

Research Paper



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SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF FARMERS SUPPLYING HORTICULTURAL PRODUCE TO A VEGETABLE MARKET IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the present study is to explore the socio-economic profile of the farmers who bring horticultural products to the vegetable market of Anantapur town of Anantapuramu district of Andhra Pradesh. The data for the present study was collected through field survey in November 2016. The results reveal that 64% of the total farmers are inheriting this profession (cultivation of vegetables) from their ancestors. Nearly 60% of the farmers have a family size of 5 to 6 members. Majority of these farmers have own small to medium landholdings and they are earning a handsome amount of money per month (more than Rs 8000) all the year round. More than 70% of the vegetable growing farmers are either illiterate or have education up to 10th (Matriculation) standard only. Both seasonal and non-seasonal vegetables are grown by the farmers by using chemical fertilizers, pesticides, insecticides and herbicides. Auto rickshaws and carts are used by the local farmers for transporting their farm produce to the market. 80% of the farmers belong to villages lying within a radius of 20 Km from the market. The main problems faced by the farmers are, low procurement prices of commission agents, fluctuating prices of the vegetables, lack of government regulating policies, lack of opportunities for direct selling and inclement weather.

KEYWORDS: Horticulture, vegetable market, farmers, commercial farming

1. INTRODUCTION

The way farmers bring their produce to the markets and the challenges they have to face in their effort to get good returns in lieu for their produce has become crucial in commercial farming. The vegetable market can be defined as a place where several producers gather on a regular basis to sell vegetables and fruits to the customers [1]. The products will be distributed and sold in market places among gatherings. This activity will be takes place on a chain basis from intermediaries to retailer and retailer to customer. This commercial cultivation has become prominent due to quick returns and also because

of the facilities available like hybrid seeds, pesticides, insecticides and irrigation. The present study aims to examine the socio economic profile of horticultural crop production and marketing by farmers particularly from the Anantapuramu district of Andhra Pradesh.

2. DATA SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY

The research statistical data was collected by interviewing 25 farmers with structured schedules in November 2016. The collected data was processed and tabulated. Simple percentages were calculated to evaluate the data. This data is represented through various diagrams/tables.



3. SOCIO- ECONOMIC ATTRIBUTES OF FARMERS

The present study focuses particularly on the marketing the produce by the vegetable growing farmers. The study estimated that every day 50 to 60 farmers involve in selling the products to retailers and commission agents in Anantapur market, Andhra Pradesh. In my random survey among 25 farmers, 21 farmers were full time vegetable farmers and 4 were part time vegetable farmers.

(I.) Family size:-

On the basis of the size of the family of vegetable growing farmers, three categories of families formed viz. large sized families (more than 6 family members), medium sized families (5 to 6 members) and the small sized families (up to 4 members). Out of the total 25 farmers interviewed, 1 belonged to the category of having large sized family, 15 farmers had medium sized families and 9 had small sized families. These figures reveal that 60%of the farmers have a family size of 5 to 6 members, 36% the farmers belong to the small sized families, while just 4% of the farmers had large family size.

Table -1: Family size of Farmers

Family size	No of persons	% of persons in Total
Up to 4	9	36
5-6	15	60
More than 6	1	4
Total	25	100

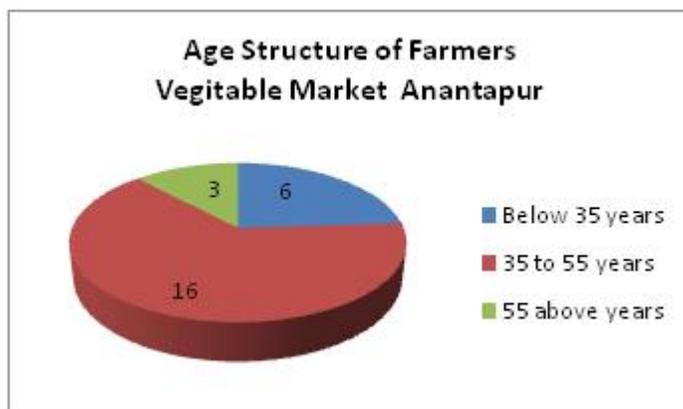
Source: Field work (2016)

