

CUSTOM HIRING SERVICE PATTERN

Custom work is an important phase of farm mechanization. In the context of farm mechanization, it includes hiring out of farm machinery and undertaking farm operations on a contract basis. Custom work is identified as multi-farm use of agricultural machinery.

In order to making a tractor effective, a farmer ought to have a viable acreage and landholdings below a particular minimum would not very much profit by purchasing the machine. A machine owner would most likely make its use for his own work but may not find full-time work for the machine and hence would like to go for custom work for others. That precludes their machines from lying idle and also ensures additional increase in returns. Tractor owners, with small landholding, are keen to resort to custom work as additional productive assignment. Usually, most of the farmers not owning tractors, or with small or medium land holdings, are desirous of getting their agricultural work done by hired tractors. However, the tractor ownership model will have a determining effect on custom work and farm mechanization. If tractors are owned by large landholders, they will have no time for custom work and in that case other alternatives would have to be sought. The present policy of the Government is to direct Agro-Service Centres to cater to the custom service needs of such farmers as do not own tractors. The centres also undertake servicing and repairs of tractors at moderate rates.

The assumption was that custom work will be increasing

Purposes	A	B	C	D	E	Total		Grand Total
						Migrants	Natives	
Ploughing.	47 (100.00)	34 (100.00)	14 (100.00)	9 (100.00)	6 (100.00)	30 (100.00)	80 (100.00)	110 (100.00)
Harrowing.	45 (95.74)	33 (97.06)	14 (100.00)	9 (100.00)	6 (100.00)	30 (100.00)	77 (96.25)	107 (97.27)
Cultivating.	43 (91.49)	32 (94.12)	13 (92.86)	9 (100.00)	6 (100.00)	29 (96.67)	74 (92.50)	103 (93.64)
Sowing.	33 (70.21)	23 (67.65)	9 (64.28)	8 (88.88)	5 (83.33)	19 (66.33)	59 (73.75)	78 (70.91)
Threshing.	35 (74.47)	30 (88.24)	11 (78.57)	8 (88.88)	5 (83.33)	23 (76.67)	66 (82.50)	89 (80.91)
Transportation.	47 (100.00)	34 (100.00)	14 (100.00)	9 (100.00)	6 (100.00)	30 (100.00)	80 (100.00)	110 (100.00)
Levelling.	47 (100.00)	34 (100.00)	14 (100.00)	9 (100.00)	6 (100.00)	30 (100.00)	80 (100.00)	110 (100.00)
Custom service.	34 (72.34)	19 (55.88)	6 (42.86)	3 (33.34)	3 (50.00)	27 (90.00)	48 (60.67)	74 (68.18)
Family and social purpose.	38 (80.85)	25 (73.53)	12 (85.71)	7 (77.77)	6 (100.00)	20 (66.67)	68 (85.00)	88 (80.00)
Power for chaff-cutter.	26 (55.32)	12 (35.29)	8 (57.14)	4 (44.44)	4 (66.67)	17 (56.67)	37 (46.25)	54 (49.10)
Power for tubewell.	29 (61.70)	12 (35.29)	8 (57.14)	5 (55.56)	5 (83.33)	19 (63.33)	40 (50.00)	59 (53.63)
Electioneering.	4 (8.51)	4 (11.76)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (13.32)	4 (5.00)	8 (7.28)
Others.	8 (17.02)	6 (17.65)	7 (50.00)	6 (66.67)	4 (66.67)	14 (46.67)	17 (21.25)	31 (28.18)
Total No.	436	298	130	87	62	292	729	1021
Average*	9.28	8.76	9.21	9.67	10.20	9.7	8.99	9.15

* Significant at 1% level of significance.

acceptable to tractor owners usually possessing relatively smaller holdings.

