

was able by then to buy his inputs directly from the market. He continued to be dependent, however, on agricultural merchants for a great portion of his marketing outlets. And bonds with absentee landlords, with whom the farmers entered into sharecropping compacts became even stronger. There is no doubt, however, in that the increased disposable income has improved the farmers' bargaining power with both the commission agent and the landlord.

The new agricultural technology has also altered the nature of the work process by alleviating the heavy burdens associated with furrow agriculture (especially those related to canal clearing during irrigation, which were done mostly by men) and increasing the work tasks demanded from women and children, especially during the harvest. The increased demand for hired labour was conveniently met by the higher returns from crop production.

In villages like Zbeidat, with a cohesive kinship structure, the collective use of water resources, has had the unforeseen political function of compelling the diverse interests of local farmers to unite and work in coordination. Previously, the 'share' system by which each cultivating household was allotted its respective right to water portions from the common village source (in accordance with the size of its plot, etc.), had fostered a vicious form of peasant individualism which had sabotaged several attempts to establish cooperative forms of using the new technology. The 'drip' system, by virtue of its centralized mechanism, superceded the water-sharing system and restored to the community a sense of cohesiveness and unity which was on its way to dissolution in the transition of Zbeidat from a semi-settled tribe to a fully-fledged peasant community.

The new technology also enabled the Valley farmer to sustain the demands of an increased population over the same limited cultivated area.