

Preface

Before the introduction of industrial revolution in England, the livelihoods of people were predominantly based on farming operations all over the world. With the process of economic development, the occupation of the people has transformed from farm works to non-farm works. Within this process of transformation, the farm sector contributed substantially to the non-farm sector in terms of provision of wage goods, labourers, etc. However, a large number of people are still dependent upon farming operations for their living in many parts of the world, particularly in the developing countries and in the mountain regions.

I have come from a farm family in which I had assisted my father in farming operations up to class XII. My father had chosen the crops and allocated cropland among the selected crops. As an Economics student, I also came to know that farmers also take multiple economic decisions in optimising their output and income. They also select multiple crops as well as farm enterprises to reduce production and marketing risks in farming operations. I was really interested to know how these farmers, mostly with low or zero level of formal education, take such decisions.

When I got a job in the Darjeeling hills, I came to know that the farmers in this region follow terrace farming. A matrix of questions used to haunt my mind including the difference between plain farming and hill farming, the process of coping of the hill farmers to multiple constraints, particularly those which resulted from mountain physiographic and eco-fragile environment conditions. My research supervisor has also provided me ideas on the farming in the hills. So, I had decided to work on “The Role of Agricultural Diversification in Rural Development: A Case Study of Mountain Livelihood Systems in the Himalayan Region of West Bengal”. Now, I am in a state of submitting my thesis.

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