

Production function

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Outline

Factor-product relationship

Types of factor-product relationships (production functions)

Relationship between total, average and marginal products

Elasticity of production

Three regions of production function

Background

- When concerned with resource allocation for production optimization, an understanding of input-output or factor-product relationship is important.
- First, study of physical or technical relationship is important. Second, for decision making, application of economic choice indicators such as price ratio is required.
- In a simple scenario, we details the physical factor-product relationship of a single variable resource and single product.
- Many time resources or capacities of technical units, such as a ropani of land or a cow, are fixed and choice is to vary the input of only one factor – such as fertilizer OR labor.
- Other inputs such as fixed capital, buildings, implements and technical knowhow remain the same.

- Under such situation question of how much of certain input (amount of fertilizer or feed to a cow) to apply arises ?
- This situation is dealt by single factor-product relationships. a.k.a single variable production function (in a production function various levels of input are involved with corresponding output of the product).

Inputs have several different names:

Inputs = factors = factors of production = resources = A, L, K, M

A: *Land (Natural and biological resources, climate.)*

L: *Labor (Human resources.)*

K: *Capital (Manufactured resources, which include buildings, machines, tools, and equipment.)*

M: *Management (The entrepreneur, or individual, who combines the other resources into inputs.)*

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Types of factor-product relationships (production functions)

- There can be three types of input-output relationships in the production of a commodity where one input is varied and the quantities of all other inputs are fixed.
 1. Constant marginal rate of returns (Constant productivity)
 2. Increasing marginal rate of returns (Increasing productivity)
 3. Decreasing marginal rate of returns (Decreasing productivity)

Contant marginal rate of returns

- Each additional unit of the variable input when applied to fixed factors, produces an equal amount of additional product. The amount of product increases by the same magnitude for each additional unit of input.
- Not a very common relationship in agriculture and holds true only for limited range.
- Example:
 1. Addition of one acre of land (technology and other factors being same) will add the same amount of product.
 2. An addition of one tractor plus driver will do the same amount of work as previous tractor driver unit did.

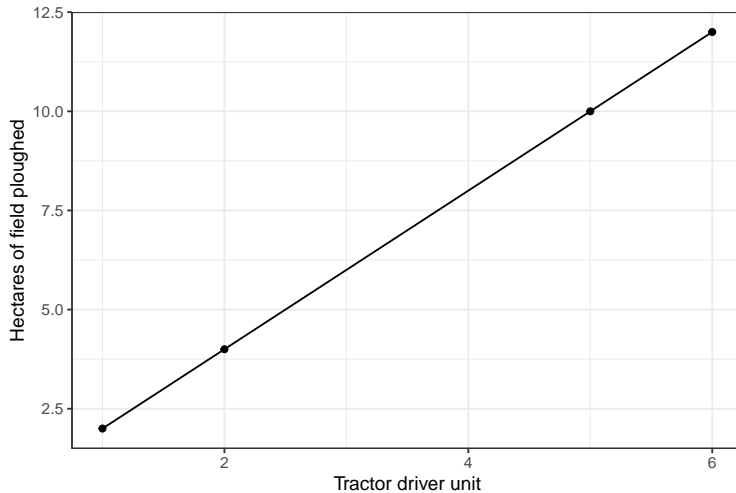


Figure 1: Constant marginal rate of returns for a input-output relationship between number of tractor plus driver unit recruits and hectares of land ploughed.

Table 1: Constant marginal rate of returns for a input-output relationship between number of tractor plus driver unit recruits and hectares of land ploughed.

tractor driver unit	field ploughed	marginal tractor driver unit	marginal field ploughed	marginal rate returns
1	2			2
2	4	1	2	2
5	10	3	6	2
6	12	1	2	2

Increasing marginal rate of returns

- Every additional or marginal unit of input adds more to the total product than the previous unit, i.e., addition to total product is at an increasing rate.
- In actual practice, the cases of purely increasing returns are rarely available except, again, in very limited range.
- This relationship is possible when the fixed factors of production are in excess capacity and addition of the small units of a variable resource makes more and more efficient use of fixed resources.
- Example:
 1. Small quantity of wheat seed applied when other factors of production such as fertilizer, irrigation and other cultural practices can be used at high levels will give low returns.

