependence on traditional farming, mitigating rural poverty, and promoting sustainable livelihoods.

Rewari's agro-based industries operate within a dynamic socio-economic and policy framework. Government initiatives, such as the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro Food Processing Enterprises (PMFME) scheme and Haryana's industrial policies, have played a pivotal role in promoting agro-industrial growth. These policies aim to provide financial assistance, improve infrastructure, and facilitate market access, thereby fostering an enabling environment for employment generation. Additionally, the rise of public-private partnerships has further strengthened the ecosystem, bringing technological advancements and investments to rural areas. The role of agro-based industries in enhancing rural employment is not limited to economic metrics. It also contributes to the social well-being of communities by reducing migration to urban areas, fostering rural-urban equilibrium, and preserving traditional knowledge and skills. The industries act as a stabilizing factor in rural economies, especially during periods of agricultural downturns or climate-induced disruptions. By providing non-farm employment opportunities, they help diversify income sources and build resilience among rural households.

This research paper aims to analyze the contribution of agro-based industries to rural employment in Rewari district. It seeks to evaluate the type and quality of jobs created, explore the distribution of employment opportunities by gender and skill levels, and identify the key industries driving employment. The study also investigates the challenges and opportunities within the agro-industrial sector, providing insights into how it can be leveraged to foster sustainable development in rural areas.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Singh (2019), discusses the significant role of processed agro products in enhancing India's export potential and economic development. It highlights that while agriculture employs over 60% of the rural population and India is self-sufficient in food production, processed agro products contribute a mere 1.3% to national exports. The need for increased agro-processing is emphasized, as it can reduce post-harvest losses, improve farmer incomes, and position India as a global food hub. Sivagami and Maran (2019), investigate the role of rural entrepreneurs in agro-based industries within the Krishnagiri District of Tamil Nadu, emphasizing their significance in enhancing employment and economic growth. The study highlights the need for agricultural production growth to uplift the socio-economic status of rural communities, while addressing challenges such as traditional mindsets and government negligence. It suggests that promoting entrepreneurship among rural populations is crucial for overcoming economic barriers and fostering sustainable development.

Study Area:-

Rewari district, situated in the southern part of Haryana, India, serves as the focus of this study on the role of agro-based industries in enhancing rural employment. Known for its rich agrarian heritage, Rewari extends an area of approximately 1,594 square kilometres, bordered by the districts of Gurgaon, Mahendragarh, and Jhajjar, as well as the state of Rajasthan to the west. The district's geographical position, with proximity to the National Capital Region (NCR) and major highways such as the Delhi-Jaipur Expressway (NH-48), makes it an ideal location for agro-industrial development. Rewari's climate is semi-arid, characterized by hot summers and mild winters, with an average annual rainfall of about 500-600 mm, primarily during the monsoon season. The district's soil is fertile, supporting the cultivation of staple crops such as wheat, mustard, and millet, along with horticultural crops like fruits and vegetables. These agricultural outputs form the raw material base for agro-based industries, including food processing, oil extraction, and dairy production, which are prominent in the region.

The district comprises three sub-divisions: Rewari, Kosli, and Bawal, with 412 villages and several small towns. Bawal, in particular, has emerged as an industrial hub, covering a mix of agro-industrial units and other manufacturing enterprises due to its inclusion in the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC). The rural population, which constitutes approximately 70% of the district's total population of about 1 million (Census 2011), depends heavily on agriculture and related activities for livelihood. This makes the study of agro-based industries and their employment potential particularly relevant for Rewari. Infrastructure development in Rewari has accelerated in recent years, with improved road connectivity, power supply, and access to markets. The establishment of small and medium-sized agro-industrial units, such as rice mills, dairy plants, and mustard oil processing factories, has created new avenues for rural employment. However, challenges such as seasonal employment, inadequate training facilities, and limited access to advanced technology persist.

