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Socio-economic profile and awareness levels of farmers towards Vikshit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan in Garhwa District of Jharkhand

¹Abhilasha Deepa Minz, ²Rohit Kumar Singh, ¹Kalyan Mandi and ²Shiba Supriya Demta

¹Assistant Professor-cum-Junior Scientist, Department of Extension Education, Agriculture College Garhwa, BAU, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

²Assistant Professor-cum-Junior Scientist, Department of Horticulture, Agriculture College Garhwa, BAU, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India

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Corresponding Author: Abhilasha Deepa Minz

Abstract

This study evaluates the socio-economic profile of farmers in the Garhwa district of Jharkhand and assesses their awareness levels regarding the newly launched Vikshit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan (VKSA-2025). Conducted during the 2025-26 agricultural year, the study utilizes a random sampling method to gather primary data from 100 respondents across local Panchayats via personal interviews. Socio-economic variables were measured using the standardized scale developed by Trivedi and Pareek (1964), with data analyzed through simple statistical tools like frequencies and percentages. The demographic analysis reveals that a majority of the respondents belong to the active middle-aged category (38.00%) and showcase a highly progressive overall literacy rate of 89.00%. However, severe structural constraints exist: 72.00% of the sample operates as marginal farmers with landholdings under 1 hectare, and 54.00% subsist within the low annual income bracket (up to Rs. 70,000). Monoculture dominates the region, with 34.00% of farmers growing only rice. Although the farming community in the Garhwa district possesses the baseline formal literacy and physical vitality required for modernization, they are heavily restricted by small landholdings, low capital reserves, and a gap in functional digital literacy. To bridge this divide, agricultural extension mechanisms must pivot toward localized, decentralized, and high-touch support systems within interior Panchayats rather than relying solely on digital-only interfaces.

Keywords: VKSA, socio-economic profile, awareness, panchayat, landholding.

1. Introduction

In a major step toward realizing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's goal of a sustainable and self-reliant India, Union Agriculture Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan launched the Vikshit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan (VKSA-2025). The launch took place on May 29, 2025, at Bhubaneswar's ICAR-Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (ICAR-CIFA) in Kausalyaganga, Odisha. This cornerstone initiative aimed to modernize traditional farming by accelerating the adoption of advanced agricultural technologies, ultimately paving the way for a more robust, efficient, and prosperous agrarian economy. Spanning more than 700 districts nationwide, the campaign ran from May 29 to June 12, 2025. It mobilized roughly 2,170 specialized teams consisting of ICAR scientists, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) experts, and state department officials. Together, these teams successfully visited nearly 1.4 lakh villages, directly engaging with and impacting over 1.35 crore farmers across India (ICAR-Directorate of Weed Research, 2025) ^[4].

The VKSA initiative paired localized agricultural extension with a structured feedback system. It provided farmers with tailored guidance on crop and livestock management, efficient input use, and soil health card recommendations,

alongside updates on state welfare schemes. Crucially, the program used interactive mechanisms to uncover grassroots obstacles in infrastructure, marketing, and supply chains. By documenting these first hand farmer experiences, the initiative produced the data-driven insights necessary to reform later agricultural policies and optimize ongoing programming (Singh *et al.*, 2026) ^[13].

In the Garhwa district of Jharkhand, the execution of the Vikshit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan (VKSA) focused on addressing the unique challenges of the region's undulating and hilly terrain. Spearheaded locally through collaborative efforts with the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) and Birsa Agricultural University networks, the program delivered targeted advisories on climate-resilient cropping and water-efficient inputs, which are critical given Garhwa's limited natural irrigation. Ground-level interactive camps were organized across various blocks to map soil health cards specifically for the district's distinct "upper" and "lower" land types, optimizing fertilizer use where soil degradation was highest. Furthermore, the initiative actively captured localized feedback on infrastructural deficits, such as the acute need for solar-powered irrigation pumps and better market connectivity for local Rabi and Kharif yields. By systematically documenting the constraints faced by

smallholder farmers in this tribal-dominated pocket, the program generated critical, region-specific evidence utilized to align state-level agricultural schemes with Garhwa's specific rural requirements.

2. Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in the Garhwa district of the state of Jharkhand during the agricultural year 2025-26. The study was conducted among 100 randomly selected respondents and the primary data was collected through personal interview in their local Panchayat by the investigator and the responses were carefully recorded in the schedule. The socio-economic variables selected under the study were age, gender, education, landholding, number of family members and their annual income. The socio-economic variables were measured with the help of scale developed by Trivedi and Pareek (1964) ^[14] to ensure standardization and objectivity. Simple statistical tools like frequency and percentage were used for analysis and interpretation of the data. The respondents were categorised into low, medium and high categories on the basis of mean and standard deviation.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Age

The distribution of respondents according to age is presented in Table 1. A perusal of the data reveals that the highest proportion of respondents (38.00%) fell within the middle-age category (36–50 years). This was followed by 34.00 per cent in the young age group (less than 35 years) and 28.00 per cent in the old age category (above 50 years). The dominance of middle-aged respondents suggests that this demographic represents the most active and decision-making workforce in the region's agricultural sector. This group typically possesses a balanced combination of physical vigor and farming experience, making them more inclined to explore modern agricultural interventions. The findings are in conformity with the research conducted by Medhi *et al.* (2020) ^[8] and Patro *et al.* (2022) ^[9], who also reported a higher concentration of middle-aged farmers in similar rural studies. The active participation of this age group may be attributed to their increased interest in government initiatives, such as the Vikshit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan and other developmental schemes, where they seek to modernize their practices and secure better economic returns.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents according to their age (n=100)

S. No.	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Young (less than 35 years)	34	34.00%
2.	Middle (36-50 years)	38	38.00%
3.	More than 50 years	28	28.00%

3.2 Education

The educational background of the respondents plays a critical role in their capacity to adopt modern agricultural innovations and comprehend complex technological packages. The distribution of the sampled population according to their literacy levels is structured in Table 2. The data clearly indicates a highly progressive literacy profile among the respondents in the Garhwa district, with

an overall literacy rate of 89.00 per cent. Notably, a cumulative majority of 53.00 per cent had cleared higher-secondary education levels, comprising individuals educated up to the intermediate (26.00%) and matriculation (24.00%) stages. Furthermore, a substantial segment of the population held advanced degrees, with 15.00 per cent graduates and 12.00 per cent post-graduates.

This robust educational foundation is primarily attributed to the effective functioning of government academic institutions, secondary schools, and degree colleges within the study locales, alongside their close proximity to developing urban centres. These empirical findings closely align with the research observations of Madhuri *et al.* (2020) ^[7], who noted similar high literacy distributions in improving rural areas. Conversely, the results contrast sharply with the trends reported by Singh and Ramachandra (2019) ^[12], where high rates of illiteracy and structural dropouts dominated the agricultural workforce. This deviation strongly highlights the socio-economic and institutional strides made in regional education infrastructures in recent years.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents according to their Education (n=100)

S. No.	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Illiterate	11	11.00%
2.	Middle School	12	12.00%
3.	Matriculation	24	24.00%
4.	Intermediate	26	26.00%
5.	Graduation	15	15.00%
6.	Post-Graduation & above	12	12.00%

3.3 Size of Land Holding

Landholding size is a decisive indicator of a farmer's economic standing, risk-bearing capacity, and ability to adopt capital-intensive technologies. The categorization of the sampled population based on their operational land ownership is outlined in Table 3. The empirical data underscores a structural realities of regional agriculture in Garhwa district: an absolute absence of large landholders, alongside an overwhelming predominance of resource-poor farmers. A striking majority (72.00%) of the respondents operate as marginal farmers with sub-hectare plots (less than 1.00 ha), while the remaining 28.00 per cent fall strictly into the small and semi-medium holder category (1.00 to 4.00 ha).

This intense concentration within the marginal and small classes is primarily a consequence of generational land fragmentation, structural division within joint family systems, and growing demographic pressure on local rural assets. These observations align with the recent baseline data documented by Bandhavya *et al.* (2025) ^[11] and Singh *et al.* (2021) ^[11], who similarly verified that smallholders and marginal families comprise the vast majority of operational holdings in changing rural landscapes across India.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents according to their Size of Land Holding (n=100)

S. No.	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Marginal (less than 1 ha)	72	72.00%
2.	Small & Semi-Medium (1 to 4 ha)	28	28.00%
3.	Medium & Large (more than 4 ha)	0	0.00%

3.4 Number of Family Members

Family size is a key determinant of both household consumption demands and the availability of family labour for agricultural activities. The distribution of the sampled population based on their household size is presented in Table 4. The data indicates that a clear majority (56.00%) of the respondents in Garhwa district live in medium-sized households consisting of 4 to 6 members. This is followed by 34.00 per cent of respondents belonging to small-sized families (up to 3 members), while only a minor fraction (10.00%) maintain large families with more than 6 members.

This structural pattern indicates a clear modern transition away from traditional, expansive joint family units toward nuclear and semi-nuclear households in the rural landscape. A medium-sized family structure is often considered socio-economically advantageous in rural ecosystems; it generally ensures an optimal balance, providing sufficient internal family labour for field operations during peak sowing and harvesting windows without creating excessive household consumption strain or food security burdens.

These empirical distributions closely align with the structural trends reported by Bharath *et al.* (2025) [3] and Shankar *et al.* (2019) [10], who similarly observed the dominance of medium-sized nuclear families in modern agricultural communities.

