



MARKETING PRACTICES OF BANANA FARMERS IN GOALPARA DISTRICT OF ASSAM; A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Banana is the second most important fruit crop in India next to mango. Banana is a significant crop in agrarian economy as it is less labour-intensive, ensures relative quick return on investment, along with regular income through out the year. Assam is one of the agrarian states in North-east India, where majority of the rural population depends on farming for livelihood. The state is the 9th largest banana producing state in India. Banana is a common fruit grown in the rural household for domestic consumptions. Besides, the state is the land of Asia's largest banana market known as Darangiri in the Galpara district. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through field survey of the researcher with a structured schedule. It is found that farmers faced more marketing related constraints than production related issues. Distance to nearest primary market, transportation cost is some of the issues faced by the farmers. Creation of conducive marketing platform is the suggestive outcome of the study, which will improve the wellbeing of the farmers.

KEYWORDS : Banana, Farmers, Marketing, Constraints

INTRODUCTION

Banana evolved in the humid tropical regions of South East Asia with India as one of its centres of origin. Modern edible varieties have evolved from the two species – *Musa acuminata* and *Musa balbisiana* and their natural hybrids, originally found in the rain forests of South East Asia. Banana and plantains are grown in about 120 countries. Total annual world production is estimated at 86 million tonnes of fruits. India leads the world in banana production with an annual output of about 14.2 million tonnes. Other leading producers are Brazil, Ecuador, China, Philippines, Indonesia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Thailand and Colombia (<http://nhb.gov.in>). In India banana ranks first in production and third in area among fruit crops. It accounts for 13% of the total area and 33% of the production of fruits. Production is highest in Maharashtra (3924.1 thousand tones) followed by Tamil Nadu (3543.8 thousand tonnes). Within India, Maharashtra has the highest productivity of 65.70 metric tones /ha, against national average of 30.5 tonnes/ha. The other major banana producing states are Karnataka, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Assam. In fiscal year 2020, fresh bananas worth over six billion Indian rupees were exported from India. This was a significant increase from the previous year. United Arab Emirates imported the largest value of fresh bananas from India in 2020. Assam occupies the 9th position in terms of Banana farming in India. The state is having the Asia's largest banana market, which serve the domestic as well as international market more specifically the market requirements of Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. Assam mostly produces bananas under AAA, AAB and ABB genomes. Although there are around 15 to 20 varieties of banana available in Assam, the famous ones are, Jahaji, Bar Jahaji, Chenichamma, Malbhog, Kanaibansi, Saapkal etc. production for domestic consumption is a common practice among the rural household in the plain as well as hill agricultural zones of the states. However, during the feasibility analysis of the present work it is observe that, marketing practices of banana farmers is conventional in nature. This paper is an attempt to analyse the marketing practices of Banana farmers in the Goalpara districts of Assam. Their marketing practices, channel selection decision and constraints are also taken into consideration. Again, there is a scarcity of information regarding economic aspect of banana farming at micro level (Kumari, 2018), which creates the motivation for the study.

Kumar et al (2012) stated that Banana cultivation in India is dominated by the small farmers with average acreage less than 3acres, whereas in other nations it is mainly under the control of large farmers. Kumari (2018) stated that farmers in Bihar are cultivating only the traditional varieties of banana. The profitability of the banana products has not been quite substantial. Regional variations in costs, returns and resource use efficiency are some of the major issues highlighted by the researcher. In the context of Assam, Chutia and Borah (2014) stated that although the percentage shares of banana in total fruit production is the highest but the growth rates is very low in the last decade. Deficient rainfalls, low irrigation coverage, excessive post-harvest loss, are the main influencing factors in this regard. Sarma et al (2020) stated that Assam is one of the potential states to increase the total banana production. In western districts of Assam, commercial cultivation of banana has gaining popularity in recent years. The study revealed that out of the technological constraints; lack of knowledge of scientific production ranked, Damage by insect pests and diseases, lack of regular visit by extension personnel to villages non availability of quality planting material, Inability to purchase modern agricultural implements, non-availability of labour during peak period ranked, increasing price of input Non-availability of timely credit facilities are major constraints faced by the banana farmers. Saikia et al (2018) stated that the marketing process of banana was facilitated by various market intermediaries like pre harvest contractors cum processor (distant), pre harvest contractors cum wholesaler, distant wholesaler, local traders etc. The pre-harvest contractors play a vital role in marketing of banana in the district. However, during the feasibility analysis researcher observed differences in the marketing practices within the region, and hence effort is taken to analyse the process of banana marketing from farmers' perspective.

