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Constraints in Adoption of Recommended Cultivation Practices of Medicinal Plant Growers

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ABSTRACT

The 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 Tiruvannamalai district of Tamil Nadu state. A total of 120 respondents were selected randomly by proportionate random sampling method and were interviewed personally with the help of a 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, high cost of labour, lack of fixed price policy for medicinal plants by the government and lack of processing industries.

Keywords: Constraints ; adoption; Medicinal plant growers;Tamil Nadu

'Medicinal plants' refers to various types of plants used in herbalism or herbal medicine. Human beings relied on nature for their basic needs, for production of food, shelter, clothing, transportation, fertilizers, flavors, fragrances and medicines. 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 an objective to study the constraints faced by medicinal plant growers in adopting the recommended cultivation practices.

METHODOLOGY

In Tiruvannamalai district of Tamil Nadu, 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, Thandampattu and Pudupalayam were selected based on maximum area criterion. A total of 120 respondents were selected by proportionate random sampling

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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.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The constraints faced by the respondents in cultivation of medicinal plants were documented and presented in Table 1. As regards production constraints, nearly three-fourths of the respondents (77.50 per cent) indicated improper availability of seed / planting material as the major constraint, 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 due to the

fact that the contractor or the private agent being the only supplier of seed materials and sometimes the seeds were not viable. The migration of laborers from the villages to cities resulted in the non-availability of laborers for the technical operations and hence higher wages were 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 credit facilities. Most of the respondents were having inadequate savings for the purchase of vital inputs for future use. They depended on private money lenders. They in turn charged high interest rates and at times the farmers had to mortgage their properties. Besides, the respondents opined that the amount sanctioned by the co-

Table 1
Production Constraints Faced in Cultivation of Medicinal Plants

n=120

Sl.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

operative society and commercial banks in the study area were not adequate to purchase the inputs.

The fourth constraint experienced by the respondents was high cost of inputs. This might be due to the fact that they get the inputs from the private agencies who sell fertilizers, pesticides, seeds etc., The fifth constraint experienced by 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. Other constraints were lack of extension services on the cultivation aspects and lack of trained personnel. Most of the respondents reported that farm labourers need to be properly trained about the cultivation practices of medicinal plants. Moreover, some of the practices are carried out simultaneously by all the farmers and hence there have been

heavy demand for trained labourers.

Among the marketing constraints, 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 reasons for the problem of fixed price policy were 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 the 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 nearby area. Medicinal plants are processed within a few hours or weeks or months after harvesting and used for many other purposes like cosmetics,

Table 2
Marketing Constraints faced in Cultivation of Medicinal Plants

n=120

Sl. 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

tablets etc. The growers process their produce at nearby 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 the proper place to get the planting material and to market. Generally, the middle men who have contact with the private industries, collect all the produce and supply to the industries. Lack of knowledge on available marketing facilities for medicinal plants might be the reason for this constraint. The fourth constraint 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. Inadequate transport facilities was also listed as a constraint. The study area was mostly rural and there were improper facilities to transfer their produce from one place to another. The contractors or commission agents collect extra charges for transport.

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