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FRUIT AND VEGETABLE MARKETING FOR SMALL SCALE GROWERS IN INDIA**DR. M S SUBHAS****PROFESSOR****KOUSALI INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES****KARNATAK UNIVERSITY****DHARWAD****HALASWAMY D. NAIK****SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW (UGC)****KOUSALI INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES****KARNATAK UNIVERSITY****DHARWAD****ABSTRACT**

India is the second largest producer of the fruits and vegetables in the world after China. Since the 1980s the international trade in fruits and vegetables has expanded rapidly. The number of commodities as well as the number of varieties produced and traded have drastically increased during the past 30 years. There is an overall increase in the demand of fruits and vegetables for consumption both in fresh and the processed form. Also there is a wide diversification in production pattern globally. Income in this sector is increasing which is driving the supply. In spite of being one of the largest producers of fruits and vegetables in the world, the export competitiveness among the Indian producers remains low. But with new marketing initiatives, the post-harvest losses and wastage due to poor infrastructure facilities such as storage and transportation are reduced to a considerable extent, yet a lot needs to be done in this sector. Marketing is important to all farm enterprises, regardless of size. Some farmers, such as cash grain farmers or dairy farmers, have large, well-established markets. They can use existing organizations to perform the marketing function for them, or they can band together, form a cooperative, and market their products jointly. Small-scale fruit and vegetable growers generally have more difficulty finding established markets; therefore, they usually develop marketing systems tailored to their unique situations. It is strongly recommended that grower identify and research the market before growing fruit and vegetable.

KEYWORDS

Small scale vegetable and fruit grower, Fruits and Vegetable Markets.

INTRODUCTION

India is essentially agrarian and rural, with ample scope for lands for farming and cultivation and it has also helped for the cultivation of a large variety of fruits as well as vegetables. India being a home of wide variety of fruits and vegetables holds a unique position in production figures among other countries. However, the old age implements and tools of the Central Indian administration, is being upgraded every fiscal year, a domain which truly looks towards guaranteed future.

India has been perhaps been renamed as the vegetable and fruit basket in the world, a factor that weighs fascinatingly upon the cultivation of fruits in the country. India serves as the home to various kinds of vegetable as fruits, and holds a vital position in the field of productions of fruits and vegetables amidst different countries of the world. India leads the world in the production of mango, banana, and acid lime and in productivity of grapes per unit land area.

Mango is the most important fruit cultivated in the country and banana comes next in rank occupying second position. Citrus fruits rank third in area and production, Guava is the fourth most widely grown fruit crop and Grapes occupies fifth position amongst fruit crops in India. More than 90 percent exports from India move to the western parts of Asia and also to the markets of Eastern Europe. Fresh vegetables and fruits export from India has steadily increased. This amplification list includes products like walnut, fresh grapes, fresh mangos and umpteen other fresh vegetables and fruits. The comprehensive and exhaustive cultivation of vegetables, flowers and fruits is referred to as horticulture.

Horticulture in this country has been thoroughly involved with the cultivation of fruits in India, besides also laying simultaneous stress upon vegetables and gardening of rare plants. Cultivation of fruits in India and in the international scenario, involves the consolidation of wide spectrum of disciplines. As the new technologies and developments have gradually become readily available in the country, the cropping and cultivating systems and production practices have also remained witness to significant metamorphoses.

India is the second largest producer of the fruits and vegetables in the world after China. Since the 1980s the international trade in fruits and vegetables has expanded rapidly. The number of commodities as well as the number of varieties produced and traded have drastically increased during the past 25 years. There is an overall increase in the demand of fruits and vegetables for consumption both in fresh and the processed form. Also there is a wide diversification in production pattern globally. Income in this sector is increasing which is driving the supply. In spite of being one of the largest producers of fruits and vegetables in the world, the export competitiveness among the Indian producers remains low. But with new marketing initiatives, the post-harvest losses and wastage due to poor infrastructure facilities such as storage and transportation are reduced to a considerable extent, yet a lot needs to be done in this sector.

