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CONSTRAINS IN AVAILABILITY OF INPUTS AND INFORMATION TO CITRUS (KINNOW) GROWERS OF TEHSIL TOBA TEK SINGH

Usman Ghafoor, Sher Muhammad and Khalid Mehmood Ch.
Department of Agri. Extension, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad

Citrus is one of the major fruits of Pakistan. It is grown on an area of 192.3 thousand hectares with a total production of 2458.4 thousand tones. The Punjab province contributes a major share of the total production and acreage of citrus fruit in Pakistan. However its average yield in the country is much lower than that of other citrus producing countries. Similarly there is a big gap between its average and potential yield, which may be attributed to a number of problems faced by growers in citrus production. Thus in order to minimize the existing yield gap and to improve the quality of citrus, these problems need to be thoroughly investigated and properly addressed. The present study has been planned to achieve this objective. The study was conducted in tehsil Toba Tek Singh. Out of 29 rural union councils, five were selected randomly. From each selected union council, two villages were selected at random. Twelve citrus growers were selected from amongst the 25 registered growers under the Fruit and Vegetable Development Project in each of the selected villages by using simple random sampling technique. Hence a total of 120 citrus growers were selected as a sample for the study. The data were collected with the help of an interview schedule. Analysis of the data show that high price of inputs, lack of irrigation water and lack of finance were perceived to be the top most input related problems faced by citrus growers for citrus production. No focus on citrus in TV and Radio broadcasts were perceived to be the top most information related problems faced by citrus growers.

Keywords: Citrus, information, inputs, problems

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan is blessed with vast natural resources in terms of fertile soils, irrigation system and seasons. Agriculture constitutes the largest sector of country's economy. It contributes 21% to GDP and employs 43.4% of the work force (Govt. of Pak., 2007).

The horticulture sector has a tremendous potential. Fruits and vegetables are grown on large area throughout the country. The area under fruit increased by 22.7% and fruit production increased by 21.1% due to good economic returns received by the growers. The area under fruit cultivation, during 2005-06, was 0.8 million hectares. (MINFAL, 2006).

In Pakistan, agro- climate is best suited for fruit production; especially the Indus plains are very well suited for fruit production. Pakistan is producing a large variety of fruits on a large area of 681,070 hectares with a total production of 5,751,800 million tones. Out of which 262 thousand tones fruits are exported from the country (Govt. of Pak., 2007).

Citrus is one of the major fruits grown in Pakistan. It is an important source of vitamins and minerals in addition to carbohydrates, which are essentially needed for human health. Citrus fruit has been reported to prevent liver, lungs and skin cancers; heart diseases; birth defects and contributes to a balanced and healthy life style (Ghirdharilal, 2000).

Citrus (Kinows) is a prized fruit of Pakistan and occupies 1st position among all fruits both in terms of area and production. However, Pakistan is at 12th position in citrus production in the world (FAO, 2005).

It is grown on an area of 192.3 thousand hectares with annual production of 2458.4 thousand tones. Average yield of citrus in Pakistan is about 12.78 tones per hectare (Govt. of Pak., 2006). While the potential yield of citrus is 18-20 tones per hectare (PHDEB, 2006), so there is a big gap between its average and potential yield. This yield gap may be attributed to a number of problems faced by citrus growers, which need to be properly addressed. Amongst these problems regarding information and inputs seem to have been playing an important role towards this big yield gap. According to Niazi (1993) lack of technical knowledge, non-co-operation of agricultural extension field staff and non-availability of agricultural extension field staff, were the major difficulties faced by respondents. He also reported that high price of inputs, adulteration in chemicals and fertilizers, lack of technical knowledge, non-availability of fertilizers at proper time, lack of finance, were the major difficulties faced by respondents. Also Hassan (1991) reported that lack of technical knowledge, non-co-operation of agricultural extension field staff and non-availability of agricultural extension field staff, were the major difficulties faced by respondents.

