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Marketing Constraints Faced by the Banana Growers in Theni District

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A B S T R A C T

Banana is one of the most important commercial tropical fruits traded. Eve was said to have used Banana leaves to cover modesty in the Garden of Paradise as revealed from antiquity. Banana is thus called "Apple of Paradise". It is also known as "Adam Fig". Theni district was purposively selected for the present study in the first stage since it occupied the first position in area under Banana in the state of Tamil Nadu. The villages of selected four blocks were noted and three villages were selected at random from each block. Altogether twelve villages were selected for the study. From each selected blocks fifteen banana growers were selected by random sampling technique. Thus the total sample size arrived was 90. Findings of the study showed that the constraints expressed by Banana growers are inadequate transport facility was the major problem faced by farmers with a mean score of 61.40 per cent.

Introduction

Banana is one of the most important commercial tropical fruits traded. Eve was said to have used Banana leaves to cover modesty in the Garden of Paradise as revealed from antiquity. Banana is thus called "Apple of Paradise". It is also known as "Adam Fig". Banana is a type of fruit from herbaceous plants of the genus Musa. Musa species grow in a wide range of environments and have varied human uses, ranging from the edible bananas and plantains of the tropics to cold-hardy fiber and ornamental plants. They have been a staple of the human diet since the dawn of recorded history. These large, perennial herbs, 2–9 m in height, evolved in Southeast Asia, New Guinea, and the Indian subcontinent, developing in modern time is secondary loci of genetic diversity in Africa, Latin America, and the Pacific. Musa species attained a position of central importance within Pacific societies: the plant is a source of food, beverages, fermentable sugars, medicines, flavorings, cooked foods, silage, fragrance, rope, cordage, garlands, shelter,

clothing, smoking material, and numerous ceremonial and religious uses. Although mostly consumed locally in the Pacific region, the fruit enjoys a significant worldwide export market. They are cultivated primarily for their fruit, and to a lesser extent for the production of fibre and as ornamental plants. Bananas come in a variety of sizes and colors when ripe, including yellow, purple and red. Most production for local sale is of green cooking bananas and plantains, as ripe dessert bananas are easily damaged while being transported to market. Bandyopadhyay (1987) examined the extent of Banana Cultivation during the period of 1970-71 to 1983-84 in the selected states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala in the southern Peninsula of India. Chadha (1999) stated that among fruits banana accounted for the highest production and they contributed31 per cent of the total food production. There had been a phenomenal increase in the production and productivity of banana which rose from 4.0 million tonnes in 1967 to 10.4 million tonnes in 1994. However, there were many problems which require to be addressed through systematic research. Debabandya Mohapatra *et al.,* (2010) in their paper remarked that banana is one of the most appreciated fruit all over the world because of its multipurpose use as food. Lack of suitable post-harvest management practices may lead to a huge economic loss for the banana producing regions.

Different post- harvest management practices are in use to enhance its shelf life by delaying the ripening, reducing respiration rate, and controlling the disease causing organisms, during transport and storage. An integrated approach can ensure product safety and quality that reaches the consumer, residing far away from the production area. In this article different pre-storage treatments viz. pre-cooling, chemical and biological treatment for disinfection, modified atmospheric packaging, chemical treatment, irradiation, and coating for enhancement of shelf life is discussed in brief.

Emile Frison *et al.,* (1998) in their article remarked that bananas and plantains are extremely important crops throughout the developing countries of the tropics. They are not only a staple food crop for millions of people, but they also provide an essential source of income through local and international trade. The plant is versatile and, as well as being an important food source, also provides fibre, starch and alcohol. Different types of bananas are important in different regions, but everywhere, banana and plantain producers face growing hardships, as a result of increasing pest and disease pressures, more specifically, the rapid global spread of black sigatoka disease, to which many important cultivars are susceptible.

Aiyasamy *et al.,* (1980) in their paper have disclosed that the present study was undertaken to analyze the production and marketing of 'Poovan' variety of banana in Tiruchirapalli region of Tamil Nadu. Sixty farmers spread over six selected villages constituted the sample for this study. Detailed information on the cultivation aspects of banana, costs of production, problems in production, marketing agencies, prices, marketing costs, pattern of disposal and constraints in marketing were collected through pre-tested schedules. Severity of diseases and of wind was reported as the major agro-biological factors.

