**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS ON CONSTRAINTS FACED BY COCONUT GROWERS IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT**

**ABSTRACT:**

 Coimbatore district has the highest production of coconuts in Tamil Nadu. In the recent years due to ample amount of rainfall and regular canal irrigation the production and supply of coconuts had increased drastically. It had also bought various new challenges and constraints to the farmers. Farmers are facing numerous technical, credit and marketing constraints like rugose spiraling whitefly attack, Tanjore wilt attack, fluctuations in market price and increase in pesticides, fertilizers etc., The study was undertaken with the objective of analyzing the constraints faced by the of coconut growers in Coimbatore district. An Ex- post facto research design was used for this study. The study was taken-up in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu. Out of the twelve blocks in Coimbatore district, “Sulthanpet block”, “Pollachi (North)”, “Pollachi (South) block” were selected. A sample size of 120 coconut cultivating farmers were selected by using simple random sampling technique. The required data was collected by personal interview using a well-structured and pretested interview schedule. The result revealed that cent percent (100%) of the farmers faced the major constraint of lack of remunerative prices for coconuts and fluctuations in market price. The major technical constraint faced by the farmers being (78.33%) Problem of disease and its control (Tanjore wilt, stem bleeding etc.,). Services and supply constraints such as increase in price of fertilizers and pesticides (85.83%). Hence, it should be definitely noted down by planners and policy makers at state and district level to make suitable strategies and policies to overcome the constraints faced by the coconut farmers.

Keywords – Coconuts, Constraints, Coimbatore, Tanjore wilt, remunerative price, fluctuation in market price

**INTRODUCTION:**

 Coconut being a long-lasting perennial plantation crop is of immense importance to the coconut growers since it provides food, fuel and varied sources of raw materials to different industries. It is the major source of livelihood and millions of families are sustained only from the income generated through coconuts. In 2020–21, India produced 21,207 million nuts of the coconut, or 34% of the world's total production. In the recent past years, the production of coconuts in Coimbatore had increased very well since due to ample amount of rainfall and sufficient canal irrigation. It had also bought various challenges and constraints for the farmers as there is adequate supply of nuts in the market. Since farmers are not aware about product diversification, value addition and post-harvest technology they are facing numerous constraints in fetching fair and remunerative prices for their produce. It had also resulted in steady downfall of copra, de-husked coconuts, coir prices etc. Apart from that increase in fertilizer cost, delayed subsidies, shortage and increase in labour wage etc,. had also added further constraints to the coconut farmers of Coimbatore. **Nandakumar (1995)** stated that marketing of coconut, copra and coconut oil is in the hands of private traders in the country. They do not have ample knowledge and skill in marketing their produce**. Palanivelu and Muthukrishnan (2019)** in their study, “Coconut marketing in Tamil Nadu: A Current Scenario” highlighted that low price for coconut and lack of market information were the major problems for coconut growers. **Kumar et.al., (2022)** in their study, “A study of marketing constraints among coconut farmers in Palakkad district” found that price fluctuation in market was the major constraint in marketing of coconut, followed by non-availability of labours, lack of market information, high labour cost, low market margin, poor storage facility, high transportation cost and delay in payment were the least experienced constraints.

Furthermore, lack of storage facilities forced them to sell their produce immediately after the harvest at low prices in the village itself to the local traders. In addition, there are inadequate arrangements for grading, standardization, market information, credit availability, storage, and transport. There is a huge extent of middlemen in marketing of coconuts who exploit farmers to certain extent such as delay in payment, not procuring in remunerative prices etc.

 Keeping the above problems in view, the present study was taken up with the specific objective to identify the constraints faced by the coconut growers in Coimbatore district. Major constraints faced by an individual farmer are poor access to modern inputs and credits, poor infrastructure, inadequate access to markets, inadequate research and extension services etc.,. In this study constraints faced was studied in four major dimensions viz., technical constraints, service and supply constraints, credit and economic constraints and marketing constraints.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS:**

 The study was undertaken with an objective of analyzing the constraints faced by the coconut growers in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu. An “Ex Post Facto” research design was used in this study. Multistage sampling procedure was used. District was selected purposively since Coimbatore has the maximum area and production under coconut cultivation. Block was selected using purposive sampling based on area under coconut production. There are twelve blocks in Coimbatore district. among which “Sulthanpet block”, “Pollachi (North)”, “Pollachi (South) block” had been chosen as the areas of research. From each block 4 villages were selected purposefully. Villages were selected using purposive sampling based on area under coconut production. The villages selected for the study are “Senjerimalai, Pachagoundampalyam, J.Krishnapuram, Malapalayam” from Sultanpet block. “A.Nagoor, Avalappampatti, Ayyampalayam, Puliampatti” from Pollachi (North) block. “Gomangalam, Ambarampalayam, Kanjampatti, Naickenpalayam” from Pollachi (South) block. It’s been selected since the area has high production of coconuts, hub for “coir and copra industries”, elaborate availability of respondents, diversified coconut growers in age, landholdings, educational status, farming experience etc., familiarity about the place by the researcher. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents. With a sample size of 120, coconut cultivating farmers were drawn using simple random sampling technique in the above-mentioned blocks and villages. The required data was collected using a pretested structure interview schedule. The collected data were coded, tabulated and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. The descriptive statistical tools such as mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage analysis were used to draw the inference from the study.

