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ECONOMIES OF PADDY CULTIVATION IN PALAKKAD DISTRICT OF KERALA

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ABSTRACT

Rice is the staple food of the people of Kerala. Rice is cultivated throughout the country. The important rice producing areas in the state are Kuttanad and Palakkad. Rice production has been stagnating around 10 to 11 lakh tones during the past decade. Paddy cultivators have been facing various problems of their paddy did not fetch the reasonable price all over the country. The fall in the price will leads to increase in the cost of cultivation, this leads to farmers to commit suicide. The number of farmers commit suicide has been increasing because of the unfavorable climate condition, low price, high cost of cultivation. Paddy cultivators of Palakkad is falling down are the period of time. This paper analysed socio economic background of the paddy cultivators in the selected villages of palakkad district and also analysed the problem of the paddy cultivators. The major causative factor identified by the social scientist is shortage of labour and low price for paddy. This paper emphasis the group management for improving the economies of paddy cultivation through better management based on low cost technology, improvement in productivity selective mechanization and cost reduction. This statement has been proved in the present study.

KEY WORDS: Paddy, Cultivation, Prices of Paddy, Farmers Problem



INTRODUCTION

Rice is the staple food of the people of Kerala. Rice is cultivated throughout the country; the important rice producing areas in the state are Kuttanad, Palghat and Trichur. Despite substantial improvement in productivity, rice production has been stagnating around 10 to 11 lakhs tones during the past decade. The state had gross cropped area of 8.75 lakh hectares under paddy cultivation in the mid- seventies contributing to an annual production of around 13 to 14 lakh tones of rice and 25 lakh tones of straw. The area under rice at least at the present level and making rice production more attractive the state government came out with several important production programmes for rice. Group farming was the major strategy adopted under the Eighth Five Year Plan for promotion of rice production. Under this programme emphasis was to be put on group management for improving the economies of paddy cultivation through better management based on low cost technology, improvement in productivity, selective mechanization and cost reduction.

State Paddy Mission under Agriculture Department attained the best growth rate in paddy production in a decade. The state had a production increase of 56000 tonnes in the last financial year. Alappuzha district comes first in farming 1952 hectares of fallow land with paddy. Palakkad district comes second by farming the crop in 1597 hectares of fallow land.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There are plenty of studies related to the paddy cultivation in the state. Some of the literature has been reviewed here.

Prabhakaran and Harikumar (2006) have revealed that Kerala's Agriculture is in crisis today. Nearly 1500 farmers have committed suicide in the last five years, mainly in Wayanad and Palakkad; the two farms dominated backward districts. In the 'Rice Bowls' of the state Palakkad and Kuttanad is an alarming decline in the extent of the area under paddy cultivation. According to the economic and statistics department, total paddy cultivation in Kerala is 3,10,521 Hectares, in Palakkad it is 1,15,910 Hectares in three seasons. The drop in paddy cultivation is because farmers don't find it remunerative.

Agriculture Department of Kerala (2007) has argued that the Wetland of Kerala is mainly used for growing paddy and for prawn culture. About 3.5 lakhs Hectares of land are used for agriculture in the state. This accounts for nearly 50 per cent of total area under wetland in the state. There are six major rice eco-systems in the state midland Malyoram Eco system, Kuttanad Agra Eco system, Onattukara rice eco system, Pokkali rice eco system, Palakkad plain and Chittur rice eco system and high range rice eco system.

Prakesh (2008) has pointed out that Palakkad district the largest paddy producing district in the state, has found that the problem faced by farmers was the acute shortage of labour and increase in the wages of farm workers. As a major share of paddy cultivation depended on hired labour, youth especially those having school education considered the agriculture work a dirty job , Kerala University field survey report said, employment opportunities in non – agricultural sector the youth shifted that sector.

Agriculture Department of Kerala (2009) has stated that Climate – based crop insurance will be provided for paddy crop in Palakkad district during the Rabi season of 2009-2010. 75 per cent of the premium for paddy cultivation will be given as subsidy. Paddy cultivation can be insured for a maximum amount Rs.8000 an acre. The premium excluding subsidy and including service tax, which paddy cultivators should remit Rs. 177 an acre. Paddy cultivation will get insurance cover for temperature, wind and rain at level that are detrimental to it.

