

Restraints and Propositions for Vegetable production in Ranga Reddy district of Telangana

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Abstract

Ranga Reddy district is a peri-urban area cultivating vegetables. Vegetable growers in the area expressed dissatisfaction with their economic situation. This study was taken up to analyse the constraints faced by respondents to give a clear picture of the current scenario. Purposive sampling of mandals and villages followed by proportionate sampling led to a sample size of 150 respondents, who were contacted and data collected using a structured interview schedule. This study highlighted that unavailability of labour was the major production-related constraint and price fluctuation was the foremost market-related constraint. Suggestions by the respondents to uplift their economic situation included implementing minimum support price and exploring new marketing systems such as Retail marketing. In addition, they suggested that post-harvest infrastructure development like transport, storage, processing activities, promotion of export activities need to be focused on.

Keywords: Farmers, Vegetable production, Constraints, Suggestions.

Introduction

Vegetables are an excellent source of nutrients, including vitamins A and C, riboflavin, thiamine, and niacin, minerals such as calcium, phosphorus, iron, and proteins in our diet. India stands as the second-largest producer of vegetables, following China, with an area of 10.3 million hectares producing 1,89,464'000 MT (Pocketbook of Agriculture Statistics, 2020). Even with increased production, India still lags in addressing hunger and malnutrition issues which urges the nation to create alternative and efficient marketing systems with infrastructure development.

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Focus on an efficient marketing system helps directly in raising farmers' income which is the need of the hour. High charges posed by intermediaries, defective weighing and lack of market place stood in the top three constraints highlighted (Ahmad et al., 2017) by Bihar vegetable growers whereas unavailability of quality seeds was a restraint claimed by potato growers (Singh et al 2018). This emphasizes that constraints faced by the vegetable growers are area-specific for which appropriate measures are needed.

The study area, Ranga Reddy district, favours the cultivation of horticulture crops with 58,318 acres under vegetable production in the year 2019-2020 making it a leading producer compared to other districts of Telangana with a production of 3,85,135 MTS. Still, the economic satisfaction of farmers was not achieved. Therefore, the following study was conducted to examine the constraints faced by the vegetable growers with regard to the production and marketing of produce. This study aimed for a better understanding of the current situation and suggestions perceived by respondents to improve the situation.

Methodology

In Ranga Reddy district of Telangana, three mandals, namely Chevella, Ibrahimpatnam, and Shabad, were purposively selected based on three years' average of acreage allotted under vegetable production. According to the Rythu Samagra Samachara Sekara (RSSS) 2020-21 data of the area under vegetable production, three villages from each mandal were chosen as the study areas. Proportionate sampling was followed to select the number of farmers to be contacted from each village. A total of 150 respondents were approached through simple random sampling to collect responses. Based on a thorough review of the literature and preliminary discussions with farmers, horticulturists, agriculturists and extension officers, the constraints were listed and divided into two categories viz., Production and Market-related. A well-structured interview schedule was prepared and pre-tested.

Responses were collected using a three-point continuum scale and quantified using the Constraints Faced Index (CFI).

CFI = No. of respondents opted constraint as very much a problem*3 + No. of respondents opted constraint as somewhat a problem*2 + No. of respondents opted constraint as not at all a problem*1

The suggestions for improvement of the economic situation of farmers were quantified using frequency and percentage based on which rankings were given.

Results and Discussions

It could be observed from table 1 that non-availability of labour was marked as the topmost constraint followed by the high cost of fertilizers and plant protection chemicals and the problem of pests and diseases at Rank II and III. The respondents complained about labourers' preference towards Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) work (100 days of employment) over the fieldwork. In addition, harvesting of vegetables needed to be completed before the daybreak to reach marketplaces early in the morning (3:30 to 4:30 am) with fresh vegetables. Tedious vegetable harvest associated with odd work hours was not favoured by the labourers who demanded additional wages.

The lack of seed or nursery material and insufficient irrigation facilities were issues of concern ranking at IV and V. Lack of finance/credit facility was ranked last by vegetable growers (VI). Due to the government's declaration of free power, 24*7 for farmers the respondents did not express dissatisfaction with the power supply.

Table 1. Production Related Constraints Faced by Vegetable Growers (n=150)

S.No.	Constraints	Very much a problem (3)	Some what a problem (2)	Not at all a problem (1)	Constraint Faced Index (CFI)	Rank
1	Non-availability of labour	91	18	41	350	I
2	High cost of fertilizers and plant protection chemicals	79	23	48	331	II
3	Problem of pests and diseases	34	47	69	265	III
4	Non-availability of seed or nursery material at the time of sowing/planting	2	29	119	183	IV

5	Inadequate irrigation facilities	0	15	135	165	V
6	Lack of finance/ credit facility	0	11	139	161	VI
7	Limited or irregularity in power supply	0	0	150	150	VII

With regard to the marketing-related constraints, fluctuations in market prices were very much a problem for the majority of respondents and ranked as number I. It could be reasoned as market prices for vegetables were found to be extremely unpredictable, varying not only from day to day but even from hour to hour. After the sale of the produce, farmers received just enough to cover their production costs, but on down days, they were short-changed, unable to meet transportation and labour costs.

