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FRUIT PROCESSING INDUSTRY IN MURSHIDABAD DISTRICT OF WEST BENGAL - PRESENT STATUS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

Fruits and Vegetable processing industry is a segment of the whole Food Processing Industry. The State of West Bengal with diverse agro-climatic zones is conducive for growing a wide variety of fruits. The district Murshidabad is rich in production of Mango and litchi and have huge amount of surplus fruits. Accordingly, besides micro and small fruit processing units so many home based fruit processing units have grown up in the district and created immense livelihood opportunities. In this background the present study makes an attempt to explore the problem and prospects of fruit processing industry in the Murshidabad district of West Bengal. The study concludes that there is ample scope of availability of raw material, market opportunity and profitability in fruit processing industry in this district. The basic problem for expansion is the lack of finance inspite of so many Govt. schemes in this regard. The study suggests that government schemes should be properly implemented so that the fruit processing industry can be a sunrise industry in the district.

KEYWORDS

Murshidabad, employment, fruit processing, investment, problem and prospects.

INTRODUCTION

Food processing refers to the application of techniques to foods in a systematic manner for preventing losses through preservation, processing, packaging, storage and distribution to improve the food intake and nutritional standards during the period of low availability. There are so many segments of food processing out of which fruit and vegetable processing is an important one. The present study relates to fruit processing only.

India has great advantage in growing a variety of fruits, such as; Mango, Apple, Banana, Grapes, Orange, Papaya, Pineapple etc. It ranks second in fruit production in World after China. But even today, hardly 2% of the total fruits are used for processing in our country as against 60-70% in other countries of the World (Rolle, 2006).

The State of West Bengal with diverse agro-climatic zones is conducive for growing a wide variety of fruits. Among fruits, mango cultivation occupies the largest area (42% of the total area) of fruit cultivation in West Bengal. The state contributes 22.88% and 10% of national pineapple and litchi production respectively and thus ranks first and second in production in these two crops. The other important fruit crops are guava, banana, sapota, jackfruit etc. The total production of fruits in the state is increased to 29.53 lakh tones in 2010-11 from 28.61 lakh tones in 2009-10. And the area of fruit cultivation is increased to 2.12 lakh hectares from 2.08 lakh hectares for the same period (ojha, 2013).

Murshidabad, the Gateway of South Bengal, is a Backward District of West Bengal. The district is densely populated and more than 80% of its population is rural. Man-Land Ratio of Murshidabad is 0.09 per hectare as per 2001 census. Murshidabad is also well known for production of mango and litchi and there is huge surplus of these fresh fruits. Therefore, fruit processing industries based on mango and litchi is suitable here. Government of West Bengal also declared Malda and Murshidabad as an Agricultural Export Zone (AEZ) of mango and litchi. The instant study, therefore, deals with the present scenario, problems and future prospects of fruit processing industry in Murshidabad district of West Bengal.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

So many papers have been published on food processing industries in National and International level. Some of the papers and books reviewed for the purpose of our present study are mentioned below:

1. Jadab Chandra Halder and Dr Pannalal Das in their paper, "Present Status and Futuristic View of Horticulture in West Bengal" (2012) estimated that in 2020-21 the production and consumption of fresh fruits in West Bengal will be 5824.42 thousand tones and 1683.88 thousand tons respectively representing huge surplus of fresh fruits for processing purpose.
2. Saraswati Nayak and A. K. Mukhopadhyay in their article, "Horticulture: Post Harvest Management" (2008), opines that post harvest technology applied to horticulture products adds value to the products, generate employment in the village and re-establishes agro-industries in rural sector.
3. United Nations Industrial Development Organization in their working paper, "UNIDO Technology Manual- Small Scale Fruit and Vegetable Processing and Products" (2004) has emphasized that technical assistance from government is an important tool which contributes to the capacity building activities of fruit and vegetable processing industry.
4. In the paper, Inclusive Growth: A Challenging Opportunity, published by AIMA in 2011 highlights the need for the public the private sector to work in tandem and leverage each other's to build an inclusive India.

