

Production problems faced by betel leaf farmers' in karur district

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Abstract: Agriculture, which is considered the backbone of the Indian economy, has taken a back seat due to the apathy of government policies in the last two decades. The percentage of cultivable land has come down. Meanwhile, nearly 70 percent of the population depending upon agriculture for their daily livelihood directly or indirectly is currently undergoing a transformation. The economic development of a country depends on the development of the core industry in which the majority of its people have been engaged for quite a long time. Indian economy has been largely based on agriculture from time immemorial. Multi-stage stratified random sampling has been adopted for the present study with Karur District as the universe, the taluk as the stratum, the village as the primary unit of sampling and the betel leaf farmers as the ultimate unit. Primary data required for the study were collected from the 300 selected respondents of Karur district in order to analyze the technical efficiency of the farmers. Suggested this study, the Government can pay attention by providing transport facilities, maintaining good roads and providing subsidiaries for suckers and fertilizers, so that the small and medium farmers may be benefited.

Agriculture, which is considered the backbone of the Indian economy, has taken a back seat due to the apathy of government policies in the last two decades. The percentage of cultivable land has come down. Meanwhile, nearly 70 percent of the population depending upon agriculture for their daily livelihood directly or indirectly is currently undergoing a transformation. With dwindling surpluses from agricultural activities, most of the labourers have now shifted to service sector activities like real estate, working as construction workers, and others (especially the second generation from farming families) who are semiskilled have found solace in the periphery, working for courier companies and the like. Thus, semi and unskilled workers are forced to take up work in manufacturing (mostly contractual in nature) and service sectors – where wages are minimal and hardly any social security is provided by the company. Yet approximately some 20 percent of the villagers now depend solely upon agricultural income for their livelihood directly. Farmers' welfare directly depends upon the income generated from agricultural produce. This income would be high or low depending upon the nature of the price discovered in the market for the produce. The farmers often do not participate in determining the price and instead the middlemen and agents. Globalisation is a process in which the entire nation is expected to benefit, including the small farmers as stakeholders. But in India, we see a different picture. Globalisation has left the small farming community (and in the case of certain crops, the government) do it. These third parties make profit out of the loss imposed upon poor

farmers by manipulating the demand-supply conditions. When this threatens the daily livelihoods of the villagers, they search for better sources of income outside agriculture. This leads to sale of land, which ultimately drives the agricultural labour-force out of employment. The other side of the story is that due to the low prices received for their produce, farmers are sometimes compelled to give very low wages to the labourers, which is far less than what they might receive in comparison to the manufacturing sector. This forces the labourers to migrate out of agriculture. This indeed is not bad for an economy, which is in the second stage of reforms and globalisation. Reforms would be meaningful in the macro context, only if they provide greater employment opportunities with better wages and working environment. It is an irony that it is not so in the agricultural sector in a nation, which calls “Mathama Gandhi” the *father of the nation*, who always stressed upon “self sufficient villages” as the building blocks for making India a strong nation. Today we have a situation where large-scale migration of productive labour force (in the age group of 16 to 58) from villages to metros is creating unmanageable shanty townships. This has come about due to a combination of misplaced trade and other policies. Fruits and agricultural landless labourers behind to languish in penury. In the era of corporate farming many large farmers have joined hands with big companies to do their business.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Raju and Senguttuvan (2003) found that the most destructive pest pseudostem weevil is widely distributed in all banana growing areas. The reason for the spread of this pest is the selection of the suckers from the pest affected places and non-removal of the leaves, trashes and suckers after the harvest of the crop.

Praveena and Selvalakshmi, (2004) observed that investment in fertilizers can be reduced by the application of biofertilizers. Biofertilizers do not pollute the soils and ground water with residues. It promotes and enhances the health of the agro ecosystem including biodiversity, biological cycle and biological soil activities.

The National Commission on Agriculture defined agricultural marketing as the process which starts with a decision to produce saleable farm commodities and it involves all aspects of market structure or system both functional, institutional based on technology and academic consideration including pre and post harvest operations, grading, storage, transportation and distribution.

B. Bhushan defines agricultural marketing as performance of activities that direct the movement of agricultural commodities services from the farm-gate to customer.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The economic development of a country depends on the development of the core industry in which the majority of its people have been engaged for quite a long time. Indian economy has been largely based on agriculture from time immemorial. The economic aspects of the crop as discussed above evidently prove that betel leaf is one of the most promising commercial crops capable of attracting substantial amount of foreign exchange to the country. Betel leaf, being highly perishable commodity, is to be marketed within a short span of time. Therefore, systematic package practices in betel leaf production will greatly improve productivity and

enable the farmers to reach the maximum benefits. Similarly a well organized marketing system for betel leaf will give a suitable reward to people actually participating in the system.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The leaves are very nutritive and contain substantial amount of vitamins and minerals and therefore, six leaves with a little bit of slaked lime is said to be comparable to about 300ml of cow milk particularly for the vitamin and mineral nutrition. The leaves also contains the enzymes like diastase and catalase besides a significant amount of all the essential amino acids except lysine, histidine and arginine, which are found only traces.

