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A STUDY ON FARMERS' MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE AND PROBLEMS FACED BY THE FARMERS DURING COVID-19 LOCKDOWN WITH REFERENCE TO CHITTOOR DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH.

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ABSTRACT:

In the wake of Covid-19, the complete lockdown was imposed from mid March to May in order to prevent spreading of Corona virus in the Country. The Covid-19 pandemic triggered the imposing of restrictions on movement and closure of state and national borders affected transportation of agricultural produce from farms to markets. With the closure of local mandis, farmers were unable to sell their produce in physical market places. However, farmers continued to sell their produce timely despite disruptions at every stage of the agri supply chain with their unprecedented marketing practices during the Covid-19 lockdown period owing to unavailability of transportation and closure of local mandis. Therefore, it is paramount to understand what viable marketing strategies were used by farmers to sell out their agricultural produce during lockdown. In this study, it has been ascertained that there is a plight in the farmers to market their harvest during lockdown. This study showed that there is a fall in supply of agricultural produce because of lower demand due to Covid-19 lockdown. Hence, the farmers have endeavored to market their produce in village markets and semi rural towns with their own marketing strategies during Covid-19 lockdown.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19, AGRICULTURE, FARMERS, MARKETING, SUPPLY CHAIN, VILLAGE MARKETS AND SEMI RURAL TOWNS.

INTRODUCTION

India is an agricultural country. This basically means that agriculture is an important part of our livelihood. In India, agriculture is our primary economic activity and about two thirds of our population is engaged in agriculture. In particular, in Chittoor district, the most of the households rely on various agricultural produce.

The major crops in Chittoor district are Paddy, Groundnut, Sugarcane, Maize, Sunflower, Tomato, Jowar, Vegetables, Pulses, Fruits, (Mango, Banana, Papaya, Cucumber, and Watermelon) etc.

After harvesting of crops, farmers focus on marketing of their agricultural products at lucrative price. However, during Covid-19 lockdown, the marketing of agricultural produce is inconvenient and difficult for farmers as there are restrictions imposed on inter-state and intra-state movement of persons and goods. These covid-19 restrictions have made

quite an impact on supply chains, resulting in disruption in marketing of agricultural goods.

Despite the imposing of restrictions of covid-19, the farmers have striven for marketing their goods by means of their own selling tactics so as to sell especially non-durable agricultural produce in rural and semi urban areas.

The majority of the farmers have targeted rural consumers to market their non-durable products like vegetables and fruits at a lower price as the rural consumers are price sensitive mainly because of their relatively low level of income and unit price of a product will have an impact on sales. Pricing the product at a lower price really attracts rural population for trying the products.

Therefore, most of the farmers have made use of rural marketing activities such as personal selling,

mobile agricultural marketing, roadside stands and so on.

Finally, Covid-19 has taught the farmers a lesson to be self sustained as well as providing different ways of marketing of their agricultural produce during difficult times.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Deepak Varshney, Dinesh Roy, J.V.Meenakshi(2020), in their study aimed to access the impact of the spread of Covid-19 and the lockdown on wholesale prices and quantities traded in agricultural markets.

AG AdeethCariappa, Kamalesh Kumar Acharya, Chaitanya Ashok Adhav, RSendhil, P.RamaSundaram in their study aimed to synthesize the early evidence of the covid-19 impact on the Indian agricultural system i.e, production, marketing and consumption followed by a set of potential strategies to recover and prosper post-pandemic.

JyotiPrakashSahoo and KailashSamal (2020) in their study assessed the impact of Covid-19 inside the rural quarter is on the rural supply-chain and also elevated the time taken for the farm produce to attain the market. There is a moderate impact on the demand aspect as the restaurants were ordered to close down for the period in between period. This caused a vast sales loss to many farmers across states.

Sukhpal Singh (2020) in his study mainly focused on impact of the lockdown needs to be examined from the angle of production and market risks. And also focused on the post-production and market risk management for farmers during and after the Covid-19 lockdown

Francisco Ceballos, SamyukthaKannan, Berber Kramer (2020) in their study analyzed data from phone-based surveys on disruptions to agricultural production and food security, administered with 1515 smallholder producers in the states of Haryana and Odisha. They found substantial heterogeneity in how the lockdown affected farmers in these two states, which is likely related to existing structural differences in market infrastructure and to differences in state-specific COVID-19 related policies. In Odisha, where mechanization is limited, farmers spent more on labor to harvest their crops, and distress selling was more prevalent due to the

absence of a well-functioning procurement system for their crops. In Haryana, preexisting market infrastructure allowed the state to sustain procurement at stable prices, limiting impacts on smallholder production. As consumers, farmers in Haryana faced more disruptions than those in Odisha, due to reduced availability of foods in the markets, whereas farmers in Odisha benefited from more diverse cropping patterns and increased local supply of foods following transport restrictions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the marketing strategies of farmers in selling agricultural produce during lockdown of Covid-19 in Chittoor District.
2. To know the best marketing strategy of agricultural produce for farmers to improve the sales during lockdown of Covid-19.
3. To find out the problems faced by farmers during Covid-19 lockdown to sell their products.
4. To study the sales of agricultural produce during lockdown.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The main problem of this study is restrictions on transportation of produce during lockdown to control spread of Corona virus is threatening the agricultural sector significantly. Consequently, farmers have not been able to market their crops. In some places of Chittoor district, the crops have been abandoned.

