Problems Of Vegetable Producing Farmers In Erode, Coimbatore And Tiruppur Districts Of Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

The farmers, who produce crops, struggle a lot to bring them up. They plough and till the land, seed the plants, water resources, clean and pack the produce, ready to be taken to the markets for sale. Even at the time of producing the crops, and at the time of selling them, they face a lot of hurdles and obstacles such as the interference of brokers and middlemen, lack of insurance facility, lack of finance, high cost of inputs, problems related to storage of the produce and transportation problems. In the market, the farmers are cheated by the brokers when the purchase is being made - like charging a low price for the produce, weighing the produce in faulty machines and so on. Thus, the farmers face a number of problems from the initial stage of production till the sale of the produce in the market. The present research was carried out with the aim of ascertaining the socio - economic conditions and various problems faced by the vegetable cultivating farmers of the Erode, Coimbatore and Tiruppur districts of the state of Tamil Nadu.

Keywords: Farmers' Problems, Vegetable Production Problems, Marketing Problems Faced By Farmers, Middlemen

PREAMBLE OF THE STUDY

The essential needs of the mankind are supplied only by the agricultural products. The crops are produced with the help of suitable climate, soil, water facility, fertilizers, etc. Even new technologies for plugging, tilting, trashing, reaping, sawing, watering and so on have contributed to the development of the agricultural sector.

The introduction of industrial revolution not only changed the lifestyle of people, but also brought about a change in the importance associated with agriculture. In India, the crops are cultivated according to the climatic conditions and natural resources which prevail in various parts of the country . Some of the products like flowers and vegetables are sold in the daily markets, since they are a perishable commodity and cannot be stored for more than a day. A few crops such as turmeric, rice and pulses are sold in wholesale markets as they can be stored for a long time.

Vegetable cultivation provides a good source of income to the grower and plays an important role in human nutrition. Higher nutrition values and economics returns per unit area are the two main advantages of growing vegetables in preference to other food crops. From the nutritional point of view, vegetables are of greater economic significance in enriching the food resources. Modern civilization leaves millions of people in situations where, under normal conditions, vegetables cannot be grown, or it has been found that they are not preferable to buy as per the peoples' demands. To meet these needs, the commercial vegetable business has come up. The business of growing vegetables is an important part of agriculture and is important in supplying the needed food to human beings. This being so, many people will continue to grow vegetables to sell and many will be engaged in the auxiliary business that serve vegetable growers.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The farmers, who produce crops, struggle a lot of bring them up. They plough and till the land, seed the plants, water resources, clean them and pack the produce ready to be taken to the markets for sale. Even at the time of producing the crops and at the time of selling them, the farmers face a lot of hurdles and obstacles such as the interference of brokers and middlemen, lack of insurance facility, lack of finance, high cost of inputs and problems of storage and transportation.

In the market, the farmers are cheated by the brokers as they sell their produce by weighing the produce on faulty scales and so on. Thus, the farmers face a number of problems from the initial stage of production until the sale of the produce in the market. The present research was carried out with the aim to ascertain the socio- economic conditions of the

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farmers and to get an insight into the various problems faced by the vegetable cultivating farmers of Erode, Coimbatore and Tiruppur districts.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research was carried down with the following objectives:-

1) To study the socio – economic conditions of the sample respondents.

2) To find out the various problems faced by the vegetable producing farmers in Erode, Coimbatore and Tiruppur districts.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Multistage random sampling technique was adopted in designing the sampling frame for the study. In the first stage, the districts, namely Erode, Coimbatore and Tiruppur were selected for the study based on the highest area under vegetable cultivation. Similarly, in the second stage, three taluks were selected based on potentiality and highest area under vegetable cultivation in the concerned district, and in the third stage, 50 farmers growing vegetables from the selected taluks of the district were selected at random in view of spread out of vegetable growers in different villages. Thus, the sample size constituted of 150 farmers for the study as a whole. Further, while selecting the villages in the selected taluks for identifying the potentiality as well as concentration of vegetable growers, the expertise of the officers of the Agriculture Department at the district taluk level was sought.

❖ **Period of The Study :** The study was carried out between the period from April - December 2010.

❖ **Instrument of Data Collection :** This study is an empirical research based on survey method. The Primary Data were collected from the farmers by using interview schedule specifically designed for the purpose.