Objectives the objective of this paper is

To analyse the marketing practices undertaken by Banana farmers in the Goalpara district of Assam

METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on both primary as well as secondary data. Primary data was collected through field survey of the searchers. Structured scheduled was designed and administered among the banana farmers to have the desired sample. One interview was last for 30 to 45 minutes. The

LITERATURE REVIEW:

interview was conducted in Assamese and thereafter transcribe into English. Geographically the study was carried out in Goalpara district of Assam. A total of 30 banana farmers were interviewed selected through non-probabilistic 1 snowball sampling procedure. However, some of the progressive farmers helped the researcher in selection of the respondents. Utmost effort was taken to social desirability bias by explaining the academic scope of work. The information of the illiterate the respondents were supplemented by the other members of the households. The study is based on banana farmers and therefore, findings and suggestions are not equally applicable for other horticultural crops. Again, there are differences in the marketing practices adopted by the banana farmers in different districts of Assam and hence, the findings cannot be generalized for the entire state. Besides, among the 20 varieties of bananas grown in the state the interviewed growers mainly produces only two varieties Chenichamma and Malbhog, hence, findings are limited to the producers of these two varieties only. Data was analysed with the help of mean analysis.

ANALYSIS

Majority of the farmers 57% farmers belong to the age group of 18-29. And 63 % of the farmers belong to the age group of 30 to 39. In analysing the formal literacy it is observed that majority of the respondents 43.34% have their formal education up to 12th standards. 36.67 per cent of the farmers having formal literacy up to 10 the standard. In analysing the land holding status of the banana farmers it is observed that 70 % of the farmers belong to the marginal and small farm category. While analysing the marketing practices of banana farmers it is observed that 27 per cent of the farmers sell their produces in the periodic market. This market is held twice in a week. 30% of the farmers sell their products through the existing traders. However, 43 % of the farmers use both the above mentioned channels of marketing. It is observed that proximity of the primary market influences the marketing practices of farmers. When markets are located within the distance of 3 to 5 kms, they sell their produces in these markets. When markets are far away i.e. above 5kms they take the services of traders. Again, some of the farmers want to save the time of marketing which is utilise in nurturing other crops in the crop portfolio. Those farmers also rely on the traders. Again it is observed that when growers are in the urgent need of cash, they take the services of traders. They intimate about the availability of the crops through phone and invite the traders for procurement from home. Besides, it was observed that on Monday usually malbhog variety of banana is traded and on Thursday usually the Chenichamma variety is traded in the Darangiri market. Farmers involved in banana farming are able to avail a significant economic return from this crop. Regular return throughout the year, easy marketing process has popularise the banana cultivation in the region. Besides, growers reported that there is significant increase in banana acreage in the last two decades. One growers reported that "previously, we had small acreage of banana farming mainly to meet the household consumption and consumption on religious ceremony as well as occasion. However, significant amount of continuous return has popularize this crop and now farmers are expanding the acreage". While there is a shortage of agricultural labourers in the region and new generation are not interested to undertake conventional agriculture as a means of livelihood, in such scenario, increasing banana acreage and increasing involvement of younger generation is a positive sign. While analysing the factors influencing the selection of marketing channel it is found that 73 per cent of the farmers involve traders to save time. 26 percent of the farmers engage traders to save the transportation cost. Although marketing practices are conducive for the growers, however, it is not free from limitations growers face the problem of road condition to bring the produces to market. As they usually bring their produces in bi-cycle, inferior road

condition particularly during rainy seasons affects them. Some of the farmers feel the excessive dominance of intermediaries. They dominate the entire process of dealing, price negotiation etc. Another major issues grower's face is the lack of adequate storage space and facilities. However, growers are satisfied with the price received from this market and there is a growing involvement of younger generation in banana farming in the region, which is a good sign of agrarian economy of the state. The modes of operation in the market are conducive for farmers.

CONCLUSION

Banana farming for household consumption has transformed into commercial banana farming due to growth of market structure in the region. There is a growing popularity of this fruit crop among the young generation of farmers. By considering the wider product range made from banana including banana chips, powder, cake etc., there should be a banana product diversification research center. Again, arrangement of storage facilities will help the growers to a large extent. Highlighting the growing importance, marketing practices of banana farming along with analyzing the constraints of the growers are the main contribution of the study.

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