



## **Problems Encountered and Suggestions Given By Sugarcane Farmers In North Coastal Districts Of Andhrapradesh**

**Key words :** Problems, Sugarcane farmers, Suggestions.

Sugarcane cultivation for sugar production in the country has history of about three centuries. The cane agriculture has grown from minor crop supporting a fledging cottage industry to become the second largest industrial crop in the country. Cane agriculture is more organized and stabilized now but equally sensitive to an array of factors ranging from climatic factors to cane and sugar pricing.

The productivity and performance of the sugarcane crop in each region is conditioned by various micro and macro environmental and biotic and abiotic factors besides socio economic aspects. In order to understand the problems faced by the sugarcane farmers and their suggestions to improve the performance of sugarcane cultivation and make the sugarcane agriculture more sustainable, the present study was carried out.

The study was conducted in north coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh during the year 2010-11. Ex-post facto research design was followed. Three districts of north coastal zone viz., Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam were purposively selected as considerable area under sugarcane. From each district two mandals and four villages were selected based on highest area under sugarcane. From each village 15 farmers comprising of small, medium and big categories farmers were selected by using random sampling procedure. Thus, the total sample size constituted to 180 respondent farmers. The data were collected with personal interview method through structured interview schedule with open-ended questions. Focused group discussions were also used to collect the data.

### **1. Problems faced by the sugarcane farmers**

To ascertain different problems faced by sugarcane farmers, they were asked to express their

problems in carrying out different aspects in sugarcane cultivation.

It is evident from the study that high cost of labour and non availability of labour (91.67 %) followed by low cane Price and low cane support price (87.22 %), lack of suitable machinery for harvesting (86.67%), non matching of issuing of cutting orders and transport arrangements (80.56%) and smut disease in ratoon crop in variety 87A298 (71.11%) were the major problems expressed by the sugarcane farmers.

The other problems faced by the sugarcane farmers were, non-availability of seed material of improved varieties (66.67%), lack of crop insurance for sugar cane on individual farmer basis (63.89%), non availability of skilled labour for propping, harvesting and other intercultural operations (63.33), credit and scale of finance not sufficient (62.22%), improper and insufficient training on modern technologies less number of demonstration plots on latest technologies (61.11%), weed problem in plant and ratoon crop and lack of knowledge on chemical weed management (58.33%), non availability of red rot resistant varieties (50.00%), irregular power supply (48.33%), Early shoot borer (47.78%), lack of production based incentives (44.44%), lack of irrigation facilities (42.22%), subsidy on transport cost according to the distance (35.00%), irregular payments and processing charges by sugar factories and lack of drought tolerant high yielding varieties each (31.11%), wild boar problem (27.22%), less number of collection centers (22.22%), prohibition on preparation of jaggery in factory zone (18.89%), adverse weather conditions (12.78%), price fluctuation in case of jaggery (11.11%) and malpractices in weighing of cane at collection centers (9.44%). Similar problems reported by Dubolia and Jaiswal (2000), Nagabhusana (2007), Mpangala (2009) and Nrusimha Kalyan *et al.*, (2011).

## 2. Suggestions given by the farmers to overcome the problems

The sugarcane farmers were requested to offer their suggestions to overcome the problems encountered by them in cultivation of sugarcane.

It is evident from the study that, majority (85.56%) of the sugarcane farmers suggested increase of cane price at least by 40-50 per cent followed by supply of machinery for harvesting on custom hiring by factories (81.67%), transport arrangements should be made properly to lift the cane in right time (76.67%), NREGS works should be converged to sugarcane operations where labour requirement is more (73.33%) and organization of more exposure visits to well grown areas to make the farmers understand and adopt new technologies (67.78%) are the major suggestions given by the sugarcane farmers.

Cane payments should be in time by sugar factories (66.66%), development and supply mini machinery to suit all types of spacing, harvesting and planting (65.00%), issue of cutting orders based on variety and date of planting not by influence of individuals (63.89%), organize seed plots at cluster level and seed supply on 50 per cent subsidy (62.22%), organize more trainings and demonstrations on latest technologies/ chemical weed management/ organic farming practices micro irrigation and planting methods by sugar factories or Department of agriculture. (54.44%), development and supply of smut resistant and red rot resistant varieties with yield (53.89%), insurance to sugarcane on individuals farmer basis (52.78%), scale of finance for sugarcane should be increased (49.44%), loans and subsidy for bore wells, oil engines and improvement of irrigation facilities from sugar factories or government (48.33%), Supply of tyre bullock carts on subsidy by factories or government (45.55%), polambadi and extension in sugarcane through agricultural department (43.88%), demonstrations on farm mechanization (39.44%), power supply should be regularized (37.78%), tricho cards made available with local out lets or at sugar factory counters (37.22%), subsidy on transport cost according to the distance (32.78%), Jaggery preparation should be allowed in factory notified if factory not able to take the cane in time (30.56%), use of digital electronic weight machines at collection centers (22.22%), training on preparation of quality jaggery and making

of value added products with jaggery (14.44%) and cooperative sugar factories should be revived and made functional (25.00%).

Sugarcane crop is labour intensive and input intensive crop, which remains in the field for more than one year. Cost of production in different regions varies and depending upon the practices adopted and prevailing cost of input and labour. Labour availability for major operations like harvesting and cost of harvesting is Rs 300-550/- per ton in north coastal districts which is more than 25 per cent of the total cost of production. The labour availability for intercultural and harvesting has become scarce and costly due to the influence of NREGS programme, resulting in delay in timely operations. Hence majority of farmers suggested that NREGS should merged to sugarcane operations where operations require more labour.

Administrative side the price offered by the sugar factories is not in tune with the cost of production. There should be minimum increase of 40-50 per cent in cane price then only sugarcane cultivation is profitable. Lack of insurance at individual level is another problem, farmers loosing economically when crop is lost due to fire accidents and other natural calamities. Hence insurance must be assured to the sugarcane crop on individual farmer basis.

On the other hand technological problems like red rot and smut disease become prevalent and lead to reduction in quality and quantity of cane. Research stations working on sugarcane need to develop varieties resistant to red rot and smut disease or effective measures to manage these problems. Precautionary measures for management of these diseases need to be demonstrated to the farmers.

Ninty per cent of the sugarcane crop grown in north coastal districts of Andhra pradesh under the control of sugar factories and their agreement, but due to operational problems like arrangement of cutting orders and transport, farmers were facing lot of difficulty in handing over the cane to the factory in time, loosing cane weight and juice quality due to transport cause is not been beneficial to both farmers and sugar factories. Hence factory management needs to concentrate on these aspects and encourage farmers to continue sugarcane cultivation as a profitable enterprise.

Sugarcane cultivation can be sustainable only if profitability can be assured through reduction in cost of cultivation through mechanization and adoption of other cost reduction technological interventions in cane agriculture. Sugar factories, department of agriculture, cane development councils (CDC) need to encourage the farmers to adopt farm machinery and supply suitable equipment and machinery on custom hire basis.

### Conclusions

A level of preparedness and planning is required to meet these challenges at technology as well as policy level. The sugar factories have to transform into integrated sugar industrial complexes producing ethanol, electricity, fertilizers and a host of the other products besides sugar. Thus make the industry more viable and pay better cane price to the farmers there by sustaining the cane agriculture.

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