Asok (2004) in his study on, "Liberalization and Globalization: Issues in Agricultural Marketing", made an attempt to bring into focus the need for a long-term prospective in the field of agricultural market keeping in mind the agricultural production, consumption requirements and global changes. The existing system has to be revitalized to take up the thrown up by the forces of globalization and

give a proper direction to all sections of the agricultural marketing system, so that integration does not have a negative fallout on the economy.

Chandrasekaran (1987) studied the marketing of banana in the Cumbam Valley in Theni district. He found that the soils in the Cumbam regions were predominantly red loamy in about 70 per cent of the area and red sand in over 23 per cent of the total area. Red loamy soil was mostly found in the Utthamapalayam Block. While red sandy soil was in abundance in the Chinnamanur Block. These soils were porous with good drainage facility and were admirably suited for cultivation of crops like banana.

Duraisingh *et al.*, (2008) in their study suggested that, fair price markets may be started in Nazareth area to sell out the marketable surplus.

The government should publish the actual ruling price list of the different commodities and also suggested that the government should arrange adequate and cheap means of transport facilities in their study area.

Gajanana (2002) in his article concluded that the producers of banana var. poovan are found to use two main channels for marketing their produce i.e., one, selling in the local market either through Pre Harvest Contractors or Commission Agents (Channel I); two, selling to the agents of the wholesalers in the distant markets like Bangalore, Mumbai and Chennai (Channel II).

Materials and Methods

Theni district was purposively selected for the present study in the first stage since it occupied the first position in area under Banana in the state of Tamil Nadu with 79314 ha and production of 31.17 lakh tonnes during 2013-14. In the second stage among Eight blocks, four blocks viz., Cumbum, Andipatti, Uttamapalayam, Bodinayakkanur blocks were selected purposively for the present study based on area under banana. These four blocks accounted for more than 50 per cent of area under banana in this district.

The distribution of the respondents in sample villages is presented in the villages of selected four blocks were noted and three villages were selected at random from each block.

Altogether twelve villages were selected for the study. From each selected blocks fifteen banana growers were selected by random sampling technique. Thus the total sample size arrived was 90. The intermediaries involved in marketing of banana namely wholesaler and retailer were selected at the rate of fifteen from each category making the total sample size of 30. Thus the total sample included 60 farmers and 30 intermediaries.

The general information related to the district such as total population, land utilization pattern, cropping pattern, agro climatic conditions, rainfall and irrigation sources were collected from the official records available in the Statistical Office of Theni District, Office of Joint Director of Horticulture, Theni district, Government publications and other published materials.

A well structured and pre-tested interview schedule was used to collect primary data. Two separate sets of interview schedules were prepared, one for the banana growers and another for the intermediaries. The questionnaires were pre-tested and finalized.

The interview schedule of banana production covered aspects such as general farm and household characteristics, details on cultivation practices adopted in banana cultivation and cost of cultivation, details on

sale of banana and problems in production and marketing. The schedule for intermediaries covered aspects such as general characteristics, cost incurred and profit realized by different market functionaries and the problems faced.

Results and Discussion

Problems encountered in marketing of Banana

Banana farmers faced many problems in marketing of Banana. In order to know which one was the major problem, the sample farmers were asked to rank the various problems faced by them. The individual ranks were given scores according to their percent position were presented in the table1.

As could be observed from above Table 1, that among the constraints expressed by Banana growers, inadequate transport facility was the major problem faced by farmers with a mean score of 61.40 per cent. Distant location of regulated market was ranked second with mean score of 50.90 per cent. Inadequate storage facility occupied third major problem with 43.85 per cent Fluctuations in market prices and lack of credit in regulated markets were not major problems compared to the first three problems.

It was expected that the developments in transport facilities could solve the problem of distant location of regulated market enabling more farmers to sell their produce through channel-II. This will increase their income.

The net income obtained by the Banana farmer was higher compared to that of other crops in all size groups. There existed a scope for increasing the income of the farmers by way of reorganizing the use of existing resources with the present level of technical knowledge. Marketing of produce through regulated market was found to be more efficient. Scarcity of labourers and inadequate transparent facilities were the foremost problem faced by the farmers during the production and marketing of Banana in the study area.

Table.1 Problems faced by farmers in marketing of Banana

S.No.	Factors	Mean score	Rank
1.	Inadequate transport facilities	61.40	I
2.	Distant location of market	50.90	II
3.	Lack of credit in regulated market	43.85	III
4.	Fluctuation in market price	34.55	IV
5.	Inadequate storage Facilities	21.25	V

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