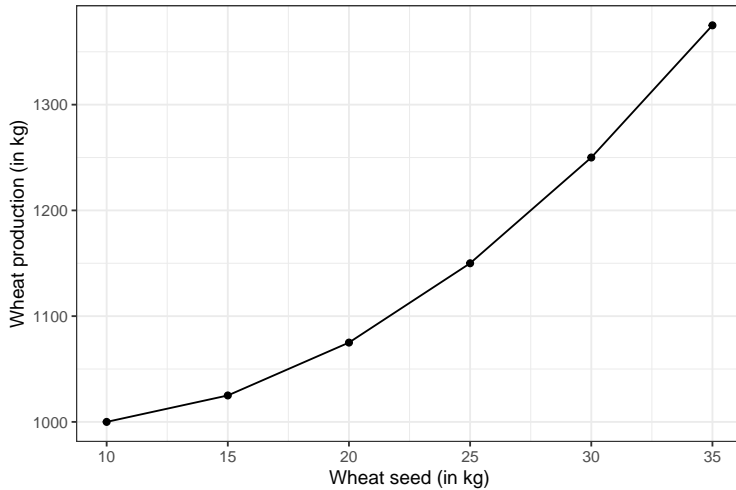


Figure 2: Increasing marginal rate of returns for hypothetical wheat production scenario.

Table 2: Increasing marginal rate of return for hypothetical wheat production scenario.

wheat seed	marginal wheat seed	wheat production	marginal wheat production	marginal rate returns
10		1000		
15	5	1025	25	5
20	5	1075	50	10
25	5	1150	75	15
30	5	1250	100	20
35	5	1375	125	25

Decreasing marginal rate of returns

- Each additional unit of input adds less to the total product than the previous unit did.
- This relationship exists in almost every practical situation in agriculture.
- Example:
 1. Response to fertilizers, insecticides, seeds, irrigation, feeds, etc. all show diminishing returns.



Figure 3: Decreasing marginal rate of returns for hypothetical wheat production scenario.

Table 3: Decreasing marginal rate of return for hypothetical wheat production scenario.

wheat fertilizer	marginal wheat fertilizer	wheat production	marginal wheat production	marginal rate returns
100		2000		
150	50	2600	600	12
200	50	3100	500	10
250	50	3500	400	8
300	50	3800	300	6
350	50	4000	200	4

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Physical returns or productivity relationships

- Total, average and marginal products are related.
- Both the average and marginal product curves or relationships can be derived once total product curve has been obtained.

Table 4: Relationship between total, average and marginal products

Units of fertilizer input	Total product (TP; Y)	Average product (AP; Y/X)	Marginal product (MP; Y/X)	Remarks
0	0			
1	2	2.0	2	Increasing at increasing rate
2	5	2.5	3	
3	9	3.0	4	
4	14	3.5	5	Increasing at constant rate
5	19	3.8	5	
6	23	3.8	4	Increasing at decreasing rate
7	26	3.7	3	
8	28	3.5	2	
9	29	3.2	1	
10	29	2.9	0	
11	28	2.5	-1	Decreasing at increasing rate
12	26	2.2	-2	