SOCIO - ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE FARMERS

SOCIO- ECONOMIC BACKGROUND OF THE FARMERS

The study involved an in-depth investigation of 150 sample respondents. Selected socio-economic characteristics of

Table 1: Demographic Profile of The Farmers

AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS	Frequency	Percent
Below 30 years	24	16
35- 40 years	31	20.7
40- 45 years	39	26
Above 45 years	25	16.7
Total	**150**	**100**
FAMILY TYPE		
Nuclear	61	40.7
Joint	89	59.3
Total	**150**	**100**
EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION		
Illiterate	50	33.3
Primary	35	23.3
Secondary	6	4
Higher secondary	43	28.7
Graduate	16	10.7
Total	**150**	**100**

MARITAL STATUS		
Married	104	69.3
Unmarried	46	30.7
Total	**150**	**100**
NUMBER OF MEMBERS IN THE FAMILY		
Below-3	49	32.7
3 - 5	69	46
5 - 7	21	14
Above - 7	11	7.3
Total	**150**	**100**
TOTAL INCOME PER MONTH	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Below ₹ 5000	62	41.3
₹ 5000 - ₹ 7000	44	29.3
₹ 7000- ₹ 9000	30	20
Above ₹ 9000	14	9.3
Total	**150**	**100**
ACRES OF LAND HOLDING		
Below 5 acres	76	50.7
5 -7 acres	55	36.7
Above 7 acres	19	12.7
Total	**150**	**100**
STATUS OF DEBT		
Yes	121	80.7
No	29	19.3
Total	**150**	**100**
AMOUNT OF DEBT		
Below ₹ 25000	31	25.6
₹ 25000 - ₹ 75000	47	38.8
Above ₹ 75000	43	35.6
Total	**121**	**100**
MODE OF BORROWING		
Friends / Relatives	26	21.5
Bank	38	31.4
Private Moneylenders	57	47.1
Total	**121**	**100**
REASONS FOR BORROWING		
To meet the expenditure of the family	26	21.5
Medical expenses	17	14.0
Settle the old debt	13	10.8
To meet agricultural expenses	41	33.9
Educational expenses of the family members	24	19.8
Total	**121**	**100**
Source: Primary data		

the farmers such as age, marital status, literacy level, family size and their economic position were important indicators influencing the farmers' problems. These socio- economic variables are explained as follows (Refer to Table 1).
26 per cent of the farmers were found to be in the age group of 40 – 45 years, 89 per cent of the rural households were joint families, 69 per cent of the farmers were married, 46 per cent of the farmers had 3- 5 members in their family , 41 per cent of the farmers' family income per month was below ₹ 5000, and 50 per cent of the farmers were holding below 5 acres of land.
Debt position aspect was also examined, and out of the 150 respondents, 80 per cent were found to be under debt. An enquiry revealed that these farmers incurred debt, mostly for meeting their agricultural needs and to meet out the expenditure of the family. These loans were mostly (47 per cent) obtained from non-institutional agencies/ private money lenders.
The Friedman chi-square tests the null hypothesis that the ranks of the variables do not differ from their expected value. For a constant sample size, the higher the value of the chi-square statistic, the longer is the difference between each variable rank sum and its expected value. For these rankings, the chi-square value is 142.336; degrees of freedom are equal to the number of variables minus 1, the asymptotic significance is the approximate probabilities of obtaining factors are not truly different. Because a chi-sqare of 142.388 with 14 degrees of freedom is unlikely to have arisen by chance, it was concluded that the 150 respondents did not have equal preference for all the factors.

Table 2 : Descriptive Statistics of Problems Faced By The Farmers - Friedman's Test