There is a great deed of distress farmers who were unable to sell their produce during lockdown. The lockdown has created a grim situation for both farmers as well as agricultural labour.

4.2 SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

This study mainly focused on knowing various marketing strategies to be used by farmers to sell their produce as well as problems faced by the farmers during the covid-19 lockdown. This study has covered farmers of various mandals in Chittoor district majorly farming of vegetables and fruits.

4.3 NEED FOR THE STUDY:

The study is rather important because Chittoor district is one of the important district in A.P in cultivating of various crops especially tomato, mango, papaya, vegetables, paddy etc.

Farmers were unable to bring their agricultural produce to market from farm to sell due to covid-19 lock down .This lock down caused for farmers leaving of agricultural produce at their fields because there are no warehouses and cold storage warehouse at their locations to keep their produce safe from spoilage. Hence, this information will be helpful for Government to take necessary steps to build required storage warehouses during the lockdown.

4.4 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

The research is conducted in Chittoor district which is one of the important districts in A.P in farming of various crops. The descriptive research is used for identifying marketing strategies of farmers in selling agricultural produce and also knowing the problems faced by the farmers during covid-19 lockdown .The primary data is collected by means of providing questionnaire to farmers of 5mandals in Chittoor district.The farmers are selected through Convenience sampling technique with the sample size of150. The collected data is analyzed by using percentage method and Garrett ranking method .

DATA ANALYSIS

1. Identification of marketing strategies by the farmers in selling their agricultural produce during lockdown of Covid-19 in Chittoor District.

Table 1: Farmers marketing strategies for their agricultural produce during covid-19 lock down.

S.No	Strategies	No of Respondents	%
1	Sales to retailers	19	12.67
2	Mobile agricultural marketing in rural areas and semi rural towns	68	45.33
3	Sales in mandis	15	10
4	Sales in weekly market	32	21.33
5	Roadside stands	16	10.67

From the above table, it is found that 45.33% of farmers have made use of mobile agricultural marketing strategy to sell their agricultural produce in both rural areas and semi-rural towns, 21.33% of farmers have made use of sales in weekly market, 12.67% of farmers have made use of sales to retailers strategy, 10.67% of farmers have made use of roadside stands strategy and 10% of farmers have made use of sales in mandis strategy during covid-19 lockdown.

According to the above analysis, majority of the farmers tried to sell their agricultural produce in both rural areas and semi-rural towns by means of

mobile agricultural strategy and sales in weekly markets during covid-19 lockdown.

Table2: Ranking by the farmers on Marketing Strategies of Agricultural Produce during covid-19 lockdown.

S.No.	STRATEGIES	1	2	3	4	5	Total
1	Sales to retailers	23	32	15	46	34	150
2	Mobile agricultural marketing in rural areas and semi rural towns	91	36	15	5	3	150
3	Sales in mandis	24	31	16	47	32	150
4	Sales in weekly market	88	37	19	4	2	150
5	Roadside stands	14	23	9	62	42	150
Garrett Table Value		75	60	50	40	25	

Table: 3 Garrett Ranking Technique

STRATEGIES	1	2	3	4	5	Garrett score	Average	Garrett Rank
Sales to retailers	1725	1920	750	1840	850	7,085	47.23	IV
Mobile agricultural marketing in rural areas and semi rural towns	6825	2160	750	200	75	10,010	66.73	I
Sales in mandis	1800	1860	800	1880	800	7,140	47.6	III
Sales in weekly market	6600	2220	950	160	50	9,980	66.53	II
Roadside stands	1050	1380	450	2480	1050	6,410	42.73	V

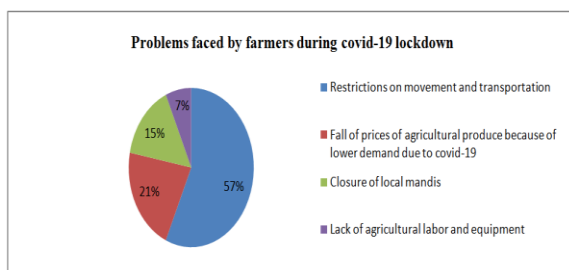
In the above table, Garrett Ranking method is used to know the ranks for marketing strategies that have been used by the farmers to sell off their agricultural produce during covid-19 lockdown.