From the available literature it is clear that no such district level study has been done till date on role of fruit processing industry of Murshidabad. The present study will try to explore an overview of fruit processing industry of Murshidabad and highlight its role in generating employment opportunities in the district. Here lies the importance of the paper.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The basic objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To get an overview of present status and scenario of fruit production and processing in Murshidabad;
2. To analyze the problems and future prospects of fruit processing industries in Murshidabad;
3. To make suggestions based on the study

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data have been collected through structured questionnaire from fruit processing units of Murshidabad district of West Bengal. The study covers 5(five) nos. of fruit processing units registered under District Industry Centre, Murshidabad and one Co-operative Society viz. Ayesbag Samabay Krishi Unnayan Samity Ltd. Therefore, total 6(six) no. of units, covering both micro and small enterprise, has been considered for the study. Both financial and non-financial data have been collected from the surveyed units during the year 2013. The study is based on financial data of the year 2012-2013. Secondary data have been collected from different reports and other published sources in print and web media. The paper is basically of descriptive type. Information relating to the units is presented in statement and table format.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. PRESENT SCENARIO OF FRUIT PROCESSING INDUSTRY IN MURSHIDABAD

As per records of Directorate of Food Processing and Horticulture, Govt. of West Bengal, there are 19 number of fruits and vegetable processing units in Murshidabad up to 31st march, 2012.

But as per records of District Industry Centre (DIC), Murshidabad there was only 5 nos. of fruit processing units in the district in that time. Besides the above units, a new large scale fruit processing cooperative unit viz. Ayesbag Samabay Krishi Unnayan Samity Ltd. was set up in 2013. It should be noted that the directorate listed the name of that industry who take any advantage from the directorate irrespective of registration from DIC. That is why the difference arises in number of fruit processing units in the district between DIC of Murshidabad and Directorate. The names of available fruit processing units and their initial details are as follows:

TABLE -1: LIST OF AVAILABLE FRUIT PROCESSING UNITS OF MURSHIDABAD

Sl. No.	Name and location of the industry	Year of Estd	Products	Initial investment (Rs. in lakh)	Proposed employment (Nos.)
1.	M/S Maxol Food Products, Vill. Goaljan, P.S. Berhampore	2003	Jam and Jelly	2	18
2.	M/s Jalangi Food Processing Industries Co-operative Society Ltd. Vill. Pilkhana, P.S. Murshidabad	2003	Wheat Atta, Chanachur, Jam and Jelly	12	18
3.	M/S Kuheli Food Products, Banshgola Road, Lalbagh.	2008	Jam, Jelly and Pickles	1	4
4.	M/s Mampi & Sarbani Food Products, Tentulia, P.S. Murshidabad.	2012	Pickles, Jam, Jelly and Tomato Sauce	4.25	9
5.	M/s Kiran Food Products, Vill. Boalia, P.S. Ranitala	2012	Pickles, Potato Chips and Bari	6.20	13
6.	Ayesbag Samabay Krishi Unnayan Samity Ltd. Vill. Ayesbag, P.S. Msd.	2013	Pickles, Sauce, Jam and Jelly	35	20

Source: DIC, Murshidabad and Field Survey

Besides the above Department of Agriculture Marketing, Govt. of West Bengal also involved in production of processed fruits, besides their main activity of imparting training of fruit processing. It is situated at Panchanatala, Berhampore and produces pickles, jam and jelly with its 6 permanent employees. Its investment depends upon Govt. grant, which normally varies within Rs.2 lakh p.a. There are also some small processing units at local household level in Murshidabad. Both of them have been excluded from the present study

As per MSME Development (Amendment) Bill, 2014, Ministry of MSME, Gol, of the 6 units listed above 5 nos. of unit belongs to micro enterprise and one unit viz. Ayesbag K.S.K.U.S belongs to small enterprise.

B. PROFILE OF THE SURVEYED UNITS

During the month of October, 2013, we have conducted a survey to the above mentioned fruit processing units and get the following information:

- The proprietor of M/s Maxol Food Products, Miss Soma Mukharjee informed that they are engaged in production of sauce, jam, jelly, pickles, mango drink, squash etc. throughout the year. Their daily production is around 100 Kg. They have 5 employees out of which 4 are widow. They do not maintain regular accounting records but have records of purchase, labour, fuel, transport, packaging, sales etc. They have also reported that the organization normally earns 10 percent profit on sales during season but the percentage of profit reduces during off-season. And this seasonal character is the major problem of their industry. They have no sufficient storage capacity due to lack of finance. The organization has taken bank loan amounting to Rs. 3 lakhs and unable to pay fully still now. They have also informed that though the organization is registered under DIC, but they did not get any subsidy against bank. The organization has a good market in its own district as well as Nadia and Bankura districts and Tripura. They have also claimed that the organization is presently facing steep competition from local unregistered producers (according to her, they are not established by DIC and they did not maintain food safety norms).
- Nazrul Mallick, one of the members of Jalangi Food Processing Industry Co-operative Society informed that the industry was running good but they compelled to shutdown the project in 2006 due to heavy breakdown of plant and machineries. According to his words, they installed the machineries procured under a govt. scheme which was inferior in quality. All the members of the society were coming from marginal farmers and they had no capacity to reinstall the plant and machineries and compelled to shut down. He also informed that the production capacity of the project was 5 tons daily with 37 regular employees. It had a good market in the district as well as north Bengal. They are trying to reopen the society.
- Smt. Anjana Sarkar, proprietor of M/s Mumpi & Sarbani Food Products informed that they have started the business of fruit processing in a small way during the last mango season (year 2013). It had good market in the locality and was also profitable. But due to lack of finance they were unable to preserve the raw materials and compelled to stop the production. She also informed that they started their business as a registered unit of DIC but did not get any financial assistance. They are waiting for a loan to restart their business.
- Smt. Kajalrekha Bibi, proprietor of M/s Kiran Food Products informed that they have also started their business at home during the last mango season (year 2013) and it was a profitable business but they discontinued production due to some unrest political situation in that area during last Panchayat Election. They also did not get any loan under Govt. scheme. They have informed that they are willing to restart the production very soon.
- Ayesbag Samabay Krishi Unnayan Samity Ltd of Murshidabad is the only small scale Fruit Processing Industry of the District till date, out of 6 fruit processing units mentioned above. It was established in April, 2013 as a Co-operative Society with Govt. loan amounting to Rs.35 lakhs. But within few days Mr. Sibaprasad Saha, then registrar of the society improved the business to a great extent. At present capital employed in business is more than 4 crores. Its factory was constructed on one acre land following relevant factory rules and regulations. Its present production capacity is 4-5 ton per day. It has one food technologist, 43 labours and 4 office staff out of which 40 women employees were selected from Self Help Group. It has a large store house with storage capacity 2500MT. Their brand name is Ayes and Krish. Whole of Ayes Products and 50% of Krish products are marketed directly by the society itself and 50% of Krish Products are supplied to a private company situated at Madhyamgram, 24Pgs (north) for marketing. All types of raw materials are stored. Mangoes are collected from Murshidabad and Malda Districts and other fruits are collected from 24 pgs (south) district. It has a got a good market in Murshidabad, Malda and North-east India. Society does not make any advertisement as their products are sold directly through whole sale suppliers.
- The district training cum production centre produces some fruit products by using Govt. grant received for this purpose. The grant varies from Rs.2-3 lakh p.a. It produces 10-30 kg. Processed fruit products in a lot. They sale their products as per govt. rate from the centre. It has a storage capacity of 10 quintals raw materials. It has no scope of expansion, because its production depends upon Govt. grant which is very limited.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**A. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

1. There is a difference in number of fruit processing units as provided by the Directorate of Food Processing Industry and DIC of Murshidabad. The number provided by the Directorate is 19 but it is 5 as per DIC. This is because the Directorate counted the name of that unit who took any advantage from the Directorate irrespective of license from the DIC.
2. Most of the Fruit Processing Units of Murshidabad are operating in household level and basically from home, except two cooperative societies viz. Ayesbag Food Processing Unit and Jalangi food processing unit. Though the later unit was closed in 2006.
3. There is a large gap between initial investment and actual present investment, which is shown in table-3 as follows;

TABLE 3: GAP BETWEEN INITIAL INVESTMENT AND ACTUAL PRESENT INVESTMENT

Name of the Unit	Proposed investment (Rs. in lakh)	Actual present investment (Rs. in lakh)
M/S Maxol Food Products	2	3
M/s Jalangi Food Processing Industries Co-operative Society Ltd.	12	10
M/S Kuheli Food Products	1	0.20
M/s Mampi & Sarbani Food Products	4.25	0.15
M/s Kiran Food Products	6.20	0.15
Ayesbag Samabay Krishi Unnayan Samity Ltd.	35	400
Total	60.45	413.50

Source: Compiled from primary data upto 31.03.2013

It is clear from the above table data that only Ayesbag Samabay Krishi Unnayan Samity Ltd has increased its investment to a great extent showing its success in fruit processing business. Other household units are basically suffering from shortage of finance and are waiting for bank loan or other government assistance.