This study focuses on agro-based industries across different rural areas in Rewari, analyzing their contribution to employment generation, workforce demographics, and the quality of jobs offered. By understanding the interplay between industrial growth and rural livelihoods, the research aims to provide actionable insights for policymakers and stakeholders in the region.

Objective:-

- To analyze the contribution of agro-based industries to rural employment in Rewari District.
- To evaluate the type and quality of employment generated (formal/informal, skilled/unskilled).
- To identify key agro-based industries contributing to rural employment.

METHODOLOGY

To ensure a robust dataset, information will be gathered from primary sources:

Structured interviews and questionnaires will be conducted with workers employed in agro-based industries such as food processing units, cotton ginning factories, and oil mills. These tools will help capture insights into workforce demographics, job types, and employment conditions.

A well-defined sampling strategy will be employed to ensure representative and reliable data:

The study will target workers employed in various agro-based industries located across the rural areas of Rewari district. 150 respondents will be surveyed. This sample size is deemed sufficient to reflect the diverse employment conditions and workforce demographics within the district. This methodological framework is designed to yield a nuanced understanding of the role of agro-based industries in rural employment generation in Rewari, offering valuable insights for stakeholders and policymakers.

Table 1.1: Employment Details

Sr. No.	Questions Asked	Type of Response	No of Respondents
1.	Current Employment Type	Full Time	86
		Part-Time	15
		Casual/Seasonal	49
2.	Nature of Work	Skilled	22
		Semi-Skilled	75
		Unskilled	53
3.	Type of Industry	Food Processing	22
		Dairy Products	39
		Cotton Ginning	7
		Oil Extraction	32
		Other	51
4.	Duration of Employment in Current Industry	Less than 1 Year	30
		1-3 Years	46
		4-7 Years	43
		8-10 Years	22
		More than 10 Years	9
5.	Monthly Income	5001-10000	04
		10001-15000	30
		15001-20000	59
		20001-25000	34
		Above 25001	23
6.	Are there opportunities for skill development in your workplace?	Yes	27
		No	123
7.	Does your workplace provide the following benefits? (Tick all applicable)	Health Insurance	105
		Paid Leave	18
		Provident Fund	112
		Overtime Payment	121
8.	How many employees work in your Industry	Less than 10	2
		10-50	47
		51-100	65
		More than 100	36
9.	Do Agro-based industries provide better employment opportunities compared to other sectors in the district?	Strongly Agree	10
		Agree	53
		Neutral	47
		Disagree	28
		Strongly Disagree	12
10.	Would you recommend others to work in this sector?	Yes	86
		No	64
Total Respondents= 150			

Source: Based on data collected by Research scholar during primary survey

RESULTS

This study examines the role of agro-based industries in improving living standards in Rewari, based on data collected from 150 respondents employed in various agro-industrial sectors. The findings, summarized below, provide insights into the type of employment, industry participation, income levels, and benefits provided by these industries.

1. Current Employment Type

Full-Time Employment (86 respondents, 57.3%): The majority of the workforce is engaged in full-time roles, suggesting stable employment opportunities in agro-based industries.

Part-Time Employment (15 respondents, 10%): A smaller fraction is employed part-time, indicating limited options for flexible work arrangements.

Casual/Seasonal Work (49 respondents, 32.7%): A significant number of workers are engaged seasonally, reflecting the cyclical nature of agro-industrial production.

2. Nature of Work

Skilled (22 respondents, 14.7%): Only a small proportion of workers perform skilled tasks, showing limited demand for advanced skills.

Semi-Skilled (75 respondents, 50%): The largest group falls into this category, implying moderate skill requirements in the industry.

Unskilled (53 respondents, 35.3%): A substantial percentage of jobs require minimal training, making the industry accessible to the untrained workforce.

3. Type of Industry

Food Processing (22 respondents, 14.7%): Represents a modest segment, indicating potential for growth in food-related enterprises.

Dairy Products (39 respondents, 26%): The highest percentage of respondents work in dairy processing, emphasizing its significance in the region.