Variables	N	Mean Rank	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Chi-square
Non-availability of good quality of seed	150	**8.50**	3.1600	1.51094	
High Cost of inputs (Seed, Fertilizers Pesticides, Fungicides & Labour)	150	**7.80**	2.9467	1.32496	
Ignorance of infestation of insect-pest disease control	150	**7.43**	2.8267	1.45974	
Lack of finance	150	**6.72**	2.5933	1.52429	
Lack of credit facilities	150	**10.45**	3.8067	1.20790	
Lack of transport facilities	150	**7.37**	2.8267	1.45513	
High cost of transportation	150	**6.99**	2.6667	1.48218	**142.336**
Absence of proper local market	150	**8.10**	3.0333	1.31800	**P value 0.00****
Malpractices by traders	150	**5.73**	2.2933	1.44959	
Intervention of middleman	150	**8.42**	3.1733	1.34487	
Higher market charges	150	**9.02**	3.3067	1.15826	
No correct weighing	150	**8.77**	3.2933	1.12654	
Delay in payment	150	**9.01**	3.3200	1.13705	
Poor market information	150	**7.76**	2.9133	1.18682	
Price fluctuations	150	**7.94**	2.9867	1.31070	
** Highly significant at 1% level of significance					
Source: Primary data					

To identify which problem has a greater effect on the vegetable growing farmers, the Friedman's test was conducted and the results of the test are presented in the Table 2. It could be noted from the Table 2 that among the fifteen factors, lack of credit facility (10.45) was ranked first; it is followed by higher market cost (9.02); delay in payment (9.01) ; No correct weight (8.77) ; Intervention of a middleman (8.42); non availability of quality of seeds (8.50); price fluctuations (7.94) ; high cost of inputs (7.80) ; poor market information (7.76) ; ignorance of infestation of insect-pest disease control (7.43) ; lack of transport facility(7.37) ; higher cost of transportation (6.99) ; lack of finance (6.72); malpractices by traders(5.73) were ranked first, second third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh respectively and so on.
Therefore, it can be concluded that lack of credit facilities, higher market cost and delay in payment were the major problems faced by the farmers.

❖ **Hypothesis**

Ho: Nature of The Family Does Not Influence The Problems Faced By The Farmers.

Table 3 : Independent Samples Test - Nature Of Family And Problems Faced By The Farmers

Problems		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Factor-1	Equal variances assumed	0.050119	0.823164	-0.41249	148	0.680578
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.41265	129.2601	0.680549
Factor-2	Equal variances assumed	4.676821	0.032179	0.156719	148	0.87568
	Equal variances not assumed			0.152266	115.6131	0.879242
Factor-3	Equal variances assumed	0.080872	0.776516	-1.41985	148	0.157755
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.42101	129.4548	0.157719
Factor-4	Equal variances assumed	1.12E-05	0.997337	-0.1297	148	0.896979
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.12962	128.7898	0.897073
Factor-5	Equal variances assumed	1.84101	0.176899	-0.02834	148	0.977426
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.02879	135.7335	0.977078
Factor-6	Equal variances assumed	0.699755	0.404215	-0.39032	148	0.696864
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.39373	132.9226	0.69441
Factor-7	Equal variances assumed	1.031527	0.311458	0.149037	148	0.881728
	Equal variances not assumed			0.151511	136.1362	0.879797
Factor-8	Equal variances assumed	0.176926	0.674638	-1.3959	148	0.164836
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.38724	126.2458	0.167813
Factor-9	Equal variances assumed	0.612233	0.435198	-0.21641	148	0.828967
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.2189	134.0798	0.827061
Factor-10	Equal variances assumed	0.207758	0.649198	-0.68762	148	0.492767
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.68794	129.2938	0.492724
Factor-11	Equal variances assumed	3.443285	0.065498	0.041955	148	0.966591
	Equal variances not assumed			0.043506	143.0588	0.965359
Factor-12	Equal variances assumed	0.115698	0.73423	1.648207	148	0.101431
	Equal variances not assumed			1.648431	129.1483	0.101695
Factor-13	Equal variances assumed	0.252116	0.616335	0.069935	148	0.94434
	Equal variances not assumed			0.070313	131.4859	0.944051
Factor-14	Equal variances assumed	1.469551	0.227348	-0.65887	148	0.511001
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.64517	119.3039	0.520057
Factor-15	Equal variances assumed	0.002947	0.956778	0.229231	148	0.819006
	Equal variances not assumed			0.228106	126.8446	0.819931

Source: Primary data

The significance level for the above hypothesis is at 95 % confidence level, i.e. 0.05 level of significance. The p value (Equal variances not assumed, sig. 2 tailed) in the Table 3 is more than the 0.05 value for all the parameters. Thus, if the p value is higher than the significance level, the null hypothesis (H0) is accepted. Hence, from the Table 3, it is concluded that the nature of the farmers' family does not influence the problems faced by the farmers.

