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Socio- Economic Characteristics of Farmers and Constraints in Tobacco Cultivation

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ABSTRACT

The present investigation was undertaken to study the socio-economic characteristics of farmers, constraints and suggestions in tobacco cultivation. Ex-post-facto research design was adopted. One hundred and fifty farmers were selected randomly from fifteen mandals of Prakasam Dist. Majority of the farmers were in old age, illiterates, with semi medium land holding, tenant barn holding, with medium farming experience, achievement motivation, innovativeness, risk orientation, economic orientation, social participation, extension contact and mass media exposure. Majority of the tobacco farmers felt that low price (100.00%), increased cost of cultivation, rainfed cultivation and insufficient rains (92.00%), *Orabanche* problem (88.00%), increased labour charges (86.00%), labour intensive crop (82.67%) and abnormal price fluctuations were the major constraints experienced by them in tobacco cultivation. The suggestions given by the tobacco farmers were providing minimum average support price not less than Rs.15000/- per quintal (97.33%), providing license to unauthorized barns (89.33%), at a time purchase to avoid weight losses (80.67%), developing high yielding varieties with good quality (72.67%) and management for *Orabanche* (70.67%).

Key words: *Constraints, Socio-economic characteristics, Suggestions, Tobacco.*

Tobacco is an important cash crop of India cultivated in rabi season. It contributes as much as Rs. 8,000 crores through excise duty and Rs.1362 crores in terms of foreign exchange to the national exchequer. Tobacco being a labour intensive crop provides employment to more than 60 lakhs people who are engaged in the farming, curing, redrying, packaging, grading, manufacturing distribution, export and retailing activities (GOI, 2005). Around 80 per cent of tobacco is grown in the states of Andhra Pradesh (44%), Gujarat (24%) and Karnataka (15%).The annual production is around 700 million kg and the country ranks third in the world in production after China and Brazil. Tobacco is therefore important as a cash crop, as an exportable commodity and as a source of revenue and foreign exchange earnings for the government. Among the tobacco growing states, particularly FCV, Andhra Pradesh occupied the first place in area and 2nd place in production.

Besides to its economic potential and labour absorption, area under tobacco has been decreasing significantly due to diminishing of market prices, high cost of production, decline in tobacco demand and prices in international market. In addition to this the government policies particularly health policies at international level has been one of the main reasons for the decline of tobacco area in India. Hence, tobacco growers in Andhra Pradesh are facing several problems in recent years in respect of growing tobacco in more area and at times produced more than their permissible limit, increased cost of production, more tenant farmers depending on private finance at higher rate of interest, diverting some of the credit loan for social expenditure like education and health that has become very expensive now a days on the other hand low market price due to less export orders resulting in huge losses thereby heavy debts which finally forced some farmers to get totally disparate situation and finally ending their lives with suicides.

In Prakasam district it is being cultivated in both light (58.28%-SLS) and black (41.72%-SBS) soils and the crop was covered in 78,457 ha. during 2014-15 out of 1,39,159 ha. in Andhra Pradesh which accounts for 56.37 per cent. Out of 19 auction platforms established by the Tobacco Board in Andhra Pradesh, 11 are operating in Prakasam district covering southern black soils (7) and southern light soils (4). The present study was taken

up in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh with the following specific objectives

1.To study the socio-economic characteristics of tobacco farmers.

2.To analyze the constraints faced by the tobacco farmers in Prakasam district.

3.To elicit the suggestions of the farmers for profitable tobacco cultivation

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Considering the maximum area and intensity of Tobacco crop, the present study was conducted in Prakasam District of Andhra Pradesh during the year 2015-16. An Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in fifteen mandals Viz Kondepi, Tangutur, N.G Padu, Maddipadu, Ongole, S.N Padu, Podili, Ponnaluru, Kandukur, V.V Palem, Addanki, Kosisapadu, Tarllapadu, Kanigiri and Chimakurthy of Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh based on highest area under tobacco cultivation. From each mandal two villages were selected purposively based on highest area under tobacco cultivation. Intern five respondents were selected randomly from each village. Thus, the total sample size constituted 150 respondents. Data were personally collected through personal interview method by using pretested structured interview schedule. Totally twelve independent variables were studied in addition to constraints and suggestions in tobacco cultivation

