

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Constraints in Adoption of Recommended Cultivation Practices of Medicinal Plant Growers

S. Dinesh Kumar, R. Jeya

Department of Agricultural Extension, Faculty of Agriculture, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar, Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India

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ABSTRACT

The main 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 the Tamil Nadu state. One hundred and twenty respondents were selected randomly by proportionate random sampling 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. Major constraints experienced by the medicinal plant growers were improper availability of seed/planting material, followed by high cost of labor, lack of fixed price policy for medicinal plants by the government, and lack of processing industries in the nearby area.

Key words: Constraints in adoption, medicinal plant growers, chengam

INTRODUCTION

The term “Medicinal plants” include various types of plants used in herbalism (herbal medicine). Humans have relied on nature for their basic needs, for production of food, shelter, clothing, transportation, fertilizers, flavors, fragrances, and medicines.^[1] Plants have formed the basis of sophisticated traditional medicine systems that have been in existence for thousands of years and continue to provide humankind with new remedies. Natural products and their derivatives represent more than 50% of all the drugs in clinical use in the world today. Treatment with medicinal plants is considered very safe as there are no or minimal side effects. These remedies are in sync with nature, which is the biggest advantage. Hence, this study was taken up with the following objective to study the constraints faced by medicinal plant growers in adopting the recommended cultivation practices.

Address for correspondence:

S. Dinesh Kumar,
E-mail: dinezselva@gmail.com

METHODOLOGY

In Tiruvannamalai district, 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 criteria. One hundred and twenty respondents were selected by proportionate random sampling 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.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Constraints faced by the respondents in medicinal plant cultivation

It could be noticed from Table 1 that with regard to the production constraints nearly three-fourth of the respondents (77.50%) indicated the improper availability of seed/planting material as the major constraint, which is followed by higher cost of the labor as expressed by 72.50% of the respondents.

These have emerged as the first and second major constraints. The contractor or the private agent only supplies the seed planting materials and sometimes they are not viable and the government does not take adequate steps to supply seedling material. The migration of laborers to cities results in the non-availability of laborers for the technical operations. Hence, higher wages are demanded. This finding derives support from the findings of the third constraint experienced by 63.33% of the respondents was inadequate of credit facilities.^[2,3] Most of the respondents were having inadequate savings for the purchase of vital inputs for future use. They always depended on private money lenders. They charged high interest rates and at times they have to mortgage their properties. Besides, the cooperative society and commercial banks in the study area were not sanctioning adequate amount to purchase the inputs. The fourth constraint experienced by 57.50% of the respondents was high cost of inputs. This might be due to the fact that they get the inputs from the private agencies. They only fix the price and get the maximum price for the given inputs such as the fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds. The fifth constraint experienced by 47.50% of 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 into canal for irrigation purpose is not adequate. The sixth and the last constraints experienced by 41.66% of the respondents were lack of extension services on the cultivation aspects. The respondents felt that the extension personnel of the state department of horticulture were not taking adequate efforts to provide technical information on medicinal plant cultivation practices and also the information provided by some of the private sectors was insufficient to cultivate the medicinal plants. The last constraint experienced by 41.66% of the respondents was lack of trained personnel. Most of the respondents reported that farm laborers need to be properly trained. Moreover, some of the practices are carried out simultaneously by all the farmers, and hence, there have been heavy demands for trained laborers. These might be the reasons for the above-reported constraint.

The major constraint expressed by 91.66% of the respondents was lack of fixed price policy for medicinal plants by the government. The contributing reason for the problem of fixed price policy for the varying economics is fluctuating in demands and supply in the regional, national and international levels. This indicates that there is a need to open cooperative marketing center and regarding price fixation government has to take steps to formulate comprehensive policy measures for price fixation. This finding derives support from the findings of The second major constraint experienced by 82.50% of the respondents was lack of processing industries in the nearby area.^[4,5] Medicinal plants are mainly processed within a few hours or weeks or months and used for many other purposes such as cosmetics and tablets. The growers process their produce at nearby processing industries only. Hence, 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% of the respondents was lack of proper marketing channel. In the study area, most of the farmers don't know from where they can get the planting material and where to market. The middlemen can contact with the private industries and they collect all the produce and supply them [Table 2]. He may get more money in this transaction from the farmers and also lack of knowledge on marketing might be the reason for reporting this constraint. The fourth constraint

Table 1: Production constraints ($n = 120$)

Production constraints	Number of respondents	Percent	Rank
Improper availability of seed/ planting material	93	77.50	I
High cost of labor	87	72.15	II
Inadequate credit facilities	76	63.33	III
High cost of inputs	69	57.50	IV
Lack of assured irrigation facilities	57	47.50	V
Lack of extension services on the cultivation aspects	50	41.66	VI
Lack of trained personnel	50	41.66	VI

Table 2: Marketing constraints ($n = 120$)

Marketing constraints	Number of respondents	Percent	Rank
Lack of fixed price policy for medicinal plants by the government	110	91.66	I
Lack of processing industries in the nearby area	99	82.50	II
Lack of proper marketing channel	81	67.50	III
Lack of information on post-harvest technology and lack of standard specification of the produce	78	65.00	IV
Inadequate transport facilities	63	52.50	V

experienced by 65.00% of the respondents 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. They are not much aware of the details like the specification of the produce about the medicinal plant. The fifth constraint experienced by 52.50% of the respondents was inadequate transport facilities. The study area was mostly rural and there were improper facilities to transfer their produce from one place to another. The contractor or commission agent also collects extra chargers for their transport. This may be the reason for reporting as a constraint.

CONCLUSION

Improper availability of seed/planting material (77.50%), high cost of labor (72.15%), inadequate credit facilities (63.33%), high cost of inputs (57.50%), lack of assured irrigation facilities (47.50%), lack of extension services on the cultivation aspects (41.66%), and lack of

trained personnel (41.66%) were reported as the constraints in the production of medicinal plants. Lack of fixed price policy for medicinal plants by the government (91.66%), lack of processing industries in the nearby area (82.50%), lack of proper marketing channel (67.50%), lack of information on post-harvest technology, and inadequate transport facilities (52.50%) were the major constraints in marketing as expressed by the respondents.

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