The farmers had purchased tractors with various motives. All were using it for ploughing, levelling and transportation. Next, it was being used for harrowing, cultivating and social purposes by all. It is also seen that more natives were using the tractors for threshing and family and social purposes compared to the migrants. The migrants were using it more for custom service, during elections and as source of power for tubewell operation and chaff-cutting work compared to the natives. The relation between the average number of purposes for which the tractor was being used and increase in land size was found significant. More widespread use of tractor was being made by the migrants than by the natives. Most probably, the possession of machinery, to be operated by tractor, made its increased use possible for the large landholders, which indicates a wider network of machinery possessed by the farmers. For electioneering custom service and other commercial purposes, lesser use of tractor as per increasing land size was being made, probably for reasons of its being busy with the work at the field or for prestige factors. The natives were making a little more social and lesser economic use of the tractor compared to the migrants. Ploughing seemed to rank ^I among the purposes for which tractor was being used. Thus, although the tractor was under-used for various reasons, its use for social purposes got 5th rank, indicating social use not to be very important. The demand for custom work will continue to

be made small and medium land-holders, especially by the farmer, till they succeed in acquiring agricultural machinery of their own, or on hire. Hence, the objective of this chapter was to look into the existing pattern of custom hiring service and trace out the constraints involved and the purposes as well as the extent to which tractors were being used for custom hiring work.

For farmers with smaller land-holdings, purchasing tractor to earn from custom hiring work, was an important motivating force and it was found that most of the farmers under study wanted to go for it. A few cases were such as did not mind foregoing their own farm work or postponing it to a less important position and preferred custom hiring work at the peak season. Their logic was that they will earn much more in custom work than they will lose in their farms.

There were a number of aspects and purposes to which the tractors were being used as seen from the following table. 5/1

Other land owners who did not own tractors wanted tractor owners to do their work on rental charges to perform various other functions:

5/2 Non-tractor owners' Aspirations

Aspects	Wanted		Given	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
Ploughing.	93	89.43	93	100.00
Harrowing.	36	82.69	86	100.00
Levelling.	86	82.69	78	90.70 →

Aspects	Wanted		Given	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
Transportation.	86	82.69	86	100.00
Cultivation.	83	79.81	83	100.00
Threshing.	78	75.00	18	23.76
Sowing.	75	72.11	75	100.00
Family and social purposes.	73	70.19	48	65.75
Power for tubewell.	32	30.76	5.	15.93
Power for chaff cutter.	27	25.95	2	7.41
Others, including elections.	14	13.48	13	92.86
Average	7.66	64.04	6.31	72.41*

*Calculated when 64.04 is taken 100% base.

It is clear that there were many purposes for which farmers wanted the tractor owners to hire out their tractors. The top rank was of this order; ploughing followed by others. This also indicates that the demand for tractor was very large and the largest part of it remained unmet. However, looking at the 'given' column, it is seen that for works needing much exertion of machine the owner generally did not like to hire his tractor out even for very lucrative remuneration. The rank order for the purposes to which the tractor owners wanted to give their tractors on hire was; quite high for the first eight purposes, including besides usual agricultural operations, the family and

social purposes.

This shows that the tractor was not given at random for all and every purpose. The selective process seems to have been preferred. The tractor owners had their own reasons in deciding to hire out a tractor for custom work. Some of the important reasons in order of rank were; less undesirable effects on machine, more client satisfaction, more overall profitability, and compulsion by relatives to have it in with a view to have social relations continued.

Most of the time, the tractor was given on specific terms and conditions. These terms and conditions, of course, varied in view of personal relations and other considerations, such as soil conditions, intensity of operation demanded, tractor horse power, demand and supply condition as well as many incidental factors. Owners and recipients of custom service conceded that the practice did both the parties tremendous good. The charges varied for usual and light agricultural operations from Rs.12 to 20 per acre or per hour with variations as mutually agreed upon.

It was found that neither all the tractor owners were willing nor had it free to hire out and rarely a large landholder would hire it out, exceptions being there like in exchange of service. The farmers wanted to keep their machine in trim. They also used the tractor to have continuity in and create further social relations. This is indicative of the tractor as a means for fostering social relations. Most of the respondents held that from new tractors much could be earned by hiring out as

additional utilization ensured additional returns at nominal running cost. It was also held that tractor owners found that many of their relatives friends and neighbours were trying to come closer to them; also some of them were reported to be drawing away. Eventually, they told that their relations were changing from personal to professional and business like. At times, the relatives were becoming constant nuisance to tractor owners by frequent requests for custom work, causing strained relations.

They were full of apprehensions about going for custom work for it was full of constraints and problems - social, economic, mechanical and others. Some of these as given by the respondents are outlined in the table given below:

5) Constraints in custom work (100 respondents)*

Constraints.	No.	Percentage
Limitations of available time.	97	97
Time conflict of demands.	97	97
Priority determination.	93	93
Do not get cash payment.	91	91
Apprehensions of clients.	65	65
Social status considerations.	23	23
Psychological factors.	8	8
Unsuitable land conditions.	8	8
Others.	13	13
Average	5.1	55.00

* 10 respondents did not practice custom work.