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio- Economic characteristics of Tobacco farmers

The findings pertaining to socio-economic characteristics of the tobacco farmers were presented in Table 1. It could be inferred from table that almost equal percent of the tobacco farmers belonged to middle age (45.33%) and old age (51.34%) groups. The probable reason for this particular trend was young generation was migrating to nearby towns in search of jobs and other works. Majority of the farmers were illiterates (39.33%), followed by middle school (17.33%), high school education (16.67%), functionally literate (13.33%). This may be because majority of them were in middle and old age group. Very meager percent of farmers were found with PUC (6.67%), graduate and above (4.67%) and primary school (2.00%) education. With respect to land holding almost forty percent (38.67%) of the farmers were semi medium followed by medium (27.33%) and small (22.67%). Only three per cent (2.66%) of them were big farmers. The fragmentation of ancestral land from generation to generation might have led to smaller size of land holdings. With respect to barn holding great majority (81.33%) of the farmers were tenants followed by nineteen per cent (18.67%) with own barns. As majority of the farmers were with medium and small land holding they were taking barns for lease. Almost seventy per cent of the farmers were with medium farming experience as they were in farming profession from long time due to their illiteracy.

With respect to achievement motivation sixty two percent of the farmers were in medium category, followed by almost equal per cent in high (20.00%) and low (18.00%) categories. Regarding innovativeness almost seventy per cent (66.67%) of the farmers belonged to medium category followed by high (24.00%) and low (9.33%) categories. This could be attributed to the factor of cultivating commercial crop such as Tobacco and further because of dry land farming, they might be interested to adopt new innovation to increase their income level. More than half of the respondents (52.00%) had medium risk taking ability, while 30.67 per cent had high risk taking ability. The possible reason could be the dry land nature of farming in the study area. Farmers in such areas tend to possess medium risk based on profits assumed. Almost fifty percent (49.33%) of the farmers were with medium economic motivation followed by high (31.34%) and low (19.33%). This might be because of their small and medium land holding and medium risk orientation.

Regarding social participation majority (60.67%) of them were in medium group followed by high (24.00%) and low (15.33%) groups. The probable reason for this trend might be due to increased political particicipation even in remote rural villages. Fifty one percent of the farmers had medium extension contact followed by equal per cent with high (25.34%), low (23.33%). With respect to mass media use almost sixty per cent (59.33%) of the farmers were in medium category followed by high (27.34%) and low (13.33%) categories. The

Table 1. Socio-Economic Characteristics of Tobacco farmers. **n=150**

S.No	Socio-Economic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age		
	i.Young age	5	3.33
	ii.Middle age	68	45.33
	iii.Old age	77	51.34
	Total	150	100.00
2	Education		
	i.Illiterate	59	39.33
	ii.Functionally literate	20	13.33
	iii.Primary school	3	2.00
	iv.Middle school	26	17.33
	v.High school	25	16.67
	vi.PUC	10	6.67
	vii.Graduate and above	7	4.67
	Total	150	100.00
3	Land holding		
	i.Marginal farmers	13	8.67
	ii.Small farmers	34	22.67
	iii.Semi medium farmers	58	38.67
	iv.Medium farmers	41	27.33
	v.Big farmers	4	2.66
	Total	150	100.00
4.	Barn holding		
	i.Owner	28	18.67
	ii.Tenants	122	81.33
	Total	150	100.00
5	Farming experience		
	i.Low	19	12.67
	ii.Medium	104	69.33
	iii.High	27	18.00
	Total	150	100.00
6	Achievement Motivation		
	i.Low	27	18.00
	ii.Medium	93	62.00
	iii.High	30	20.00
	Total	150	100.00
7	Innovativeness		
	i.Low	14	9.33
	ii.Medium	100	66.67
	iii.High	36	24.00
	Total	150	100.00
8	Risk orientation		
	i.Low	26	17.33
	ii.Medium	78	52.00
	iii.High	46	30.67
	Total	150	100.00

Table 1. cont.....