This study will help to formulate a suitable frame work to analyse the various elements of production and marketing of betel leaf. Such a study will ensure proper resource combinations to improve betel leaf production and thereby increasing the profit.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the problems faced by betel leaf farmers
2. To offer suggestions to improve the production and marketing of betel leaf

AREA OF THE STUDY

Agriculture is a predominant occupation in Karur District and it occupies an important place in the District economy. Most of the labour force is engaged in agriculture and its allied activities. Karur district was selected for the present study since the betel leaf cultivation occupied important place in agriculture in this district.

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses have been framed in the light of the above objectives.

H_0 : There is no significant difference between mean ranks for respondent's problems towards production of betel leaf.

H_1 : There is no significant difference between mean ranks for respondent's problems towards production of betel leaf.

METHODOLOGY

The study is a combination of both descriptive and analytical. The present study is empirical and hence field survey method and personal interview technique were adopted. Multi-stage stratified random sampling has been adopted for the present study with Karur District as the universe, the taluk as the stratum, the village as the primary unit of sampling and the betel leaf farmers as the ultimate unit. Primary data required for the study were collected from the 300 selected respondents of Karur district in order to analyze the technical efficiency of the farmers. The field survey was carried out during the period from April 2015 to December 2015 to collect the primary data. Primary data collected from interview schedule. The following descriptive statistics Percentages, mean and standard deviation, Friedman rank test.

PROBLEM FACED BY PRODUCTION OF BETEL LEAF CULTIVATION

TABLE NO.1

Ranks			
		Mean Rank	Rank
1	Huge Investment	4.50	1
2	Nonavailabilityh of quality indigenous planting material	5.20	2
3	Scarcity of labour	6.56	3
4	Irregular supply of electricity	3.45	4
5	Pest and diseases attack	5.94	5
6	Poor harvest during rainy season	7.31	6
7	Problem of pests	8.05	7
8	Problem of diseases	8.70	8
9	High cost fo fertilizers	9.42	9
10	Availability of labour	10.02	10
11	High cost of plant protection chemicals	11.44	11
12	Limited and irregularity of power supply	10.89	12
13	Cloudy climatic conditions	12.81	13
14	High investment in establishing a poly house all the above	12.26	14

Source: Primary Data.

This table lists the mean rank of each variable. Low rank corresponds to the higher values of the variables. Here non availability of quality indigenous planting material has lower values than the other variables with the mean value 4.50. High investment in establishing a poly house all the above on next had larger values than the other variables with the mean value of 12.26. The Friedman test determines if the average ranking differs across variables.

H_0 : There is no significant difference between mean ranks for respondent's problems towards production of betelleaf.

H_1 : There is no significant difference between mean ranks for respondent's problems towards production of betelleaf.

TABLE - 1(a)
FRIEDMAN TEST

No. of respondents	Calculated value	F	P-value	S/ SN
300	2919.839	3	.000**	S

**** P<0.01 S - significant**

This table lists the result of the Friedman test. For these rankings, the chi-square value is 2919.839; Degree of freedom is equal to the number of values minus 1. As 14 options are ranked, there are 13 degrees of freedom. It is clear from the above table that significance level is 0.000 at one percent level of significance. Hence the hypothesis is rejected. At least one of the variables differs from the others.

SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Since the availability of water is insufficient, the purchase of water from fellow farmers is inadequate. As a result there is a sizable reduction in the output. In order to increase the water resources, the government should comforward to help the farmers through subsidy for digging well or bore well.
2. The Betel leaf cultivation is higher in kulithalai taluk. But they fetch only lower price. If a Co-operative marketing society is established in this taluk, it will be beneficial for betel leaf producers as it undertakes the procurement, processing and other marketing functions for the benefit of the members.
3. The farmers are usually following traditional methods of cultivation through generation. The advance techniques like soil testing and seed testing are not used by the farmers as they are not aware of them. Therefore, the laboratories for these tests are to be established in every panchayat union of karur district.
4. The farmers should be encouraged to follow intercrop cultivation as it not only increases the total income but also the intercrops are used for natural manure.

CONCLUSION

The agricultural growth strategy of the past has intensified the interclass inequalities.

The Government can pay attention by providing transport facilities, maintaining good roads and providing subsidiaries for suckers and fertilizers, so that the all farmers may be benefited. The Government can take necessary steps to release Cauvery water at appropriate period (i.e. during betel leaf period) which will enable the farmers to get a good yield of betel leaf. In the areas chosen for the Research, two-third of the population are agriculturalists. Their agricultural lands depend on monsoon rains. If the monsoon fails, then the farmers will be in trouble. In this situation, the Government should give financial support to farmers, especially to the small and medium farmers.

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