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents according to their Number of Family Members (n=100)

S. No.	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Small (up to 3 members)	72	72.00%
2.	Medium (4 to 6 members)	28	28.00%
3.	Large (more than 6 members)	0	0.00%

3.5 Annual Income

Annual household income serves as a baseline indicator of a family's purchasing power, economic stability, and capacity to invest in high-yield inputs or modern machinery. The classification of the sampled population based on their annual income levels is compiled in Table 5. The economic profile reveals that a majority (54.00%) of the rural households in the study area subsist within the low annual

income bracket. This is closely followed by 42.00 per cent of the respondents who fall into the medium-income tier, while only a small fragment (4.00%) achieves a high annual income status.

This pronounced concentration of families in the low-income segment directly mirrors the landholding realities discussed in Table 3. Because 72.00 per cent of the sample consists of marginal farmers working sub-hectare plots, their primary source of revenue is highly restricted. Small plots limit scale economies, leaving households deeply vulnerable to rising input costs and climate fluctuations. The substantial 42.00 per cent in the medium tier likely reflects households that have successfully diversified their earnings through secondary livelihoods, such as animal husbandry, small-scale enterprise, or seasonal off-farm labour.

These economic patterns closely match the field observations of Mathuabirami and Kalaivani (2020) [6], who similarly highlighted that low-to-medium income structures dominate smallholder-dominated agrarian ecosystems.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents according to their Annual Income (n=100)

S. No.	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Low (up to Rs. 70,000)	54	54.00%
2.	Medium (Rs. 70,001 to Rs. 1,39,000)	42	42.00%
3.	High (More than Rs. 1,39,000)	4	4.00%

3.6 Cropping Pattern

With reference to the data given in table no. 6, it can be concluded that majority (34%) of the farmers were only growing rice during the year, followed by 23 per cent of the respondents growing rice and wheat in a year, 14 per cent of the respondents were growing rice, kharif vegetables and wheat during the year, equally 14 per cent of the respondents were growing rice and rabi vegetables during the year, seven per cent of the respondents are growing rice, kharif vegetables and rabi vegetables, five per cent of the respondents were growing rice, wheat and rabi vegetables during a year and only three per cent of the respondents were growing rice, wheat, kharif vegetables and Rabi vegetables in a year.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents according to their Cropping Pattern (n=100)

S. No.	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Rice	34	34.00%
2.	Rice - wheat	23	23.00%
3.	Rice +kharif Vegetables - wheat	14	14.00%
4.	Rice + kharif vegetables - wheat + rabi Vegetables	3	3.00%
5.	Rice - wheat + rabi Vegetables	5	5.00%
6.	Rice + kharif vegetables - rabi vegetables	7	7.00%
7.	Rice - rabi vegetables	14	14.00%

3.7 Awareness About VKSA Programme

Assessing target population awareness is a prerequisite for evaluating the reach, penetration, and field efficiency of any agricultural development initiative. The distribution of respondents based on their cognitive familiarity with the VKSA program guidelines is presented in Table 7. The empirical data reveals a critical bottleneck in institutional extension reach: an overwhelming majority (75.00%) of the

farmers in Garhwa district do not possess any understanding of the VKSA program frameworks. While 5.00 per cent display absolute clarity regarding its comprehensive provisions, a substantial one-fifth (20.00%) remain only partially aware of the initiative.

Given the earlier findings, that 72.00 per cent of the sample consists of resource-constrained marginal farmers, this information gap severely limits their ability to leverage

available institutional support to modernize their fields. These results underscore a clear need for localized, intensive extension campaigns, interactive demonstration camps, and simplified vernacular literature to convert passive, partial awareness into functional, active program utilization. Similar findings were found in a study conducted by Jamanal *et al.* (2019) ^[5] and Baruah and Mohan (2021) ^[2].

Table 7: Distribution of Respondents according to their Awareness about VKSA Programme (n=100)

S. No.	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Not Aware	75	75.00%
2.	Partially Aware	20	20.00%
3.	Fully Aware	5	5.00%

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that while the rural population of Garhwa district possesses the basic literacy and age-driven physical vitality required to modernize their agricultural operations, they are severely bottlenecked by small operational landholdings and low capital reserves.

Furthermore, the transition toward digitized agricultural governance—exemplified by the VKSA program—has outpaced grassroot capacities. High formal literacy has not automatically translated into functional digital literacy, leaving the majority of resource-poor, marginal smallholders trapped in a state of "partial awareness."

To bridge this divide, extension mechanisms must pivot away from centralized hubs and move directly into interior *Panchayats*, replacing rigid digital-only interfaces with simplified, high-touch local support systems.

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Disclaimer (Artificial Intelligence)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

Competing Interests

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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