**Area, Production and Productivity status of coconuts in Coimbatore district:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Area** | 87749.20 ha |
| **Production** | 14882 lakh nuts |
| **Productivity** | 16960 nuts/ha |

 **Source- www.coconutboard.gov.in (2019-2020)**

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS:**

**Constraints faced by the coconut growers.**

**Table 1. Distribution of respondents based on the constraints faced by the coconut growers (n=120)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S. No** |  **Constraints** | **Number** | **Per cent** |
| **A.** | **Technical Constraints** |
| 1. | Lack of high yielding, disease and pest resistant varieties | 23 | 19.17 |
|  2. | Lack of improved agricultural implements | 82 | 68.33 |
| 3. | Problem of pests and its control (Rugose Spiraling Whitefly, Eriophyid mites etc.,)  | 89 | 74.17 |
| 4. | Problem of disease and its control (Tanjore wilt, stem bleeding etc.,) | 94 | 78.33 |
| 5. | Insufficient guidance about post - harvest practices | 44 | 36.67 |
| 6. | Lack of awareness about export procedure | 79 | 65.83 |
| **B.** | **Services and supply constraints** |
| 1. | Labour scarcity and increase in labour cost | 93 | 77.50 |
| 2. | Increase in price of fertilizers and pesticides | 103 | 85.83 |
| 3. | Lack of coconut processing plants | 33 | 27.50 |
| 4. | Lack of cold storage facilities | 26 | 21.67 |
| **C.** | **Credit and economic constraints** |
| 1. | Lack of credit facilities for inputs like Insecticides, fungicides and fertilizers | 51 | 42.50 |
| 2. | Insufficient information regarding agricultural schemes | 33 | 27.50 |
| 3.  | Delay in agricultural subsidies | 45 | 37.50 |
| 4. | Complicated procedures for agricultural subsidies | 23 | 19.17 |
| **D.** | **Marketing constraints** |
| 1. | Lack of remunerative prices of coconut | 120 | 100 |
| 2. | Fluctuations in market price | 120 | 100 |
| 3. | Exploitation by middleman | 109 | 90.83 |
| 4. | Lack of regulated markets |  96 | 80.00 |
| 5. | Lack of value addition units | 103 | 85.83 |

**1.Technical constraints**

From table 1, it could be inferred that the majority of respondent’s technical constraint (78.33 per cent) was problem of disease and its control such as Tanjore wilt, stem bleeding etc., as it was very difficult to control sometimes resulting in loss of the whole tree. Followed by problem of pests and its control like Rugose Spiraling Whitefly, Eriophyid mites etc., (74.17 per cent). They were inable to eradicate fully when there is incidence.

 More than half of the respondents (68.33 per cent) reported lack of improved agricultural implements such as coconut dehusker, coconut desheller etc., followed by more than half of the respondents (65.83 per cent) reporting lack of awareness about export procedure, as many respondents were interested in exporting coconuts to fetch higher prices and insufficient guidance about post - harvest practices (36.67 per cent.)

 Only (19.17) per cent mentioned lack of high yielding, disease and pest resistant varieties.

**2. Services and supply constraints.**

 Regarding services and supply constraints majority of the respondents (85.83) mentionedincrease in price of fertilizers and pesticides as it increased overall cultivation cost followed by, labour scarcity and increase in labour cost (77.50 per cent) as finding skilled labour has become difficult for carrying the inter-cultural operations and other activities . Slight above a quarter of respondents reported lack of coconut processing plants (27.50 per cent).

 Only (21.67 per cent) of the respondents mentioned lack of cold storage facilitiesas only few respondents stored their produce in cold storage, because most of the respondents sold their produce immediately.

**3. Credit and economic constraints**

It could be inferred from table 1, regarding the credit and economic constraints that majority of the respondents (42.50 per cent) mentionedlack of credit facilities for inputs like insecticides, fungicides and fertilizers followed by delay in agricultural subsidies (37.50 per cent) and insufficient information regarding agricultural schemes (27.50 per cent). This delayed their process of ensuring better credit opportunities to promote their livelihood.

 Only (19.17 per cent) expressed complicated procedures for agricultural subsidies.

**4. Marketing constraints**

With respect to marketing constraints cent percent of the respondents mentionedlack of remunerative prices of coconut as the price of copra and nuts had fallen drastically and Fluctuations in market price as the major constraint. In recent years the coconut and copra price has seen a greater downward trend with drastic price fluctuations

 More than three-fourth of the respondents (90.83 per cent) mentioned Exploitation by middleman as majority of the farmers sold their produce through middleman followed by, Lack of value addition units (85.83 per cent) as many farmers were interested on value addition of their produce and lack of regulated markets (80.00 per cent) since farmers had a strong belief that through proper regulated markets they could avoid middle man exploitation and fetch better price for selling their produce.

 **CONCLUSION:**

Coconut farmers face numerous constraints that hinder their productivity and profitability. Technically, the major challenges are the control of diseases like Tanjore wilt and pests such as Rugose Spiralling Whitefly, which often lead to significant crop losses. Additionally, there is a lack of modern agricultural implements and knowledge about export procedures and post-harvest handling. Service-related issues include rising input costs for fertilizers and pesticides, coupled with labour shortages, which increase cultivation costs. The absence of coconut processing units further limits value addition opportunities.

Economically, farmers struggle with inadequate credit facilities and delays in receiving subsidies, affecting their ability to invest in better practices. Marketing challenges are also critical, with fluctuating prices, middlemen exploitation, and the lack of regulated markets preventing farmers from obtaining fair prices. To enhance coconut farming, addressing these technical, financial, and marketing constraints through improved support systems and infrastructure is essential for sustainable growth. Hence, planners, policy makers and extension officials should take into account and design policies and plans to overcome these bottlenecks faced by coconut farmers and promote the betterment of farming community.

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