Cotton Ginning (7 respondents, 4.7%): A minor proportion, reflecting niche involvement.

Oil Extraction (32 respondents, 21.3%): Demonstrates a notable contribution to the agro-industrial economy.

Other (51 respondents, 34%): A diverse range of industries suggests the presence of untapped sectors beyond conventional agro-industrial operations.

4. Duration of Employment in Current Industry

Less than 1 Year (30 respondents, 20%): Indicates the inclusion of newer entrants in the workforce.

1-3 Years (46 respondents, 30.7%): Reflects growing workforce engagement in recent years.

4-7 Years (43 respondents, 28.7%): A significant portion has gained medium-term experience in the sector.

8-10 Years (22 respondents, 14.7%): Highlights a smaller number of employees with long-term engagement.

More than 10 Years (9 respondents, 6%): Represents highly experienced workers, underscoring the need for retention strategies.

5. Monthly Income

5001-₹10,000 (4 respondents, 2.7%): Reflects a minimal group earning the lowest range, possibly seasonal workers.

10,001-₹15,000 (30 respondents, 20%): A modest percentage in the lower-middle income bracket.

15,001-₹20,000 (59 respondents, 39.3%): The largest income group indicates decent earning potential for most workers.

20,001-₹25,000 (34 respondents, 22.7%): Represents upward mobility in income levels.

Above ₹25,001 (23 respondents, 15.3%): Suggests that a smaller group achieves high-income levels, possibly skilled workers or managerial roles.

6. Opportunities for Skill Development

Yes (27 respondents, 18%): A limited percentage indicates opportunities for skill enhancement at the workplace.

No (123 respondents, 82%): Highlights a significant gap in training initiatives, which could improve productivity and career growth.

7. Workplace Benefits

Health Insurance (105 respondents, 70%): Indicates a considerable provision of medical security.

Paid Leave (18 respondents, 12%): Represents a minimal provision of leave benefits.

Provident Fund (112 respondents, 74.7%): Demonstrates strong adherence to statutory benefits.

Overtime Payment (121 respondents, 80.7%): Suggests fair compensation for extra hours worked.

8. Number of Employees in Industry

Less than 10 Employees (2 respondents, 1.3%): Indicates limited participation from small-scale enterprises.

10-50 Employees (47 respondents, 31.3%): Reflects the prevalence of mid-sized enterprises.

51-100 Employees (65 respondents, 43.3%): A dominant category, showing industry clustering.

More than 100 Employees (36 respondents, 24%): Highlights the presence of large-scale operations contributing significantly to employment.

9. Comparative Employment Opportunities

Strongly Agree (10 respondents, 6.7%): Few respondents strongly believe agro-industries outperform other sectors.

Agree (53 respondents, 35.3%): A significant percentage sees agro-industries as competitive employers.

Neutral (47 respondents, 31.3%): Suggests mixed perceptions regarding employment benefits.

Disagree (28 respondents, 18.7%): Reflects skepticism about the sector's competitiveness.

Strongly Disagree (12 respondents, 8%): Indicates dissatisfaction with opportunities.

10. Willingness to Recommend the Sector

Yes (86 respondents, 57.3%): A majority is willing to recommend the sector, indicating general satisfaction.

No (64 respondents, 42.7%): Reflects a significant group facing challenges or dissatisfaction.

CONCLUSION

Agro-based industries in Rewari district play a pivotal role in enhancing rural employment and socio-economic development. By offering diverse job opportunities, fostering skill development, and promoting economic stability, these industries significantly contribute to improving living standards. However, challenges such as seasonal employment, wage disparities, and limited training opportunities must be addressed to maximise their impact. With strategic interventions, including better infrastructure, inclusive policies, and capacity-building initiatives, agro-industries can further strengthen their role in rural empowerment. This study underscores their transformative potential in bridging the gap between agriculture and industrialization, paving the way for sustainable rural growth.

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