Keeping in view big yield gap in fruits and vegetables, Fruit and Vegetable Development Project (F&VDP) was started in January 2006. This project has its own extension field staff (EFS), which is focusing on many issues relating to fruits and vegetables production including the problems regarding availability of information and inputs. The major objectives of this project are: a) organizing farming community under farmer field school (FFS) system b) educating farmers in mango, citrus and vegetables production technology c) minimizing the use of pesticides to the tune of 20-25% on fruits and vegetables through a comprehensive and well organized training programme in IPM techniques d) to enhance mango, citrus and vegetables production qualitatively and quantitatively for foreign exchange earnings e) reduction in environmental pollution and health hazards (Govt. of Punjab, 2005). Depite the efforts made by the EFS under F&FDP, the growers are still facing many problems. The present paper focuses on inputs and information related problems faced by citrus growers. In order to enhance per hectare yield and to improve the quality of citrus, these issues need to be thoroughly investigated. The present study had, therefore, been planned to achieve this objective.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in tehsil Toba Tek Singh. There are 32 union councils, of which 29 fall under rural category. Out of these, five union councils were selected randomly. From each selected union council, two villages were selected at random. Twelve citrus growers were selected from amongst the 25 registered growers under the F&VDP in each of the selected villages by using simple random sampling technique. Hence a total of 120 citrus growers were selected as a sample for the study. The data were collected with the help of an interview schedule. The collected data were statistically analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to draw conclusions and to suggest pertinent recommendations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to know the rank order of various problems faced by citrus growers regarding availability of inputs for citrus production, their relative scores were computed by multiplying score value allotted to each category of the scale used for data collection with the frequency counts, which show that respondents identified a number of the problems but their intensity varied from low to very high. The data in this regard are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Ranking of the problems faced by the citrus growers regarding availability of inputs for citrus production

Problems	Rank Order	Score	Mean	SD
High price of inputs	1	587	4.80	0.52
Lack of irrigation water	2	547	4.55	0.56
Lack of finance	3	543	4.52	0.70
Distant market	4	488	4.06	1.12
Adulteration in pesticides	5	456	3.80	1.10
Non-availability of reliable nursery plants	7	361	3.00	1.23
Adulteration in fertilizers	6	333	2.79	1.41
Non- availability of fertilizers when needed	8	301	2.50	1.51
Lack of transport	9	270	2.25	1.29
Non- availability of pesticides when needed	10	258	2.15	1.22

The data given in Table 1 show that high price of inputs, lack of irrigation water and lack of finance were perceived to be the top most problems, which fell under very high category with mean values of 4.80, 4.55 and 4.52 respectively, while distant market and adulteration in pesticides were perceived to be high with mean values of 4.06 and 3.80 respectively. Non-availability of reliable nursery plants, adulteration in fertilizers and non- availability of fertilizers when needed were perceived medium with mean values of 3.00, 2.79 and 2.50 respectively. Lack of transport and non- availability of pesticides when needed fell under low category with mean values of 2.25 and 2.15 respectively.

Table 2. Ranking of the problems faced by the citrus growers regarding information about citrus

Problems	Rank Order	Score	Mean	SD
No focus on citrus in TV programmes	1	572	4.76	0.70
No focus on citrus in Radio programmes	2	565	4.70	0.77
No access to printed material	3	489	4.07	1.03
Non- cooperation of EFS	4	471	3.92	0.79
Non- availability of EFS	5	419	3.49	1.19
Illiteracy among citrus growers	6	189	1.57	1.05
Lack of interest on the part of growers	7	177	1.47	0.63
No access to electronic media	8	108	0.90	1.51
Poor technical knowledge of EFS	9	94	0.82	1.63

In order to know the rank order of various problems faced by citrus growers regarding information about citrus, their relative scores were computed by multiplying score value allotted to each category of scale used for data collection with the frequency counts, which show that respondents identified a number of problems but their intensity varied from very low to very high. Data in this regard are given in Table 2, which indicates that no focus on citrus in TV and Radio broadcasts was perceived to be the top most problem and was placed under very high category with mean values of 4.76 and 4.70 respectively. No access to printed material and non-cooperation of EFS were perceived to be high with mean values of 4.07 and 3.92 respectively. Non-availability of EFS was perceived medium with mean value of 3.49. Illiteracy among citrus growers came under low category with mean value of 1.57. Lack of interest on the part of growers, no access to electronic media and poor technical knowledge of EFS fell under very low category with mean values of 1.47, 0.90 and 0.82 respectively.

CONCLUSIONS

High price of inputs, lack of irrigation water and lack of finance were perceived to be the top most problems faced by citrus growers regarding availability of inputs for citrus production and fell under very high category. Distant market and adulteration in pesticides were other important problems. No focus on citrus in TV and Radio broadcasts was perceived to be the top most problem faced by citrus growers regarding availability of information and was placed under very high category. No access to printed material and non-cooperation of EFS were other important problems with regard to information.

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