(II.) Educational level:-

As far as the educational level of the surveyed farmers of Anantapur vegetable market is concerned, 4 farmers were illiterate, 14 had received education up to class 10th, while 5 farmers were graduates and 2 farmers had completed post graduate degrees. It is evident from these records that 72% of the farmers were either illiterate or had education up to 10th standard only, while the remaining 28% possessed higher educational qualifications. The low level of educational standards among the vegetable growers is due to the fact that even though horticulture is a scientific profession yet it does not need any specialized skills. The vegetable growing farmers can easily get themselves trained in it, even if they have little formal education.

(III.) Age Group:-

As far as the age group of the vegetable growers is concerned, out of the total 25 interviewed farmers 6 were below 35 years of age, while 16 farmers were between the age of 35 to 55 years and the remaining 3 farmers were above 55 years of age. Thus, about 64% of the total farmers are in the category of mature farmers (35 to 55 years of age). The reason for a majority of the vegetable growing farmers belonging to this category is that most of them inheriting this occupation from their ancestors. They have medium to large family size with medium sized landholdings. These farmers were adopting vegetable cultivation as the pressure of sustaining their big families on medium-sized farms and they found this option more feasible and rewarding than growing cereal crops.



Source: Field work (2016)

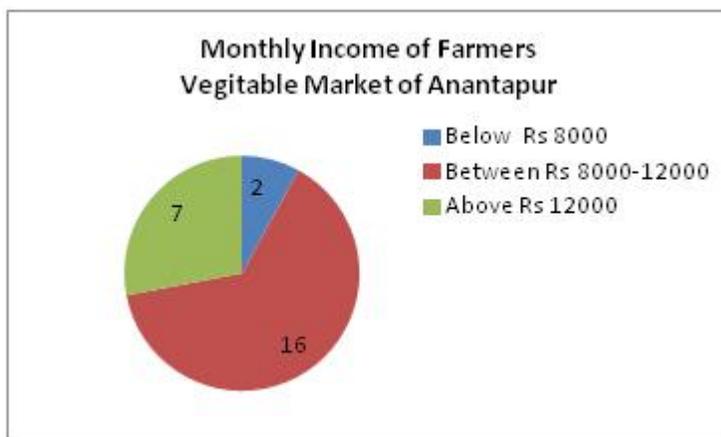
Fig 1. Age Structure of Farmers

Out of the total farmers 24% belonged to the age group of young farmers (below 35 years of age). These were either graduates or postgraduates, who entered this profession due to lack of job opportunities in both private and government sectors or heavy competition in the service sector. The smallest proportion of farmers was in the age group of old farmers (above 55 years of age). These farmers were cultivating vegetables on land taken on lease as they were landless. The rental landholdings were small in size and they were engaged in this occupation for the last 20 to 30 years. They were fully conscious of the new advances in vegetable farming technology.

(IV.) Monthly Income:-

On the basis of monthly earning income, the vegetable-growing farmers can be divided into three

categories i.e. low income group (monthly income below Rs. 8,000), middle income group (monthly income ranging between Rs. 8,000 to 12,000) and high income group (monthly income above Rs. 12,000). Only Two farmers belonged to the low income category while 16 farmers were in the middle income group and 7 farmers belonged to the high income group. This data reveals that most of the vegetable growing farmers own small to medium landholdings, but majority of them are earning a handsome amount of money per month. This fact can be used to motivate other marginal and small farmers to shift from cereal crops to vegetable cultivation, since their small landholdings are relatively more viable for handsome remuneration in case of vegetables than other crops.



