

TO STUDY THE MEASURES AND STRATEGIES TO PREVENT RECURRENCE OF CROP HOLIDAY



Agriculture

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh to formulate the suitable measures and strategies to prevent recurrence of crop holiday. The Study was undertaken by using the descriptive research design.

The present investigation included 60 respondents of crop holiday farmers and 60 respondents of non crop holiday farmers. Measures and strategies includes the interventions to be taken up by the government level, extension system, research system, community level and at an individual level.

Asia dominates the world in rice production as it accounts for about 90 per cent of world's rice area and 92 per cent of production India ranks first in the world with an area of around 44 million hectares under rice cultivation and is the second largest producer of rice after china. In India, Andhra Pradesh is historically known as the "Rice Bowl of India", Andhra Pradesh stands sixth in area, third in production, and second in productivity and contributes nearly 12 per cent of the national rice production. In Andhra Pradesh area under rice crop is 4.38 million hectares With a production of 1,40,101 tonnes and productivity 3333kg ha⁻¹ (Agricultural Statistics at a glance,2011) In Andhra Pradesh major rice growing districts are East Godavari, Gun- tur, Karimnagar, Krishna, Nalgonda, Nellore and West Godavari. East Godavari is a predominant rice growing district in Andhra Pradesh which occupies 3,99,994 hectares rice cropped area with production of 16,31,545 tonnes and productivity of 4079kg/ha. During 2011, the farmers of East Godavari district declared Crop Holiday in 13 mandals . As a result, 85,050 acres was not cultivated by the farmers during the Kharif season (Vamsi et.al, 2011). Thus there is a threat to production if this trend is continued or happened in intervals. It is high time to suggest suitable measures and strategies to prevent the recurrence of crop holiday.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh because paddy growers of this district had declared crop holiday in about 2 lakh acres (Ramanamurthy et.al,2012), which was the highest acreage under the crop holiday districts. Among 13 crop holiday mandals of East Godavari district, two mandals were selected purposively. First mandal was selected based on the highest area under crop holiday i.e I.Polavaram and the second mandal was selected based on the highest area under non crop holiday i.e Ambajipeta. Six villages were selected randomly from crop holiday declared mandal and other six villages from non crop holiday declared mandal .Thus making a total of twelve vil- lages for the study. From each selected village 10 farmers were selected. A total of 120 respondents constituted the sample for the study. Keeping the specific objectives and variables of the study in view, interview schedule was developed and adminis- tered to respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Measures and strategies includes the interventions to be taken up by the government level, extension system, research system, community level and at an individual level to prevent the re- currence of crop holiday.

In fact, in 2010, seventy per cent of the *kharif* crop was damaged

due to cyclone in the study area. In the next season *rabi* 2010-11, these farmers had a bumper crop ,but they did not get reason- able prices either from the government or the market. However, farmers resentment grew against the state for it could not pro- cure paddy (due to lack of storage space) at reasonable prices. Besides, farmers got agitated that state government did not re- lease water by 15th april 2011.All these incidents culminated in the crop holiday movement. The other important issue is that millers benefit significantly from paddy procurement. In this sit- uation, why cannot paddy farmers form their own milling coop- eratives? The above some of the interventions at different levels i.e Research, Extension, Government, Community and Individual will help them own the value that they are creating and in this process improve their livelihoods. No doubt "Agriculture is a high risk economic activity" but Agriculture not just as a food producing machine for the urban population". The bottom line of any policy in agriculture should be the economic well being and livelihood security of agricultural families.

1.Interventions at government level

- The first and foremost mandate of the government is to rec- ommend minimum support prices(MSP) with a view to make agriculture a remunerative sector so that farmers are incentivized to adopt modern technologies and better farming practices. In paddy the cost of production has risen sharply since 2008-09, and the paddy farmers are not duly compensated for these ris- ing costs. But given the excess supply situation where stocks are bulging despite record level exports, the government is of the considered view that an MSP of Rs.1250 per quintal will be a ra- tional decision. But the proposed MSP by government is Rs.1644 per quintal. But it would be appropriate decision by the govern- ment if it considered the MSP recommended by the Swaminad- an commission i.e. Rs.2033 per quintal i.e MSP should be at least 50 per cent more than weighted average costs of production.

- Labour costs has risen sharply during last 3 years which has pushed costs of paddy cultivation. Farmers also complaints the serious shortage of labour during peak seasons. There is a strong feeling amongst farmers that this problem has raised due to im- plementation of MGNREGA. Hence it is recommended that agri- cultural operation be made part of MGNREGA, wherein say half is paid by farmers and other half by the scheme. This would help agricultural labour to earn more than what they currently get- ting and farmers can save labour costs.