Marketing is important to all farm enterprises, regardless of size. Some farmers, such as cash grain farmers or dairy farmers, have large, well-established markets. They can use existing organizations to perform the marketing function for them, or they can band together, form a cooperative, and market their products jointly.

Small-scale fruit and vegetable growers generally have more difficulty finding established markets; therefore, they usually develop marketing systems tailored to their unique situations. It is strongly recommend that you identify and research your market before you become a fruit and vegetable grower.

Some of the most prominent fruits which are cultivated in India include banana, citrus fruits, mango, apple, papaya, pineapple, guava and grapes. India produces near about 41 percent of world's mangoes and around 23 percent bananas. The total export value of the main exporting fruit crop from India is mango. Exports of mangoes, grapes, mushrooms have started going to the United Kingdom, Middle East, Singapore and Hong Kong. These Indian fruits are also processed in several products like canned fruit, concentrates and fruit juices, dehydrated fruit, jellies and jams.

Some of the well-known varieties of mangoes which are cultivated in and exported from India include Dashehri, Kesar, Alphonso, Banganpalli, Chausa, Langra, Mallika and Swarnrekha. Some of the reputed importers of Indian mangoes include Bangladesh, U.A.E, U.K, Nepal and Saudi Arabia. The notable places for the cultivation of mangoes in India are the states of Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka and Maharashtra. Apart from mangoes, India also exports fresh table grapes to the global market.

MAJOR MARKETS

Fruits and vegetables are produced seasonally, but the market requires products throughout the year. For many decades, this problem of matching product availability with consumer demand was solved in two ways: (1) selling fresh products during harvest and shortly thereafter, and (2) processing the rest to meet

demand during the rest of the year. As technology improved and consumer incomes increased, it became possible to provide fresh produce year-round. Indian consumers now expect fresh fruits and vegetables every month of the year. In addition, a strong demand remains for processed fruits and vegetables.

FRESH MARKETS

Increased consumer incomes and year-round demand for fresh produce force retailers or their representatives to establish buying points both in different growing areas of the India and in foreign countries. Some retailers contract year-round with fresh fruit and vegetable packers, who may in turn contract with growers. Contracts and large volume buying practices enable packers to obtain sufficient quantities of individual products. Large fresh fruit and vegetable packers may contract with growers in several different production regions to ensure that fresh fruits and vegetables are available every week of the year. These packers generally contract only in regions with a large number of growers. Further, they contract mainly with the largest growers, even in concentrated production regions. Some packers ensure supplies by growing commodities themselves. Large retailers and packers are unlikely to purchase products directly from a single, small-scale grower, especially a grower in a remote production area. For small-scale fresh fruit and vegetable grower, there is need for selling directly to retailers in order to avoid intermediaries. Although some chain stores and independent retailers have buy-local programs for fresh produce, such stores and programs are not common. There is urgent need for developing their own marketing system. In effect, farmers must become the grower, packer, and wholesaler.

PROCESSING MARKETS

To stay competitive, processors must keep unit costs low, so large corporations generally do the processing. Many of the smaller local processors have found it difficult to compete with these corporations and have gone out of business. Almost all processors contract with growers for their raw product needs. Over the past twenty to thirty years, most processors have moved their plants to major production areas. Therefore, it may be difficult to locate processors interested in buying from small-scale growers. If a processor does indicate a willingness to buy, insist on a purchase contract with the processor before planting the crop. Growers may wish to process your own fruits and vegetables. It will probably be impossible for processing and market produce at costs as low as those incurred by larger processors. As a result, it may be very difficult to compete for sales with processed fruits and vegetables through conventional retail outlets. Consider processing specialty items with strong local or regional demand where you will be able to charge a "premium" price. Sometimes a small processor will process fruits or vegetables for a grower on a contract basis, especially if the product being produced does not interfere with its own processing requirements.

