

LOOKING BEYOND AGRICULTURAL MODERNIZATION:
A STUDY OF SOCIAL-WELL-BEING OF RURAL AGRARIAN COMMUNITIES

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Though agricultural modernization efforts and adoption of technology have been studied extensively, little attention has been paid to empirically assessing the impact of agricultural modernisation on the well-being of rural communities. This study addresses this aspect using a basic-needs approach to measure community well-being.

The relationship between external linkages that push agricultural modernization and community well-being was examined using a series of multiple regression models for which data was collected from 305 villages and 8460 households in a cross sectional survey of three districts in Sri Lanka in 1984.

External linkages were found to be positively associated with the level of agricultural modernity in villages. However, the contention that traditional social relationships inhibit modernization was seriously questioned by the findings. Agricultural modernization, per se, was associated positively with certain indicators of basic needs fulfillment. However, external linkages were found to have a direct negative association with community level of living. Increased external linkages were not found to be associated with intra-community inequality, but traditional social relationships and organizations did appear to suffer negative consequences of linkage. While agricultural modernization contributed to an increase in community level of living. It also produced a rise in inequalities. These findings question the merits of agricultural modernisation efforts particularly if such efforts are aimed at reducing poverty and inequalities among rural people.