Prabhakaran (2009) has discussed that Palakkad called the rice bowl of Kerala, accounted for nearly 50 per cent of paddy produced in the state during 2008-2009. During 2007-2008, its share was 46 per cent. The increase is attributed to a rise in the area of cultivated land and productivity, said to be the results of a decade – long “silent revolution” initiated by local bodies, government agencies and farmers. The development of eight high – yielding varieties paddy from near extinct traditional varieties of Palakkad has also being to double production the author said.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Paddy cultivators have been facing various problems as their paddy did not fetch the reasonable price all over the country. The fall in the price, increase in cost of cultivation especially increase in the price of fertilizer, severely affect the farmers. Due to the low prices, the farmers get very poor income; this leads to the farmers to avail loans from the local money lenders. The non repayment of loans to both banks and local money lenders forced them to commit suicide. In many parts of the country farmers were committed suicide that could

number more than 1000 in last ten years. Kerala is one among the states producing paddy to a considerable quantity, and this state also depicts the same picture i.e., the number of farmers commit suicide has been increasing. The causes vary among according to climatic condition, low price, high cost of cultivation etc. In Kerala, the main cause for this extreme condition is low income from farm activity.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the present study are follows.

1. To study the socio economic background of the paddy cultivators in the selected villages of Palakkad district
2. To analyses the problems of the paddy cultivators
3. To assess the farmers opinion about the prices of paddy in the study area.
4. To suggest some policy measures to increase the production of paddy in the study area.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on primary data. The data were collected from the paddy cultivators of three villages of Chittur block of Palakkad districts of Kerala. Palakkad is one among the districts producing paddy at a larger level in the state. Chittur is one among the block producing paddy to a larger level in earlier periods. But now the production of paddy in this district is reducing because of shortage of labour. So Chittur block has been chosen for the present study.

The villages Vandithavalam, Perumatty and Pattenchery were selected on the basis of the concentration of paddy cultivators. These three village farmers are contributing a larger portion of paddy cultivation in the block when compared to other blocks. Bases on the households engaged in paddy cultivation, 20 farmers each from Perumatty, Vandithavalam and 10 from Pattenchery were selected. A well structured questionnaire has been used to collect the data from the data, and the collected information has been analyses with the help of SPSS. A simple percentages and regression models were used to get the relevant information

PRODUCTION

The total rice production during the year 2004-2005 was estimated at 6.67 lakh tonnes as against 13.39 lakh tonnes during 1981-1982. This shows a decreasing trend in the production of rice over the years. Palakkad is the chief rice producing district and accounts for 39 per cent of the total rice production in the state. Thrissur and Alapuzha are the other major rice producing districts of the state. In the case of rice production (autumn), Palakkad district has increased its contribution from 41 per cent to 52 per cent in 2004-2005 when compared to the year 1995-1996. But the share of production (autumn) trend of other districts is negative..

State government or local self government has to identify areas where the paddy cultivation can be carried out profitably and to proclaim these areas for exclusive paddy production areas and to encourage the farmers by giving necessary helps so that paddy production can be increased to a very good extent. Implement various Programmes aim to reduce cost of cultivation, increase production; productivity and marketing facilities for making paddy cultivation profitable have to be chalked out sincerely by all concerned.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1) Paddy Price and Subsidy

The average price of paddy is given in table 1. The price is fixed by Civil Supply Corporation. It fixes the price according to the quality of paddy and it ranges from Rs 11 to Rs 12. In the present study, Perumatty and Pattenchery farmers get Rs 12 per Kg as their paddy has good quality while Vandithavalam village farmers get only Rs 11.6 per Kg for their paddy as it is a low quality paddy. In all, more than 50 per cent of the farmers have availed subsidy. But none of them benefited waiving off the loan provided to them. Village wise analysis also presents the same picture.

