

Changes in land ownership and tenure in the small holder sector in post-independent Sri Lanka

The alienation of state lands to the landless in rural areas under land settlement schemes in the dry zone and village expansion schemes in the wet zone, encroachment of state lands for agriculture and tenurial reforms of paddy lands have largely contributed to transform the pattern of land ownership and tenure in the smallholder sector in post-independent Sri Lanka . This study examines important changes in land ownership and tenure in the smallholder sector with regard to types of ownership of agricultural land tenure arrangements and social dimensions of both agricultural landowners and operators in the smallholder sector.

The agricultural censuses of 1946, 1962, 1973 and 1982, and other reports on agricultural statistics have been used to identify of land ownership, tenure categories and owners and operators.

One of the significant change in land tenure has been the increase of operators who are landless, operators having only home gardens and part time operators. The traditional land tenure practices such as *ande*, *thattumaru* and *Kattimaru* are also prevalent. The smallholder agricultural sector comprises an aggregate of more heterogeneous farming society.

A great degree of social Justice has been achieved with more equitable distribution of agriculture lands among the rural poor but a significant number of small scale farmers tend to move away from agriculture. Farming is less attractive to new comers due to low returns from farming.