



SUGGESTIONS GIVEN BY THE RICE FARMERS OF NELLORE DISTRICT TO OVERCOME THE CONSTRAINTS IN RICE PRODUCTION

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ABSTRACT

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This paper describes the suggestions given by the rice crop cultivating farmers to overcome the constraints faced by them in SPSR Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh. The data was collected from a sample of 120 rice farmers by following simple random sampling method. The study revealed that among the various suggestions given by the farmers, fetching of better market price/provision of Minimum Support Price (MSP) by the government (91.67%) was ranked first followed by prioritization of agricultural activities in NREGP programme (90.83%), development of pest and disease resistant varieties (89.17%), development of suitable implements and equipment (88.33%), provision of warehousing facilities at Panchayat level (85.00%), availability of combine harvesters at lower rents (79.17%), provision of loans by government agencies at lower interest rates (77.50%), provision of processing, trading and export facilities (70.00%), conducting regular training programmes to the farmers (66.67%), increasing subsidies for rice farming (65.83%), encouraging seed village programme (65.00%), facilitating direct marketing in rice (54.17%), timely supply of high yielding variety (HYV) seed/good quality seed by Department of Agriculture (48.33%), increasing the efficiency of the extension staff (40.00%), adopting group farming approach in rice farming (39.17%), implementation of green manure schemes (34.17%), implementation of crop insurance (31.67%) and recruitment of sufficient extension staff (20.83%).

KEYWORDS: Rice farmers; suggestions and constraints.

INTRODUCTION

Rice cultivation is one of the most important developments in history. Rice has fed more people over a longer period of time than any other crop. Almost one fifth of the world's population, depend on rice cultivation for their livelihoods. Among the prominent rice-producing countries, the seven largest producers were China (197.22 million tonnes), India (120.62 million tonnes), Indonesia (66.41 million tonnes), Bangladesh (49.36 million tonnes), Vietnam (39.99 million tonnes), Myanmar (33.20 million tonnes), and Thailand (31.56 million tonnes); which accounted together for < 80.12 per cent of the 2010 World Production (FAO, 2014). Andhra Pradesh is the Fifth largest state in India accounting for 9 per cent of the country's area. It is the principal food crop cultivated throughout the Andhra Pradesh state providing food for its growing population, fodder to the cattle and employment to the rural masses. Any decline in its area and production will have a perceivable impact on the state economy and food security.

The study area, Nellore district is famous for its paddy fields, thereby deriving its name from "Nell". Nell + Oru (Nel in Tamil indicates Paddy and ooru is town in both Telugu and Tamil languages). The reasons for shrinking of rice cultivating area in SPSR Nellore district are due to numerous constraints in rice production. Some of the farm level rice production constraints include stagnating yield, declining profit, high cost of labour, unavailability of the labour, unavailability of quality seed in time, unavailability of sufficient farmyard manure. Rice farmers are also facing marketing problems which in turn leading to distress sale. Economic factors such as price fluctuation is adversely affecting rice production. Therefore, enhancing adaptability and stability of productivity and providing more profitable livelihood to the rice cultivating farmers is a major challenge to the agricultural research and extension system.

In view of the above scenario, the present study was conducted with the main objective of studying suggestions given by the rice cultivating farmers to overcome the constraints faced by them.

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MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted in SPSR Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh which is one a major rice growing district in Andhra Pradesh (Visalakshi, 2015). Out of the 46 mandals in Nellore district, four rice growing mandals have been purposively selected and two rice growing villages were selected from each mandal at random, thus making a total of eight villages selected for the study. Among the rice farmers 15 farmers from each village were selected randomly thus making a total of 120 farmer respondents for the study. An interview schedule was developed for the study and pretested in non sample area. The data was collected using standardized interview schedule by personal interview method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As perceived by the respondents, fetching of better market price/increase in the Minimum Support Price (MSP) by the government (91.67%) (Rank I) was the first suggestion. As most of the respondents were medium farmers, they have depends on to fetch the good market price for final produce. Which in turn they have to spent as the initial investment on rice cultivation and also for family maintenance. Most of the farmers also clearly expressed that when they took the produce to the market, the market prices were made lower by the commission agents, brokers etc. In such cases the market yard people were also not coming to the rescue of the farmers. Hence the rice farmers expressed that government should take stringent action against any defaulter in the market yard and should fix correct and better market price well in advance.

The second suggestion given by the farmers is prioritization of agricultural activities in MGNREGA programme (90.83%) (Rank II). MGNREGA programme should affect the other agricultural operations and engagement of labourers during crop season should be avoided in NREGP so that farmers will be benefited with the shortage of labour and high rate of wages also be avoided. Government should engage and support the local agricultural labourers to avoid the non availability of man power for farm operations, under MGNREGA.

Development of pest and disease resistant varieties (89.17%) (Rank III) was the next suggestion given by the respondents. The pests like Brown Plant Hopper (BPH), leaf folder, stem borer and diseases like blast, sheath blight and Bacterial Leaf Blight (BLB) were frequently

occurring on the rice crop incurring huge losses to the farmers.

Development of suitable implements and equipment (88.33%) (Rank VI) was the next suggestion given by the respondents. The rice farmers expressed that there were no suitable implements for the intercultural operations. Some of the activities like transplanting, harvesting etc. The available equipments are not manageable by the farmers due to more cost. The intercultural operations are labour intensive and farmers have to spend a lot of money for paying wages. Therefore, it is required to develop suitable equipment and provide to the for the benefit of farmers to avoid the heavy expenses on labour wages.

The next suggestion indicated by the farmers was provision of storage facilities at Panchayat level (85.00%) (Rank V). Majority of the respondents expressed that they were loosing part of their produce in storage due to damage by different storage grain pests and diseases.