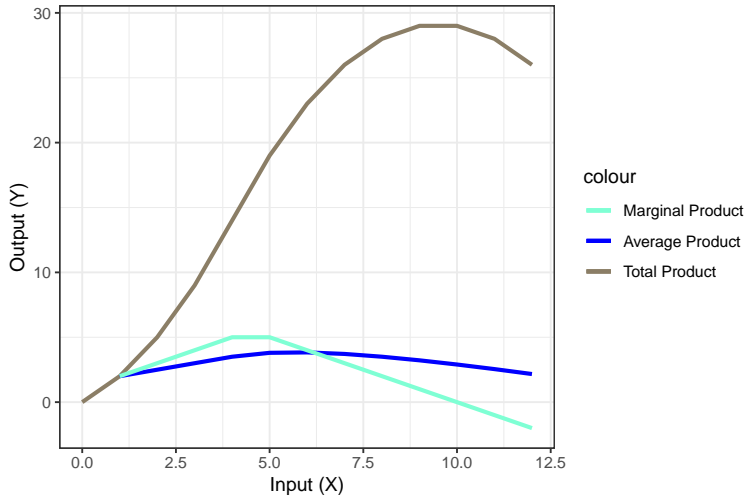


Figure 4: Relationship between TP, AP and MP.

Total product (TPC) and Marginal product (MPC)

1. Since the marginal product (MP) is a measure of rate of change therefore:
2. When the Total product (TP) is increasing, the MP will be positive.
3. When the TP remains constant, the MP will be zero, and
4. When the TP decreases, the MP will be negative.
5. So long as MP moves upwards or increases, the TP increases at an increasing rate.
6. When the MP remains constant, the TP increases at a constant rate.
7. When the MP starts declining or slopes downward, the TP will be increasing at a decreasing rate.
8. At the point when MP becomes zero or when MP intersects X-axis, the total product will be at maximum.

Marginal product (MPC) and average product (APC)

1. When the MP keeps increasing or is moving upward right from the beginning the Average product (AP) curve also keeps moving upward. So long as MP curve remains above the AP curve, the AP curve keeps increasing. This means when the AP is increasing, the MP must be greater than the average product.
2. As soon as the MP curve goes below the AP curve, the AP curve starts decreasing; i.e. when AP is decreasing, the MP is always less than the AP.
3. When AP is equal to MP, at this point AP will be at the maximum. From here onward, MP will change from greater to being less than AP, the MP curve must therefore intersect AP curve from above at its highest point.

Summary of relationship between MP and AP

1. When $MP > AP$, AP is increasing
2. When $MP < AP$, AP is decreasing
3. When $MP = AP$, AP is at a maximum.

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Elasticity of production

- The elasticity of production refers to the percentage change in output in response to the percentage change in input. It is denoted by the symbol E_p and can be computed as:

$$\begin{aligned} E_p &= \frac{\frac{\Delta Y}{Y}}{\frac{\Delta X}{X}} \\ &= \frac{X}{Y} \times \frac{\Delta Y}{\Delta X} \end{aligned}$$

- Let us consider an example, given in Table 5.

Table 5: Relationship between fertilizer input and yield of wheat.

Fertilizer doses (X)	Total yield attributable to fertilizer (Y)
0	0
1	103
2	174
3	223
4	257
5	281
6	298
7	308

As input increase from 1 to 2 units, total output increase from 103 to 174 units. Output thus increases by 71.9 percent in response to input increase of 100 percent. The elasticity of production is therefore:

$$\begin{aligned} E_p &= \frac{71.9}{100} \\ &= 0.719 \end{aligned}$$

Similarly, between the second and third unit of input, the elasticity works out to be 0.56.

- Essential points to remember in elasticity analysis are:
 1. A production function with an elasticity of $E_p = 1.0$ indicates constant returns throughout. This means one percent increase in input is always accompanied by one percent increase in output.
 2. The elasticity is more than 1.0 up to the point of maximum average product where it becomes 1.0.
 3. The elasticity is less than 1.0 between the points of maximum average product and the maximum total product.
 4. When it becomes less than zero, total product declines.
 5. When elasticity of production is 1.0, marginal and average products are equal. This condition holds true at only one point on the classical production function as shown in Figure 4.
 6. A production function for which the elasticity is less than 1.0 throughout all ranges of input used will indicate diminishing returns.