4. There is also difference in number of proposed employment and actual employment as shown in table 4:

TABLE 4: GAP BETWEEN PROPOSED EMPLOYMENT AND ACTUAL EMPLOYMENT

Name of the Unit	Proposed employment	Actual employment
M/S Maxol Food Products	18	5
M/s Jalangi Food Processing Industries Co-operative Society Ltd.	18	37
M/S Kuheli Food Products	4	3
M/s Kiran Food Products	13	4
M/s Mampi & Sarbani Food	9	4
Ayesbag Samabay Krishi Unnayan Samity Ltd.	20	47
Total	82	100

Source: Compiled from primary data upto 31.03.2013

The table shows increase in number of employment from proposed figure, which is basically due to success of two cooperative societies. Of the two societies Jalangi Food Processing Industries Co-operative Society is presently closed.

5. It is clear that the actual position of small scale unit is far better than proposed position. On the other hand, the actual position of household units is far behind from the proposed position basically due to lack of required investment.
6. All the units (both small scale and household units) have good market position, and they are not facing any problem in selling their products.
7. Actual productions of household units are much lower than small scale units.
8. Most of the proprietors of the above units have come from poor families so they sought necessary financial support from Government to run their business.
9. It is very important to note that most of the employees of the above units have been taken from the Self-help Groups and 4 women employees of Maxol Food Products are widow. Therefore, the industry has a good impact on the livelihood of the marginal and distressed community people.

B. PROBLEMS OF FRUIT PROCESSING INDUSTRIES IN MURSHIDABAD:

1. The foremost problem of the fruit processing industry of this district is that all units except Ayesbag unit are suffering from acute financial crisis. Jalangi Food Processing unit has compelled to shut down the project due to lack of finance and Mumpi & Sarbani Food Products has compelled to stop production in off-season due to lack of finance.
2. There is no special facility in getting loan from bank for setting up fruit processing unit. One has to fulfill all normal requirements of bank for getting loan.
3. There is also unhealthy competition from unauthorized food producers as faced by Maxol Food Products.
4. There is a lack of co-ordination between Govt. authorities and proprietors of fruit processing units. They do not know how to start the business in formal way and to whom they meet for assistance in this regard. There is a Food Processing Development Officer in the district but none of the proprietors have knowledge about it. And there is no co-ordination between Fruit Preservation cum Training Centre and Food Processing Development Office. As a result, the Training Centre is unable to send their trainees to the Food Processing development Office for assistance to set up a fruit processing unit.

C. FUTURE PROSPECTS OF FRUIT PROCESSING INDUSTRIES IN MURSHIDABAD:

From the study of the units it has been found that there are ample marketing opportunities of fruit products in Murshidabad as well as others districts of West Bengal. Murshidabad district is well known for Mango and Litchi production and Govt. of West Bengal has identified the districts Malda and Murshidabad as Agri-Export Zone for mango and Litchi. It is clear from analysis of responses of owner of sample units that there is no problem of raw material, marketing of products and profitability in this sector. But, most of the units are unable to expand their production capacity due to lack of fixed capital. Therefore, if the fruit processing units of Murshidabad are given financial support by the Govt., then fruit processing industry would be a sun rising industrial sector of Murshidabad.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

From the above study we have seen that there are two different types of picture of fruit processing industry in the district. Household units are suffering from acute financial crisis and they compelled to reduce production or stop production during off-season. On the other hand, relatively large scale unit i.e. the Ayesbag Food Products has a prosperous history of production from the very beginning of the industry. It has no capital problem and they are trying to diversify their product portfolio. Therefore, if fruit processing industry is set up in the district at relatively medium or to some extent large scale with adequate capital investment there will be good prospects. They industry have also high importance in generating employment potential in the district. There are so many government schemes for development of fruit processing industry. But there is a communication gap between government authorities and the targeted people. Therefore, to solve this problem, government schemes and facilities should be advertised properly and should be communicated at the grass root level. Necessary financial, technological and marketing support should be provided to foster the growth o fruit processing industry in Murshidabad district of west Bengal.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

The study is based on information provided by the owner of the surveyed units. We have considered one year financial data for our analysis. We have not separately study the market opportunities of processed fruit in the concerned district and in West Bengal also. Some more micro level home based fruit processing units also

operate in Murshidabad districts but the details of those units are not available to DIC and we have failed to trace them inspite of our earnest effort. Detailed entire sate wise study is necessary to get an in-depth picture of fruit processing industry in West Bengal.

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