Subsequently, high cost of transportation, markets being far away and exploitation by middlemen were ranked II, III, IV, respectively. Further, concerns related to the market were high commission charges, lack of market information ranked as V and VI respectively.

Table 2. Market-Related Constraints Faced by Vegetable Growers (n = 150)

S.No.	Constraints	Very much a problem (3)	Some what a problem (2)	Not at all a problem (1)	Constraint Faced Index (CFI)	Rank
1	Fluctuation in market prices	95	28	27	368	I
2	High cost of transportation	49	29	72	277	II
3	Markets are far away	36	32	82	254	III
4	The exploitation by middlemen	19	41	90	229	IV
5	High commission charges	16	35	99	217	V
6	Lack of market information	17	26	107	210	VI
7	Lack of processing facilities	7	26	117	190	VII
8	Inadequate infrastructure facilities in the market	6	22	122	184	VIII

9	Illegal deductions while selling	4	12	134	170	IX
10	Hamali charges (Labour charge for loading and unloading of goods) are more	2	7	141	161	X
11	Prolonged transactions (Taking long time while marketing)	2	3	145	157	XI
12	Faulty system of weighment	0	0	150	150	XII
13	Delayed cash payments	0	0	150	150	XIII

The hurdles such as lack of processing facilities, inadequate infrastructure facilities in the market, illegal deductions while selling were ranked as VII, VIII and IX as may be seen in Table 2. Vegetable growers ranked higher hamali charges at X, and prolonged transactions as XI. The respondents opted for credible commission agencies. The respondent vegetable growers did not state faulty payment systems and delayed cash payments as an issue.

These results are consistent with investigations of Pandit and Basak (2013), with vegetable farmers in commercial cultivation, Rohit et al. (2017) who probed respondents about problems in peri-urban vegetable cultivation, and Rai et al., (2019), who discussed with Nepali farmers regarding their constraints in commercial vegetable cultivation.

The responses of the vegetable growers, concerning suggestions for improvement of existing marketing systems, for their economic upliftment are presented in Table 3. More than three-quarters (78%) of the vegetable growers expressed the need for Standardized / Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for vegetables. Nearly half of the sample (48%) wished to explore new marketing systems such as retail marketing to improve their existing marketing situation, and 38 per cent suggested the need to have more procurement centres nearby.

Vegetable growers believe that a Standardized/Minimum Support Price could be a useful approach to deal with market price fluctuations. The role of retail market places in lowering transportation costs may contribute to higher income, hence respondents were interested in learning more about it.

Table 3. Suggestions for Economic Upliftment as Expressed by Vegetable Growers.

S. No.	Suggestions	*Number	Per cent (%)	Rank
1	Standardized / Minimum Support Prices for the produce	117	78.00	I
2	Explore new marketing systems - Example- retail marketing	72	48.00	II
3	More procurement centers at nearby places	57	38.00	III
4	Form cooperatives for collective marketing	48	32.00	IV
5	Provide access to market information	42	28.00	V
6	Improving physical facilities at markets	18	12.00	VI
7	Protection from the exploitation of middlemen	10	6.67	VII
8	Providing timely and immediate payment	4	2.67	VIII
9	Providing concessional transportation charges	1	0.67	IX

About 32 per cent of the vegetable growers suggested forming cooperatives to boost marketing, and 28 per cent suggested providing access to market information. Improving physical facilities at markets (12.00%), protection from middlemen (6.67%), timely and immediate payments (2.67%) and concessional transport charges (0.67%) were a few other suggestions by the vegetable growers. These results are in line with Baban (2012) when scrutinizing the vegetable growers' marketing behaviour, and econometric analysis carried out by Kondal (2016).

Conclusions

Irregularity in power supply, was reported as the topmost constraint by Singh et al (2020), but vegetable growers of the study area had not complained about it, confirming the area specificity of problems. Lack of market information and processing facilities were not indicated as problems, by the majority of respondents. It does not mean the existence of such facilities but conveys the disinterest of the respondents. It underlines the need of motivating the vegetable growers to avail better communication systems involving extension

officials combined with information technology. The creation of infrastructure like cold storage, processing units, and facilitating exports are in the hands of the government.

As an immediate solution, minimum support price will cater to the economic needs of respondents and motivate them towards farming. However, measures are required, to strengthen the post-harvest systems. Along with this, developing new marketing systems viz., Retail markets will help farmers in obtaining better prices.

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