Table 4 : Independent Samples Test -Age And Problems Faced By The Farmers						
Problems		**F**	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
Factor-1	Equal variances assumed	0.004884	0.944377	-0.19434	148	0.846174
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.19434	145.36	0.846181
Factor-2	Equal variances assumed	0.096378	0.756657	2.288202	148	0.023542
	Equal variances not assumed			2.293961	146.6182	0.023213
Factor-3	Equal variances assumed	0.001644	0.967711	1.220354	148	0.224272
	Equal variances not assumed			1.220931	145.6326	0.224085
Factor-4	Equal variances assumed	0.558363	0.456106	-0.15696	148	0.87549
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.15762	147.2467	0.874969
Factor-5	Equal variances assumed	0.21109	0.646589	-0.88458	148	0.377816
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.88598	146.1951	0.377085
Factor-6	Equal variances assumed	0.175476	0.675898	0.321452	148	0.748321
	Equal variances not assumed			0.321617	145.6543	0.748204
Factor-7	Equal variances assumed	0.034942	0.851973	-1.47812	148	0.141502
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.48048	146.2069	0.140897
Factor-8	Equal variances assumed	1.323866	0.251755	-1.70794	148	0.089744
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.71709	147.5579	0.088061
Factor-9	Equal variances assumed	2.713943	0.101596	1.076925	148	0.283266
	Equal variances not assumed			1.082371	147.4837	0.280854
Factor-10	Equal variances assumed	2.363162	0.126365	0.016171	148	0.987119
	Equal variances not assumed			0.016057	139.9757	0.987212
Factor-11	Equal variances assumed	0.469184	0.494434	-0.21597	148	0.82931
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.21506	142.4706	0.83003
Factor-12	Equal variances assumed	1.051357	0.306868	0.077224	148	0.93855
	Equal variances not assumed			0.07678	141.1815	0.938907
Factor-13	Equal variances assumed	0.037809	0.846093	0.200861	148	0.841083
	Equal variances not assumed			0.200733	144.9922	0.841189
Factor-14	Equal variances assumed	2.659475	0.105061	0.40337	148	0.687258
	Equal variances not assumed			0.407025	147.9999	0.684578
Factor-15	Equal variances assumed	0.04884	0.825399	-0.24064	148	0.810163
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.24119	146.5159	0.809743
Source: Primary data						

❖ Hypothesis

Ho: Age group does not influence the problems faced by the farmers.

The significance level for the above hypothesis is at 95 % confidence level, i.e. 0.05 level of significance. The p value (Equal variances not assumed, sig. 2 tailed) in the Table 4 is more than 0.05 for 13 parameters and for 2 parameters, the p value is less than the significance level. Those two parameters are High Cost of inputs (Seed, Fertilizers, Pesticides, Fungicides & Labour) and ignorance of infestation of insect-pest disease control.

When $p < 0.05$, it indicates that the age group of the farmers influences the problems faced by them for particular parameters. But for rest of the 13 parameters, $p > 0.05$, which indicates that the age group of the farmers does not influence the problems faced by them. So from the above analysis, the null hypothesis for the stated 2 parameters is rejected and the null hypothesis for the remaining 13 parameters is accepted. Thus, from the above findings, we conclude that the age of the respondents influences the problems faced by them.