Source: Field work (2016)

Fig 2. Monthly Income of Farmers

(V.) Size of Landholdings:-

The data relates to landholdings collected from the surveyed farmers revealed that 5 farmers have small land holdings (below 3 acres) while 16 farmers have medium sized landholdings (3 to 6 acres) and the remaining 4 farmers are having large land holdings (above 6 acres). It is evident from the above data that farmers with small

and medium landholdings are more engaged in this occupation of growing vegetables. The farmers having large landholdings are least interested in this occupation, the reason being that farmers with large land holdings prefer to cultivate cereal crops (rice, wheat etc.) and cash crops (sunflower, Fruits etc.).

Table-2: Size of Landholdings of the Farmers

Size of Landholdings	No of persons	% of persons in Total
Below 3 acres	5	20
Between 3-6 acres	16	64
Above 6 acres	4	16
Total	25	100

Source: Field work (2016)

(VI.) Vegetable Cultivation as an Occupation:-

As far as the profession of vegetable cultivation is concerned, 7 farmers had a family background of growing vegetables. Their fathers and forefathers cultivated vegetables. These farmers had applied the

knowledge of their elders in this profession. The remaining 18 farmers were attracted towards this profession after the advent of Green Revolution. This revolution of agriculture brought rice - wheat cropping pattern in Andhra Pradesh, which became very popular among the farmers of Anantapur region as well. But the



high costs of farming inputs and low farm profits on small landholdings caused the farmers to go for vegetable cultivation. The Red and Black soils of this area are quite favourable for vegetable growing. Their newly adopted profession enhanced the economic conditions of the farmers. They also realized that growing of vegetable crops was more profitable than cereal crops, since by growing vegetables they are in able to earn money all the year round.

(VII.) Types of Crops Cultivated:-

As far as crop types of vegetables grown by the farmers throughout the year are concerned, at present seasonal and non-seasonal vegetables are grown by the farmers. Earlier in this region non-seasonal vegetable crops were not sown. But it became possible only due to the availability of hybrid seeds of main season variety, early season variety and late season variety. The survey of the 25 farmers in this study revealed that the farmers of Anantapur area grow almost all the vegetables both in summers and winters. Tubers like beet root and carrot are grown in winters, while radish is grown both in summers as well as in winters. The leafy vegetables like coriander, spinach etc. are grown both in winters as well as in summers, while lettuce, fenugreek and cabbage are cultivated in winters. The fruit vegetables and squashes are grown mostly in summers. Prominent among them are brinjal, tomato, cucumber, ridged gourd, bitter gourd etc. Bulb vegetables like garlic and onion are cultivated in winters. Out of all the vegetable crops grown in the area, coriander and chilies are the most popular choices that are grown all the year round.

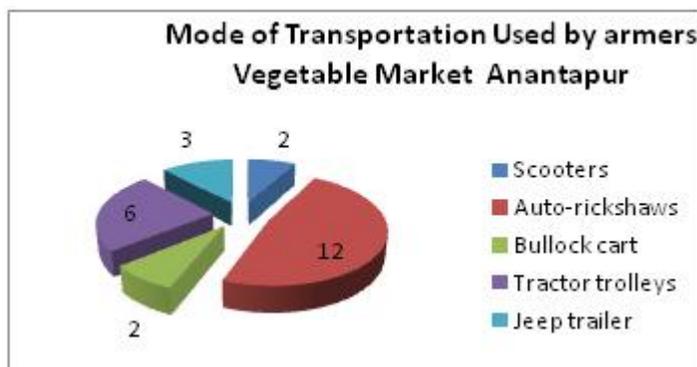
(VIII.) Use of Fertilizers:-

Vegetable farming needs a fertile soil for speedy growth of crops with assured high yield. The farmers engaged in cultivation of vegetables do not leave their

land as crop-free even for a few days. Under such circumstances, a huge amount of fertilizers are required to maintain the fertility of the soil. Out of the total 25 farmers interviewed, almost all of them used chemical fertilizers like urea, di-ammonium phosphate, ammonium sulphate, calcium nitrate, single superphosphate, potassium nitrate etc. However 8 farmers are also using organic fertilizers like farmyard manure, compost and animal-dung manure. Apart from the use of fertilizers a few vegetable growers also use oxytocin injections to boost plant growth. All the 25 farmers also make liberal use of toxic insecticides, pesticides and herbicides to maximize crop production.