According to Garrett ranking method, mobile agricultural marketing in rural areas and semi-rural towns stood 1st rank and said to be most effective marketing strategy for farmers to sell out their produce particularly during covid-19 lockdown with the total score of 10,010 and an average of 66.73%. Sales in weekly market occupied 2nd rank with the total score of 9,980 and an average of 66.53%. Sales in mandis occupied 3rd rank with the total score of 7,140 and an average of 47.6%. Sales to retailers occupied 4th rank with the total score of 7,085 and an average of 47.23%. Roadside stands occupied 5th rank with the total score of 6,410 and an average of 42.73%.

- 3.Problems faced by farmers during covid-19 lockdown.

Table 4: Problems faced by farmers during covid-19 lockdown

S.NO	Problems	No of respondents	%
1	Restrictions on movement and transportation	85	56.66
2	Closure of local mandis	23	15.33
3	Lack of agricultural labor and equipment	10	6.66
4	Fall of prices of agricultural produce because of lower demand due to covid-19.	32	21.33



In the above analysis, it is found that 56.66% farmers faced the problem of restrictions on movement and transportation. 21.33% farmers faced the problem of fall of prices of agricultural produce because of lower demand due to covid-19. 15.33% of farmers faced the problem of closure of local mandis and 6.66% of farmers faced the problem of lack of agricultural labour and equipment due to covid-19 lockdown.

According to the above study, due to restrictions on movement and transportation and strict adherence to covid-19 norms, farmers were unable to bring their agricultural produce to markets.

Sales of agricultural produce during covid-19 lockdown

Table 5: Sales of agricultural produce during covid-19 lockdown

S.NO	Sales of agricultural produce during covid-19 lockdown	No of respondents	%
1	Poor	47	33.33
2	Average	103	68.66
3	Good	-	0
4	Excellent	-	0

The above table represents status of sales of agricultural produce during covid-19 lockdown. 68.66% of the farmers said that the sales of the agricultural produce are average because of strict restrictions in intra and inter-state implemented by the government to prevent from spreading of corona virus. 33.33% of farmers said that sales of their produce are poor. The analysis stated that the sales of the agricultural produce depend on produce of farmers mainly during covid-19.

FINDINGS

With the analysis of sales strategies, woes of farmers, and sales of agricultural supplies during Covid-19 lockdown, the following are the important findings.

1. The research has notified various sales strategies which have been used by farmers in order to sell off their agricultural supplies.
2. Based on the study, majority of the farmers targeted villages and semi rural towns with the strategy of mobile agricultural marketing (rural marketing) during Covid-19 lockdown.
3. According to the Garrett ranking method a mobile agricultural marketing strategy stood 1st rank in selling of agricultural produce.
4. This study found that majority of the farmers faced the woes predominantly restrictions on movement, transportation and fall of prices of agricultural produce because of lower demand due to Covid-19.
5. It is found that most of the farmers produce stays within villages and remains largely unsold due to unavailability of transportation and lower demand during lockdown.
6. In this study, it has been found that the sales of agricultural produce are average during covid-19 lockdown.

SUGGESTIONS

With the restrictions on movement and transportation due to covid-19 mainly the supply chain of agricultural produce has been affected significantly.

1. Farmers have found it difficult to take the produce to the city-mandis and get a good price due to disruption of supply chain. Therefore, farmers should be encouraged to sell their agricultural produce in their local markets and rural areas with their mobile vegetable trucks to be provided by the state government at subsidized price to the eligible farmers so as to scale up the sales of their agricultural supplies during lockdown.
2. The disruption of supply chain due to lockdown, farmers were unable to sell and keep their agricultural produce safe from spoilage as there are no warehouses and cold storage warehouses at their convenient locations. Hence, it is very important to provide the warehouses and cold storage houses for farmers at their Panchayat level for preserving agricultural produce safe from any spoilage during lockdown.

3. Agricultural department of State needs to impart the information of marketing of agricultural produce to the farmers during lockdown.

CONCLUSIONS

Covid-19 has posed the strict lockdown across the country. The lockdown has severely impacted on supply chains of agricultural supplies. Hence, the farmers were unable to bring their produce to markets good enough. Despite some relaxation for farming supplies, farmers are still finding it difficult to take the produce to the city-mandis and get a good price. Due to restrictions on movement and transportation, most of the farmers produce stays within villages and remains largely unsold. Therefore, the prices of agricultural supplies continue to fall and force the most of farming families into debts. However, the farmers have made tremendous efforts to sell off their supplies with their unprecedented selling strategies. Besides, a virulent strain of corona has taught the farmers a lesson of way of supply chains and selling off their supplies during unfavorable conditions.

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