EVALUATING MARKET DEMAND

Larger growers, particularly those located in major production areas, can pursue either of the two traditional marketing alternatives: wholesale fresh marketing or processing. Small-scale growers who find these marketing avenues closed to them will need to take a direct-to-consumer approach. This requires thorough research of the market and customer behavior before planning crop production. Some farmers generate profits by planting first and then looking for a market, but this is extremely risky for fruit and vegetable growers. There are far more failures than success stories in this situation. If there are a new growers, or an established one planning to produce a new item, you should first attempt to evaluate the market demand for the product and then decide which direct marketing channel(s) will best meet the needs of your consumers. Growers estimates of profitability should include the marketing channel costs as well as production costs. Small-scale growers should collect three types of information before deciding to produce and market fresh fruits and vegetables. Determine and define the geographic area where you will market fresh fruits and vegetables. Identify potential customers before you investigate consumer demand. Assess the level of unfulfilled demand among consumers within the defined marketing area. It is advisable to estimate the amount that consumers (buyers) within that market buy at present. In the process, you will gain insight into how they might be better served. Consider the competitive structure of your market. Knowing who your potential competitors are, where they are located, and what services they provide are important pieces of information for you as a new grower-marketer. Note potential competitors who might have marketing advantages (lower costs, better locations, and higher-quality produce) or may provide potential consumers with similar products. You must find out as much as possible about consumers who may buy your product(s). What products are your potential consumers buying, where are they buying, and when are these products available?

Supermarkets are major suppliers of fresh fruits and vegetables but generally are not strong competitors for sales of in-season crops. Other direct marketers, whether they are pick-your-own operations, roadside markets, farmers markets, or curb markets, are the primary competitors. The entry and exit from the market can occur very quickly. In recent years direct marketers have expressed concern about the increased number of competitors and the possibility of profit loss in existing operations. Here are some important questions that you as a grower marketer must answer:

- 1) Who are the likely consumers of your produce and where do these consumers live?
- 2) How many people live within your marketing area?
- 3) Are consumers currently buying a particular fruit or vegetable?
- 4) How much of the product(s) do your potential customers currently use? Is this use seasonal?
- 5) What prices are consumers paying for high-quality products?
- 6) Are consumers adequately served at present?

If consumers in the area are being adequately served, here are some additional questions:

- 1) Can you do the job better and draw part of the market away from competitors?
- 2) Can the quantity that consumers purchase be increased by providing better quality than is now available?
- 3) Will your anticipated production come at a time when little else is offered for sale?
- 4) What level of quality must you produce to meet the need unfulfilled demands of consumers?
- 5) How must you prepare and package the produce? What size containers are most popular? What marketing costs will be incurred?

SELECTING A DIRECT MARKETING CHANNEL

Several factors must be considered when choosing a direct marketing channel. Location can have a major impact on an enterprise's profitability because location affects the direct marketing channel used as well as the ability to attract customers. Furthermore, some direct marketing channels, such as pick-your-own operations, work well for some products but not as well for others. Bringing fruits and vegetables to market requires special handling. To preserve quality and maintain marketability, each crop must be harvested, prepared for market, packaged, and shipped. Any direct marketing of produce may increase exposure to risk.

CONCLUSION

Small-scale fruit and vegetable growers generally have more difficulty finding established markets; therefore, they usually develop marketing systems tailored to their unique situations. It is strongly recommend that you identify and research your market before you become a fruit and vegetable grower. Increased consumer incomes and year-round demand for fresh produce force retailers or their representatives to establish buying points both in different growing areas of the India

There is exigent need for selling fresh products during harvest and shortly thereafter, and processing the rest to meet demand during the rest of the year. Indian consumers now expect fresh fruits and vegetables every month of the year. In addition, a strong demand remains for processed fruits and vegetables.

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