It is seen that the time-bound character of agricultural work was a vital problem as it caused a positive-negative or positive-positive conflict in terms of the decision whether or not to let the tractor out and to whom and for how long. The difficulties in realising the custom hiring rental from the clients was another hurdle in custom work and almost all those going for custom work showed some apprehension on this issue. To win the confidence of clients was a big question as even the best possible work done failed to win public appreciation of the work by the unsatiated client who was always suspicious and far too demanding. All these factors were causing a change in the relations of tractor owners with other farmers and has wider implications for rural society at large, as well as the policy of the Government in this connection. Social and psychological considerations, besides the physical ones, also loomed large and many tractor owners for these considerations did not want to go for custom work even though they could afford it, their tractors lying idle and available for additional work.

Most of the farmers were positively oriented to, and had a liking for custom work. Those who expressed a disliking for custom work either had no time to go for it or had bitter experience or were socio-psychologically not prepared to go for custom work. As many as 90% had a liking for it and only 10% did not like or practice it at all. This speaks of the extent of the tractor owners going for, or willing to take up custom work to help out others. That affects the pace and pattern of farm mechanization.

The custom service demands of farmers were not being met by tractor owners to the extent expected, as given out by the respondents:

5 | 4, Tractor demands of non-owners remaining unmet

Percentage of demand unmet	No.	Percentage
Upto 25	15	15.00
Upto 50	30	30.00
Upto 75	23	23.00
Above 75	32	32.00
Total	100	100.00

Of the 110 respondents to this study 10 gave the information that custom work did not apply to them.

By and large, it is not ~~possible~~ feasible for the needs of all the non-tractor farmers to be fulfilled by those owning tractors. Nevertheless, custom service is of some help and yet it is not a total help considering the fact that 15% tractor owners could not meet about 25% demands for custom work and 30% could not meet up to 50% demands. And 23% could not meet 75% demands and as much as 32% could not meet above 75% demands of custom work.

A very big constraint in attending to custom demand was the generally prevalent dissatisfaction of the client and his unfavourable utterances in this regard even if the work was done in the best possible way. The greatest sincerity in custom work of the tractor operator failed to bring laurels to him and thus the motive of recognition for the work done of the tractor operator largely remained unmet making him disinterested in custom work.

DISCUSSION

All farmers were using tractors for ploughing, levelling and transportation. Migrants were using it more in a widely spread manner than were the natives. The average number of purposes of use of tractor indicated a rising tendency as per increase in land size. Natives were using the tractor more for social purposes compared to the migrants. Almost all except those in largest landholding group accepted that their tractors were being under-utilized for reasons of seasonal nature of work and lack of complementary machinery. Most of the farmers wanted to earn from custom hiring work if they could be free from their own work. Some wanted to go for it even at the cost of their work as it was more economic to earn from hiring out than losing a little on own farm for reasons of delay. There were many purposes for which the non-tractor owners wanted to hire in the tractor. However, the owners did not want to hire out the tractors for heavy jobs like levelling which shows that they were selective and cautious in using their tractor. The terms and conditions for hiring out the tractor were favourably skewed towards the tractor owners. Tractor was also being used on the farm of others in exchange for bullock work by bullock owners. These were also used to create social relations. At other times due to tractor, their relatives were withdrawing from them for not being obliged. Economically apart, socio-culturally custom hiring work was full of constraints and problems. Realising the charges for the work done was the most torturing experience for the owners. Those expressing disliking for custom hiring work

either had no free time or had sad experiences in the past. Most of the custom service demands remained unmet which points to the need and prospects of custom hiring work. The client hiring in the tractor was never satisfied with custom service work done at his farm.

Tractors were being under-utilized even when most of the farmers wanted to use these for multifarious purposes on different terms and conditions. Similar views have been expressed by Venkantappiah, 1970, Haldipur, Shivamaggi, 1970, Shah, 1970 Babu, 1970 and Donda, 1970. The constraints in custom service have also been reported by Srinivasan, 1970, Jakhade etc. The increased provision for custom service work was highly emphasized by many participants like Patel, 1970, Shah, 1970 etc. at the Seminar on Farm Mechanization held at Vallabh Vidyanagar, Gujarat, 1970.