Table 1. Price of Paddy (Value in Rupees)

Sl. No	Price	Vandithavalam	Perumatty	Pattenchery	Total
1.	11.6	20 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	20 (40)
2.	12	0 (0)	20 (100)	10 (100)	30 (60)
3.	Avail Subsidy	10 (50)	11 (55)	6 (60)	27 (54)
4.	Total	20 (100)	20 (100)	10 (100)	50 (100)

Source: Computed Note: Figures in Parentheses are Percentages to the Total

2) Problems Faced by the Farmers

The farmers of the study villages have been facing various problems and the list of problems told by the farmers has given in table 2. Many farmers have multiple problems but their prime problem has been taken for the analysis. In all, nearly 70 per cent of the farmers told that there is shortage of labour. This alone is the prime problem, and some times the farmers put their land

as fallow due to this problem. The next important problem in the study region is lack of water storage (10%). However, it was not at all a problem among the farmers of Perumatty village as they have good water storage facility. All other problems viz. higher wage, natural calamities, low price for paddy, and water availability are the minor ones among the paddy cultivators. All the villages have shown the same picture with labour shortage as the primary problem.

Table 2. Problems Faced by Paddy Cultivators

Sl. No	Problem	Vandithavalam	Perumatty	Pattenchery	Total
1.	Labour	12 (60.00)	17 (85.00)	5 (50.00)	34 (68.00)
2.	Wage	2 (10.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (20.00)	4 (8.00)
3.	Lack of Water Storage	1 (5.00)	3 (15.00)	1 (10.00)	5 (10.00)
4.	Natural Calamities	3 (15.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	3 (6.00)
5.	Low Price	1 (5.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (10.00)	2 (4.00)
6.	Lack of Water	1 (5.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (10.00)	2 (4.00)
7.	Total	20 (100.00)	20 (100.00)	10 (100.00)	50 (100.00)

Source: Computed

3) Suggestions given by Paddy Cultivators

In relation to suggestions of the farmers a list of it were presented in table 3. Each farmer has their own suggestions and most of them have not suggested anything. Thus 32 per cent of the paddy cultivators have not given any suggestion to improve the production of paddy. However, the same proportion of farmers suggested that subsidy for paddy cultivation will increase the production to a greater extent. Some of

the farmers (18%), have suggested that high yielding varieties of seeds will increase the paddy production. About 10 per cent of the farmers have suggested that proper mechanization will reduce the labour shortage which in turn leads to higher production. This overall suggestions has been noticed in all the villages of the present study.

Table 3. The suggestion given by Paddy Cultivators

Sl. No	Problem	Vandithavalam	Perumatty	Pattenchery	Total
1.	No Suggestion	6 (30.00)	6 (30.00)	4 (40.00)	16 (32.00)
2.	Subsidy	7 (35.00)	6 (30.00)	3 (30.00)	16 (32.00)
3.	Labour	2 (10.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (4.00)
4.	Irrigation	1 (5.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (2.00)
5.	HYV Seeds	2 (10.00)	5 (25.00)	2 (20.00)	9 (18.00)
6.	Machinery	1 (5.00)	3 (15.00)	1 (10.00)	5 (10.00)
7.	Wage	1 (5.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (2.00)
8.	Total	20 (100)	20 (100)	10 (100)	50 (100)

Source: Computed

Thus the paddy cultivation in Palakkad district has tremendous scope in the future, if the government and the paddy cultivators have a long view to increase the production paddy in the state of Kerala especially in Palakkad district.

CONCLUSIONS

Paddy cultivation in Chittur is falling down over the period of time. The major causative factor identified by the social scientists is a shortage of labour and low price for paddy. This statement has been proved in the present study. Though the fertility of the soil, favourable monsoon, and government policies have helped the farmers they have not completely engaged in paddy cultivation as it requires timely manual work. This needs more human labour, which is the only problem among the farmers. And hence, mechanization, or participation of more human labour alone will increase the paddy production in the study area.

SUGGESTION

Based on the study, the researcher has suggested the following.

1. As the shortage of labour is the primary problem, mechanization of agriculture will increase the paddy production.
2. Subsidized high yielding varieties of seeds will improve the production. Hence, both the farmers as well as government have to consider more on promoting the same in the state.
3. The price of the paddy should be increased to a reasonable level, which makes the farmers to cultivate paddy to a greater extent.
4. The farmers also have a broader look regarding the fall of paddy production and engage in paddy cultivation intensively.

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