(IX) Mode of Transporting Vegetables:-

Different modes of transportation are used by the vegetable farmers to transfer their produce to the Anantapur market. Among the farmers under study, Auto-rickshaws were used by 12 of them to transport their produce to the market, 6 farmers used tractor trolleys, 3 farmers used Jeep trolleys for transporting their vegetable to the market. Jeep trailer, Scooters and bullock carts were also used by a few farmers to bring their produce to the market. Most of the respondents preferred Auto-rickshaws and tractor trolleys as mode of transporting vegetables. Tractor trolleys are used by those farmers who have big landholdings with huge bulk of vegetables to be transported to the Anantapur market. This mode of transport is also used by large farmers who have to travel relatively longer distance to bring their produce to the market. Usually bulky vegetables like tomatoes, radish, brinjal, green chilies, drumstick, cauliflowers etc. are transported on tractor trolleys from farms to the market. The use of bullock cart in this area has become very rare nevertheless two farmers still take their vegetables to the market on it.



Source: Field work (2016)

Fig 3. Types of Vehicles used by Farmers

(X) Distance Travelled by Farmers:-

Vegetables are highly perishable in nature. Therefore the farming of vegetables is generally concentrated nearby to the towns and cities, so that they can easily be transported to the market immediately after harvesting in their fresh form. In case of the vegetable market of Anantapur, the above statement holds true. Out of the total 25 farmers under study, 11 farmers are located within 10 km radius from the vegetable market, 9 farmers lie in the next 10 to 20 km

distance band and only 5 farmers have to travel more than 20 km to come to the market to sell their produce. This data reveals that a majority of the farmers interviewed (80%) belong to villages lying within a radius of 20 km from the market. Their number decreases as the distance from the market increases. However, with the development of efficient means of communication and transportation, the number of vegetable growers coming to the market will increase further.

Table-3: Distance Travelled by the Farmers to the Vegetable Market of Anantapur

Distance to Market	No of persons	% of persons in Total
Below 10 KM	11	44
Between 10-20 KM	9	36
Above 20 KM	5	20
Total	25	100

Source: Field work (2016)

(XI.) Problems faced by vegetable farmers:-

The major problems which these vegetable growing farmers have to face are:

- The profession of farmers has become unreliable due to fluctuation of prices regularly. The farmer shows much interest to grow the same product due to earn more profits. The prices will come down for more production. The continuous imbalance between demand and supply led to fluctuations in the prices of vegetables.
- The weather inclination leads to rotting of vegetables, it is also one of the major causes for the loss to farmer.
- Sometimes the commission agents makes secret agreement to fix low prices and it leads to compromise at the lowest rates.
- There is a lack of procurement policies of the government particularly in case of vegetables. This adds to the uncertainty of gainful marketing of vegetable crops.
- The farmers in the market do not have proper facilities to show their produce and they have to sit on the road side and unhygienic places to sell their produce.

4. CONCLUSION

As the results indicate the cultivation of horticultural products is full of fluctuations. After a careful examination of the farmers their educational levels, their backgrounds, the mouths they have to feed we can jump to the conclusion that though horticulture is a boon in disguise to these illiterate and semi-literate farmers it should be borne in mind that there are certain issues which should be settled so that these farmers get prospered with the effort and money they put into it. For this, the government should introduce stringent measures to check the middlemen from cheating out the farmers of the benefits which they would otherwise get. The government should launch an app to assist farmers like these to direct them through the course of cultivation of these like, which crop to go, where and when to sell and at what price. The government should also start storage and transport facilities for these farmers.

REFERENCE

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