- Irrigation department and government should ensure that ir- rigation canals are to be closed on 15th April and to release water on 15th May every year and also take up the repairs and mainte- nance of canals on regular basis.

- For escaping the natural calamities, the cropping schedule of

East Godavari for *Kharif* should be modified and transplantations to be completed by 20th June and under any circumstances harvesting should be completed by first fortnight of October so that *Kharif* crop escapes from the heavy rains and cyclones usually occur in November and December. This can be done by mechanized planting.

- Civil Supplies department like FCI, Andhra Pradesh state civil supply corporation (APSCSC) have to procure paddy like in the states of Punjab and Haryana and Government should also encourage market federations (MARKFED), Rytmitra saghas etc, farmers participation in such purchases should be encouraged.

- In case of calamities, the payment of compensation is usually being delayed; this has deterred the farmers to go for rice cultivation. Hence government should ensure timely availability of crop insurance claims and implemented the weather based crop insurance scheme in coastal belt.

- The equipment and machinery possessed by the farmers is very poor to attend various plant protection and other farming operations from seed to seed. The presence of this equipment is essential keeping in view of scarce and costly human labour. Hence the government should provide this equipment through cooperatives for community usage.

- Special provision should be given to coastal belt districts for construction of godowns for at least 50 per cent production of the selected area.

- The government has to make the availability of data to the farming community about spot and future prices of commodities through the multi commodity exchange(MCE) and the NC-DEX and APMC electronic network which covering 93 commodities through 6000 terminals and 430 towns and cities.

2.Extension system interventions

- More training programmes may be organized for farmers to enlighten on affects and coping mechanisms to natural calamities.

- For reducing cost of cultivation, encourage and motivate the farmers to adopt bio fertilizers, bio pesticides, organic inputs and green leaf manuring which are considered as cost reduction technologies.

- Steps may be initiated to generate interest among farmers to get not only the climate related information from mass media channels like T.V, radio and newspaper but also the better preparedness techniques to reduce the losses due to natural calamities.

- The designed contingency plans may be translated in to meaningful actions to be followed by the farmers in true spirit to escape the affects of natural calamities.

- In view of the labour shortage, demonstration and popularization of alternate methods such as direct seeding either dry or sprouted seeds with farm implements like row seeder, transplanters and combine harvesters could be done to reduce cultivation costs.

- Creative use of ICT in information dissemination should be implemented to disseminate the critical information of early warning and forecasting to cut off the losses.

3. Research system interventions

The interventions of research system may not have direct effect for crop holiday but the proposed interventions will reduce the cost of paddy cultivation in particular.

- Precision has to be maintained in documenting and reporting the area based and situation wise weather related information.

- Developing the rice varieties suitable for withstanding the natural calamities like floods, cyclones etc.

- Evolving strategic and integrated control measures of *sheath blight*, *blast* diseases in *kharif* paddy.

- *Contingent plans* should be worked out in case of weather abnormalities or crop failure due to natural calamities.

4.Interventions at community level

- The farmers should collectively agree for taking up the desilting drains, repairs to canals and forming irrigation channels under MGNREGA for efficient water use efficiency.

- Farmers should follow the group action approach especially in practicing the biological control measures to arrest the pest and disease complex in rice. Rice blast disease can be controlled effectively if the farmers practice various preventive measures on community mode like seed treatment, spraying of chemicals etc.

- All the farmers should be habituated to insure the crop against natural calamities in rice to face any eventuality.

- The Indigenous technical knowledge(ITKs) which are the great wisdom of local area should be practiced uniformly by all the farmers to derive maximum benefits with the available local resources which leads to reduction of costs in paddy cultivation.

- Farmers should collectively form into groups and collect the produce to avoid the middle men in marketing of the produce.

5. Interventions at individual level

- Farmers should avoid the middlemen and encourage farmers groups

- Farmers should adopt the recommend optimum use of fertilizers, need based plant protection measures and mechanization to reduce the cost of cultivation.

- Every farmer should go for crop diversification it reduces the risk of crop loss.

- Each and every farmer should take initiative to experiment new technologies in their farm to reap maximum profits from those technologies. The farmer should imbibe the spirit of group dynamics and team spirit to follow the group action approach to take up measures to control the diseases like rice blast, sheath blight in rice which is affecting the crop continuously year after the year.

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