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CONSTRAINTS IN ADOPTION OF RECOMMENDED CULTIVATION PRACTICES OF MEDICINAL PLANT GROWERS

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to identify the constraints faced by medicinal plant growers in adoption of recommended cultivation practices. The present investigation was conducted in Thiruvannamalai district of the Tamil Nadu state. 120 respondents were selected randomly by proportionate random sampling method from selected villages and they were interviewed, personally to collect the data with the help of structured interview schedule. The collected data were processed and statistically analyzed. Major constraints experienced by the medicinal plant growers were improper availability of seed/planting material, followed by high cost of labour, lack of fixed price policy for medicinal plants by the government, lack of processing industries in the nearby area.

KEY WORDS: *Constraints in adoption, Medicinal plant Growers*

INTRODUCTION

The term 'Medicinal plants' includes various types of plants used in herbalism (Herbal medicine). Humans have relied on nature for their basic needs, for production of food, shelter, clothing, transportation, fertilizers, flavours, fragrances and medicines (Cragg and New man 2005). Plants have formed the basis of sophisticated traditional medicine systems that have been in existence for thousands of years and continue to provide mankind with new remedies. Natural products and their derivatives represent more than 50 per cent of all the drugs in clinical use in the world today. Treatment with medicinal plants is considered very safe as there is no or minimal side effects. These remedies are in sync with nature, which is the biggest advantage. Hence this study was taken up with the following objective to study the constraints faced by medicinal plant growers in adopting the recommended cultivation practices.

METHODOLOGY

In Thiruvannamalai district, Chengam taluk was selected for the study, as it has the maximum area under medicinal plant cultivation compared to other taluks. In this taluk, three blocks namely Chengam, Thandarampattu and Pudupalayam were selected based on maximum area criteria.120 respondents were

selected by proportionate random sampling method from selected villages and they were interviewed personally to collect the data with the help of structured interview schedule. The collected data were processed and statistically analyzed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Constraints faced by the respondents in medicinal plant cultivation.

Table 1.Production constraints

(n=120)

S.No	Production constraints	No of Respondents	Per cent	Rank
1	Improper availability of seed/ planting material	93	77.50	I
2	High cost of labour	87	72.15	II
3	Inadequate credit facilities	76	63.33	III
4	High cost of inputs	69	57.50	IV
5	Lack of assured irrigation facilities	57	47.50	V
6	Lack of extension services on the cultivation aspects	50	41.66	VI
7	Lack of trained personnel	50	41.66	VI

It could be noticed from the above Table 1 that with regard to the production constraints nearly three-fourth of the respondents (77.50 per cent) indicated the improper availability of seed/planting material as the major constraint, which is followed by higher cost of the labour as expressed by 72.50 per cent of the respondents. These have emerged as the first and second major constraints. The contractor or the private agent only supplies the seed planting materials and sometimes they are not viable and the government does not take adequate steps to supply seedling material. The migration of labourers to cities result in the non-availability of labourers for the technical operations. Hence higher wages are demanded. This finding derives support from the findings of Ajjan (2004) and Bhuse (2002).The third constraint experienced by 63.33 per cent of the respondents was inadequate of credit facilities. Most of the respondents were having inadequate savings for the purchase of vital inputs for future use. They always depended on private money lenders. They charged high interest rates and at times they have to mortgage their properties. Besides, the co-operative society and commercial banks in the study area were not sanctioning adequate amount to purchase the inputs.

The fourth constraint experienced by 57.50 per cent of the respondents was high cost of inputs. This might be due to the fact that they get the inputs from the private agencies. They only fix the price and get the maximum price for the given inputs like the fertilizers, pesticides,seeds etc.The fifth constraint experienced by 47.50 per cent of the respondents was lack of assured irrigation facilities. Basically the study area is a drought prone area. Due to failure of monsoon and a poor storage in reservoirs, the water let in to canal for irrigation purpose is not adequate. The sixth and the last constraints experienced by 41.66 per cent of the respondents was lack of extension services on the cultivation aspects. The respondents felt that the extension personnel of the state department of horticulture were not taking adequate efforts to provide technical information on medicinal plant cultivation practices and also the informations provided by some of the private sectors was insufficient to cultivate the medicinal plants. The last constraint experienced by 41.66 per cent of the respondents was lack of trained personnel. Most of the respondents reported that farm labourers need to be properly trained. Moreover, some of the practices are carried out simultaneously by all the farmers and hence there have been heavy demand for trained labourers. These might be the reasons for the above reported constraint.

Table 2. Marketing constraints

(n=120)

S.No	Marketing constraints	No of Respondents	Per cent	Rank
1	Lack of fixed price policy for medicinal plants by the government	110	91.66	I
2	Lack of processing industries in the nearby area	99	82.50	II
3	Lack of proper marketing channel	81	67.50	III
4	Lack of information on post-harvest technology and lack of standard specification of the produce	78	65.00	IV
5	Inadequate transport facilities	63	52.50	V

The major constraint expressed by 91.66 per cent of the respondents was lack of fixed price policy for medicinal plants by the government. The contributing reason for the problem of fixed price policy for the varying economics fluctuating demands and supply in the regional, national and international levels. This indicates that there is a need to open co-operative marketing centre and regarding price fixation government has to take steps to formulate comprehensive policy measures for price fixation. This finding derives support from the findings of Bharathideepa (2003) and Mary (2004).The second major constraint experienced by 82.50 per cent of the respondents was lack of processing industries in the near by area. Medicinal plants are mainly process within a few hours or weeks or months and used for many other purposes like cosmetics, tablets etc. The growers process their produce at near by processing industries only. So if the government encourages processing industries in each block then the area under cultivation of medicinal plant can be increased.

The constraint experienced by 67.50 per cent of the respondents was lack of proper marketing channel. In the study area most of the farmers do not know from where they can get the planting material and to market. The middle men can contact with the private industries and they collect all the produce and supplies them. He may get more money in this transaction from the farmers and also lack of knowledge on marketing might be the reason for reporting this constraint. The fourth constraint experienced by 65.00 per cent of the respondents was lack of information on post- harvest technology and lack of standard specification of the product. Most of the farmers directly supply their produce to the contractors at the field itself. Due to this they did not care much for post-harvest technology. However the growers are aware of the fact that they can get better price if they store and sell the produce at an appropriate time. In the study area only for the past few years they have been cultivating the medicinal plants. They are not much aware of the details like the specification of the produce about the medicinal plant.Fifth constraint experienced by 52.50 per cent of the respondents was inadequate transport facilities. The study area was mostly rural and there were improper facilities to transfer their produce from one place to another. The contractor or commission agent also collects extra chargers for their transport. This may be the reason for reporting as a constraint.

CONCLUSION

Improper availability of seed / planting material (77.50 per cent), high cost of labour (72.15 per cent), inadequate credit facilities (63.33 per cent), high cost of inputs (57.50 per cent), lack of assured irrigation facilities (47.50 per cent) and lack of extension services on the cultivation aspects (41.66 per cent) and lack of trained personal (41.66 per cent) were reported as the constraints in the production of medicinal plants.Lack of fixed price policy for medicinal plants by the government (91.66 per cent), lack of processing industries in the nearby area (82.50 per cent), lack of proper marketing channel (67.50 per cent), lack of information on post-harvest technology and inadequate transport facilities (52.50 per cent) were the major constraints in marketing as expressed by the respondents.

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