9	Economic motivation		
	i.Low	29	19.33
	ii.Medium	74	49.33
	iii.High	47	31.34
	Total	150	100.00
10	Social participation		
	i.Low	23	15.33
	ii.Medium	91	60.67
	iii.High	36	24.00
	Total	150	100.00
11	Extension contact		
	i.Low	35	23.33
	ii.Medium	77	51.33
	iii.High	38	25.34
	Total	150	100.00
12	Mass media exposure		
	i.Low	20	13.33
	ii.Medium	89	59.33
	iii.High	41	27.34
	Total	150	100.00

Table 2. Constraints identified in Tobacco cultivation. n=150

S.No.	Constraint	Frequency	percentage
1	Low price	150	100.00
2.	Increased cost of cultivation	138	92.00
3	Rain fed cultivation and insufficient rains	138	92.00
4	Orabanche problem	132	88.00
5	Increased labour charges	129	86.00
6	Labour intensive crop	124	82.67
7.	Abnormal price fluctuations	89	59.33
8	Insufficient loans	67	44.66
9	Unavailability of high yielding varieties with good quality	58	38.66

reasons that could be attributed this nature were their innovative nature and economic motivation. The findings were in line with that of Swami *et al.,* (2014).

Constraints expressed by the farmers in tobacco cultivation

Constraints identified in tobacco cultivation were presented in Table 2. Cent per cent of the farmers felt that low price is the major constraint making tobacco cultivation non profitable. Ninety two percent of the farmers expressed increased cost of cultivation and complete rain fed cultivation and insufficient rains were the major hindrances for getting good production from tobacco crop. *Orabanche* is another major constraint felt by eighty eight percent farmers affecting tobacco yields adversely with 50-75 per cent yield losses. Increased labour charges is the constraint experienced by eightysix per cent of the farmers ultimately resulting in increased cost of cultivation. Almost eighty three per cent of the farmers expressed that tobacco is a labour intensive crop. Nearly sixty (59.33%) of the farmers felt abnormal

Table 3. Suggestions expressed by the farmers for profitable Tobacco cultivation. **n=150**

S.No.	Suggestion	Frequency	percentage
1	Minimum average support price should not be less than Rs.15000/- per quintal	146	97.33
2.	License should be given to unauthorized barns	138	89.33
3	At a time purchase to avoid weight losses by the Tobacco board	121	80.67
4	High yielding varieties with good quality	109	72.67
5	Management for *Orabanche*	106	70.67
6	Providing compensation of an amount of Rs. 5,00,000 per barn to discontinue tobacco cultivation	94	62.67
7.	Avoiding abnormal price fluctuations	89	59.33
8	Providing sufficient loans to tenant farmers	67	37.33
9	Profitable alternate crops to Tobacco	48	32.00
10	Discouraging unauthorized production	47	31.33

price fluctuation is another constraint faced by them. Below fifty per cent of the farmers expressed constraints like insufficient loans (44.66%) and unavailability of high yielding varieties with good quality (38.66%) as their constraints. Similar constraints viz. increased cost of inputs (80.00%), low price (63.00 %) and insufficient credit (57.00%) were reported by Anamika (2012).

Suggestions expressed by the farmers for profitable Tobacco cultivation

Suggestions given by the farmers for enhanced profitability in tobacco cultivation were presented table 3. Great majority of the farmers expressed that minimum average support price for quintal tobacco should not be less than Rs. 15000/- (97.33%), followed by license should be given to the unauthorized barns (89.33%), at a time purchase to avoid weight losses by the Tobacco board (80.67%), high yielding varieties with good quality (72.67%), management for *Orabanche* (70.67%), providing compensation of an amount of Rs. 5,00,000 per barn to discontinue tobacco cultivation (62.67%) and avoiding abnormal price fluctuations (59.33%) were the suggestions for profitable tobacco cultivation. Whereas below half of the respondents expressed that providing sufficient loans to tenant farmers (37.33%), suggesting profitable alternate crops to Tobacco (32.00%) and discouraging the unauthorized production (31.33%) will help to make tobacco cultivation profitable.

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