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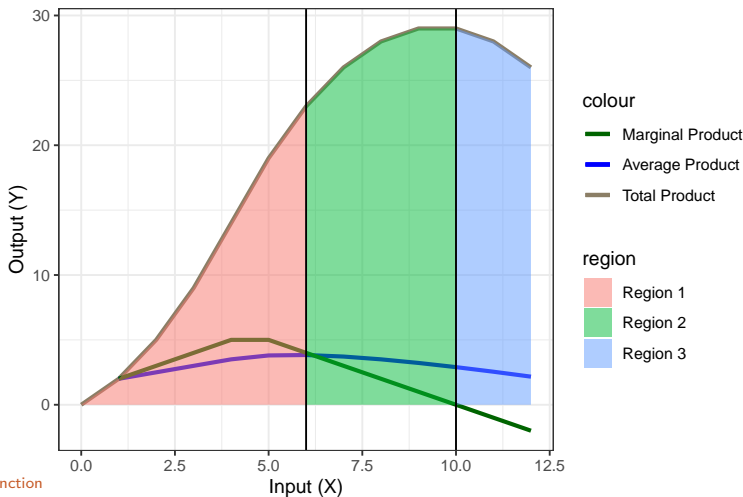
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Three regions of production function

- The classic production function (Figure 4 and Table 4) can be divided into three “regions”, “zones”, “parts” or “stages”, each important from the standpoint of decision-making on efficient resource use.
- These are (again shown in Figure 5):



Region 1 (irrational zone)

- This region holds from the point of origin up to the point the MPP remains greater than APP.
- The APP increases throughout this region indicating that the efficiency of all the units of variable input keeps increasing.
- Zone terminates as soon as APP equals MPP
- Notes:
 - once the farmer decides to produce, he must produce up to the level of input use where the APP is highest.
 - the efficiency of the variable input keeps increasing throughout the Region 1.
 - it is not reasonable to stop using an input when its efficiency on all units used is increasing.
 - reaching to the point of highest average product is always profitable

Region 3 (irrational zone)

- This region obtains where MPP crosses zero point and becomes negative.
- Negative MPP occurs when so much excessive quantity of the variable input is used that total output begins to decrease.
- Notes:
 - in the third region of production, the TP is decreasing.
 - additional quantities of input reduce the total output in this region, hence it is not profitable zone even if the additional quantities of resources are available free of cost.
 - e.g., if a farmer operates in this region – a farmer growing local variety and applying fertilizer without restraint might suffer loss of yield due to lodging and inefficient nutrient utilization – he will incur double loss:
 1. reduced production
 2. unnecessary additional cost of inputs

Region 2 (rational zone)

- This region obtains when MPP is decreasing and is less than APP. In this region at the starting point, MPP is equal to APP and it extends to the point where MPP becomes zero.
- The APP is also decreasing.
- Within the boundaries of this region is the area of economic relevance. Optimum point of input-use must be somewhere in this rational zone.
- Optimum point can, however, be located only when input and output prices are known.
- This region of production embodies diminishing returns phase – both AP and MP are decreasing.

Why operate in zone II of production function ?

- When a farmer is undertaking production on his farm, his prime objective is to maximize his returns. The TP curve in the production function shows only the total production while the MP curve represents the rate of returns from production. MP as a measure of farm operation efficiency at different level of production is useful to decide how much to produce with available quantities of input.
- It is of interest to farmer that each additional unit has variable relations with quantity of output. One surely will not want to stop production when addition of input causes more increment in product than the earlier unit of input did. This is the case of 1st zone of production function. In this zone efficiency of additional input is increasing and the fixed factors of production are not being used up to their full potential. To maximize returns from production, it is required that input be increased.

- As soon as the production from additional one unit of input stops adding to the total product, input use beyond this level is wasteful. This leads to farmer incurring double loss (first from increased cost of input use second from reduced returns from the product itself).
- However, as long as addition to total product is increasing at increasing rate or increasing at constant rate, or even increasing at decreasing rate, so that cost of additional unit of input use can be justified with returns from product obtained by the same additional unit of input, the production is carried out. The exact optimum level of input use, however, is determined by the price of input and output, both.