Availability of combine harvesters at affordable rents (79.17%) (Rank VI) was one of the next suggestion given by the respondents as harvesting and threshing were the important activities of the end of the crop season. Hence there is a huge demand for the harvesting and threshing machines which led the farmer to invest more towards the higher rental rates of the machines. So there is every need to provide combined harvesters and threshing machines at local level on affordable rental charges, so that the farmers can come out of the shortage of labour and timely harvest will also be done by the farmers.

Provision of loans by government agencies at lower interest rates (77.50%) (Rank VII) was the next suggestion given by the rice farmers. Every season the farmers had to dependent on the middlemen and brokers for the initial investment who were charging huge interest rates. Hence, farmers suggested for loans by the government agencies at lower rate of interest to protect themselves from the exploitation by the local money lenders at higher interest rates.

The next suggestion given was provision of processing, trading and export facilities (70.00%) (Rank VIII). Rice farmers are always depending on millers for processing of their produce where the milling charges are very high. Hence the farmers were in want of support from the government in processing, trading and export of rice to other states and countries to get the maximum benefit.

Suggestions to overcome rice production constraints

Table 1. Suggestions given by the rice farmers to overcome the constraints

S. No.	Suggestions	F	%	Rank
1.	Fetching of better market price / Provision of more Minimum Support Price (MSP) by the Government	110	91.67	I
2.	Allocation of agricultural activities in MGNREGA(Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guaranty Act) programme to avoid labour shortage	109	90.83	II
3.	Timely and easy availability of pest and disease resistant varieties	107	89.17	III
4.	Easy availability of suitable implements and equipment	106	88.33	IV
5.	Provision of storage facilities at Panchayat level	102	85.00	V
6.	Availability of combine harvesters at lower rents	95	79.17	VI
7.	Provision of loans by government agencies at lower interest rates	93	77.50	VII
8.	Provision of more processing, trading and export facilities	84	70.00	VIII
9.	Conducting regular training programmes to the farmers	80	66.67	IX
10.	Further increase in subsidies for rice farming	79	65.83	X
11.	Encouraging and strengthening of existing seed village programme	78	65.00	XI
12.	Facilitating direct marketing in rice	65	54.17	XII
13.	Timely supply of High Yielding Variety (HYV) seed / Good quality seed by Department of Agriculture	58	48.33	XIII
14.	Frequent visits by the extension staff	48	40.00	XIV
15.	Adopting group farming approach in rice farming	47	39.17	XV
16.	Strengthening of existing green manure schemes	41	34.17	XVI
17.	Further strengthening of crop insurance scheme	38	31.67	XVII
18.	Recruitment of adequate extension staff	25	20.83	XVIII

Conducting regular training programmes for the farmers (66.67%) (Rank XI) was the suggestion given by the respondents. The rice cultivating farmers felt that they were lacking some of the latest technologies about the new varieties, chemicals, methods etc., in rice cultivation.

Increasing subsidies for rice farming (65.83%) (Rank X) was the next suggestion expressed by the respondents.

The respondents expressed that even though rice is the most important crop and they felt that there is no subsidy provided for good quality seed and as well as other inputs.

Encourage seed village programme (65.00%) (Rank XI) was the next suggestion as the availability of quality seed is one of the problem faced by most of the farmers at the beginning of the season. Even if the seed is available

it is very costly and the farmers have to transport it from far away places and have to incur additional costs on transport. Hence, it was suggested by the respondents that seed village programme may be taken up in their villages.

Facilitating direct marketing in rice (54.17%) (Rank XII) was the next suggestion given by the respondents. It is known fact that the middlemen, commission agents, brokers etc., were knocking away the profits of the farmers. Hence, farmers suggested that by establishing the farmer's societies, cooperatives or involving government agencies, the produce should be marketed directly to the wholesalers so that farmers will get the maximum benefit. Farmers also expressed that the State Department of Agriculture should ensure timely supply of HYV seed / quality seed (48.33%) (Rank XIII) which was the major problem faced by them.

Increase the extension staff (40.00%) (Rank XIV) is also one of the suggestion given by the rice farmers. Adopting co-operative farming approach in rice farming (39.17%) (Rank XV) is also one of the suggestion expressed by the rice farmers. Some of the farmers felt that to make the rice cultivation more sustainable, the older methods of fragmented cultivation and management is not suitable.

Strengthening of existing green manure schemes (34.17%) (Rank XVI) was the next suggestion given by the respondents. Hence, it is necessary for the government to supply the green manure crop seed in time and in sufficient quantity to promote the farmers to grow these crops by giving some kind of subsidy. These findings are similar to Arathy (2011).

Further strengthening of crop insurance (31.67%) (Rank XVII) was also one of the suggestion expressed by the rice farmers. The respondents stated that implementation of crop insurance is utmost necessary in the event of entire crop failure due to natural calamities such as heavy rains, cyclones and storms.

Recruitment of adequate extension staff (20.83%) (Rank XVIII) was one of the suggestion expressed by the rice farmers. Since, very long, the availability of extension worker per unit farm families was the major question and the respondents also expressed that the extension personnel were not visiting them frequently. Hence they suggested for recruitment of sufficient extension staff to bridge the gap between the farmers and extension workers.

CONCLUSION

It could be suggested that, government must design suitable policies for rice growing farmers. Thorough monitoring of proper supply of inputs with low prices, proper and ease of sanctioning institutional credit, good marketing facilities with remunerative prices to the produce must be improved. There is a necessity to integrate farm production with national and international markets to enable farmers to undertake market driven production plan and adoption of modern marketing practices to get fair price to their produce.

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