INPUT USE PATTERN AND FACTORS AFFECTING POTATO YIELD IN BARPETA DISTRICT OF ASSAM

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A study was conducted during 2004-05 in Barpeta district of Assam to assess the physical input use pattern and factors affecting yield of potato. Barpeta was selected purposively because it contributes highest in potato production (12.30% of the state) among all the districts of Assam. Stratified multistage random sampling was employed for the study and thirty six potato growers were selected randomly from three blocks, namely, Bhawanipur, Mandia and Sarukshetri of the district. Simple tabular methods and Cobb-Douglas production function were used to analyse the data. It was found that farmers were not using quality seed and balanced dose of fertilizers. There was lack of irrigation and cold storage facilities in the area. Farmers were also lacking the knowledge of scientific potato production practices. The regression analysis showed that labour, mulching, plant protection and micronutrients were the important factors affecting potato yield. Further, potato production in the study area was operating under increasing return to scale (2.84). The study suggests to intensify the efforts to educate the farmers regarding scientific potato production practices. State Government should make available good quality seed to the farmers and establish cold storage and proper irrigation facilities.

MARKETING OF POTATO IN HOOGHLY DISTRICT OF WEST BENGAL

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Present study is an attempt to identify marketing channels for potato and to study the price spread in potato marketing in Hooghly district of West Bengal, for suggesting suitable measures for increasing the marketing efficiency. Using simple random sampling technique, data were collected from a total of 30 potato farmers, 5 wholesalers and 16 retailers by personal interview method with the help of pre-structured schedule during February 2001. A total of 5 marketing channels were identified out of which ‘Producer-cold store-commission agent/wholesaler-retailer-consumer’ was found to be the most important marketing channel as about 40 percent of the total potato on sample farms was being disposed off through this channel. Major share of potato produced was disposed off at the time of harvest without storing in cold store because of low retention power of the marginal and small farmers due to financial obligations. However, the net share of producer in consumer’s rupee was higher in Producer-commission agent/wholesaler-retailer-consumer channel (about 60%). Marketing efficiency was also higher in the same channel. Both the channel for potato marketing were inefficient due to involvement of a number of middlemen and require due attention from the Government to increase the efficiency of the potato markets of West Bengal which can be increased by taking following steps: 1) Providing loan facility on cold stored potatoes to farmers 2) providing more cold storage space by constructing more cold stores, 3) Encouraging farmers for forming cooperatives for sending potatoes directly to distant markets and 4) providing cheap and efficient transportation to potato.