Table 5 : Independent Samples Test - Educational Qualification And Problems Faced By The Farmers						
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
Problems		**F**	**Sig.**	**t**	**df**	**Sig. (2-tailed)**
Factor-1	Equal variances assumed	0.342024	0.559554	0.448436	148	0.654494
	Equal variances not assumed			0.448543	147.9878	0.654418
Factor-2	Equal variances assumed	1.105395	0.294799	0.731838	148	0.465425
	Equal variances not assumed			0.732639	147.5578	0.464941
Factor-3	Equal variances assumed	0.554942	0.457487	0.762688	148	0.446863
	Equal variances not assumed			0.762201	147.1856	0.44716
Factor-4	Equal variances assumed	0.005779	0.939506	0.223566	148	0.823403
	Equal variances not assumed			0.223554	147.8586	0.823413
Factor-5	Equal variances assumed	3.603281	0.059612	0.716315	148	0.474926
	Equal variances not assumed			0.717468	146.7278	0.474226
Factor-6	Equal variances assumed	0.150363	0.698746	0.877734	148	0.381511
	Equal variances not assumed			0.878046	148	0.381342
Factor-7	Equal variances assumed	0.036973	0.847783	-1.02859	148	0.30535
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.02807	147.3932	0.305599
Factor-8	Equal variances assumed	5.172062	0.024391	-0.55217	148	0.581664
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.55088	142.2758	0.582578
Factor-9	Equal variances assumed	1.116155	0.292469	1.161026	148	0.247501
	Equal variances not assumed			1.160511	147.4716	0.247716
Factor-10	Equal variances assumed	0.309664	0.578727	0.62694	148	0.531664
	Equal variances not assumed			0.627502	147.7649	0.531299
Factor-11	Equal variances assumed	0.05793	0.810131	0.888608	148	0.375656
	Equal variances not assumed			0.889141	147.9529	0.375371
Factor-12	Equal variances assumed	1.516884	0.220045	-1.11817	148	0.265305
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.11644	145.0596	0.266081
Factor-13	Equal variances assumed	2.021636	0.157176	-0.24053	148	0.81025
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.24005	143.5223	0.810635
Factor-14	Equal variances assumed	0.619046	0.43266	-0.49229	148	0.623243
	Equal variances not assumed			-0.49259	147.9516	0.623034
Factor-15	Equal variances assumed	0.00806	0.928585	-1.37638	148	0.170784
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.37705	147.9862	0.170576
Source: Primary data						

❖ Hypothesis

Ho: Educational qualification does not influence the problems faced by the farmers.

The significance level for the above hypothesis is at 95 % confidence level, i.e. 0.05 level of significance. The p value (Equal variances not assumed, sig. 2 tailed) in the Table 5 is more than the 0.05 level for all the parameters. Thus, if the p value is higher than the significance level, we accept the above the null hypothesis (H0). Hence, from the Table 5, it can be concluded that educational qualification of the farmers did not influence the problems faced by them.

SUGGESTIONS

In order to alleviate the various problems faced by the farmers in cultivating the vegetables, the following suggestions are provided by the researcher :

1) The Government should take instantaneous initiatives in the field of production, and marketing activities can be carried out under the supervision of the appropriate agencies. A regulated market, to some extent, can do the needful to redress the grievances of the producers. Installation of cold storage facilities can play an important role to store the surplus produce in the glut period and to supply the surplus in the lean season. Well connected network transport facilities should be developed for an efficient marketing system.

2) The vegetable producers should be encouraged with right and timely supply of inputs and facilitate credit for better performance in the yield of commodity.

3) Public weighing machines should be installed in each market to ensure the correct weighing for the vegetable sales in the market. In order to provide accurate weighing, electronic weighing equipment should be installed at all market places.

4) Most of the farmers in the study area were getting the price information about their products only from their fellow farmers and local traders. Hence, they were not able to get the correct information about the market price of the vegetables. To augment the market information, the government should make an effort to broadcast the prices of agricultural produce through television, radio and display notice boards in market places to disseminate information regarding price of the produce.

5) The Government should come forward to announce the minimum pricing policy so as to fine-tune the price variation and also to save the farmers from huge losses. Considering the liberalized economic climate introduced in the country, development of alternate marketing strategies with full/equal involvement of the private sector would be conducive to the economic enhancement of the farmers.

CONCLUSION

Though India is the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables in the world, but our country has been facing the situation of glut and scarcity in respect of many crops. This is because of the non-existence of efficient marketing infrastructure and proper storage facilities for the regulated supply management of the vegetables, scarcity of agricultural inputs, lack of proper training and knowledge about new developments in cultivation methods and technological developments. The study clearly reveals that the increase in the number of middlemen and higher market charges were the major problems faced by the vegetable farmers and the financial position of these farmers was not very sound. Therefore, they were unable to make proper investments for the farming of vegetables. Therefore, the government should take appropriate steps to strengthen these farmers' markets . These farmers' markets have to provide new business opportunities for the vegetable sellers. It would help the farmers to sell their produce easily to the consumers directly so that they can save the middlemen commission and hence, are able to improve their financial position.

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