

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

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FERTILIZER MARKETING IN CHHATTISGARH: UNDERLYING PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

ABHISHEK KUMAR PATHAK
ASST. PROFESSOR
DR. C.V. RAMAN UNIVERSITY
BILASPUR

DR. PUSHKAR DUBEY
SR. LECTURER IN MANAGEMENT
PADMASHREE KRUTARTHA ACHARYA COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING (PKACE)
BARGARH

DR. SANJAY PANDEY
PROFESSOR & HEAD
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT
CHOUKSEY ENGINEERING COLLEGE
BILASPUR

ABSTRACT

Agriculture for an honourable and high-minded man is the best of all occupations by which men procure the means of living. Advances in medicine and agriculture have saved vastly more lives than have been lost in all the wars in history. Agriculture in Indian states has direct and indirect effect on the lives of Indian people and in order to live up to the expectations, the sector has vastly grown and increased the output to several times. Improved means of cultivation, technological advancements, modern equipments and high quality fertilizers have made it possible. Rapid growth and lack of crop rotation measures have made to lose the soil fertility, thereby increasing the demand for fertilizers in India. The present paper highlights various issues in fertilizer marketing in the state of Chhattisgarh. Firstly, it explores an idea on problems related to the sector in the state and secondly, attempts have been made to study the marketing mix of fertilizer in the state.

KEYWORDS

fertilizer marketing, fertilizer demand, Chhattisgarh.

INTRODUCTION

Chhattisgarh, the 26th state came into existence in 1st November 2000, is now among the fastest growing states of India. The high productivity of the state has earned it the name of "Rice Bowl of India". With 34.24% of the total area under cultivation in the state, engages 80% of the total population in agricultural and agro-based activities. The growth of agriculture in the state has created demand for the firm input. Consumption of fertilizers has become necessary and its utility is realised significantly. It has opened the doors of chances for the marketer and the potential entrepreneurs to make investments and optimise the earning sources. It is therefore essential to understand the issues relating to fertilizer marketing in Chhattisgarh. The current paper attempts to identify various problems and its tentative solutions, relating to fertilizer marketing in Chhattisgarh. It also highlights the needful marketing mix for the same.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

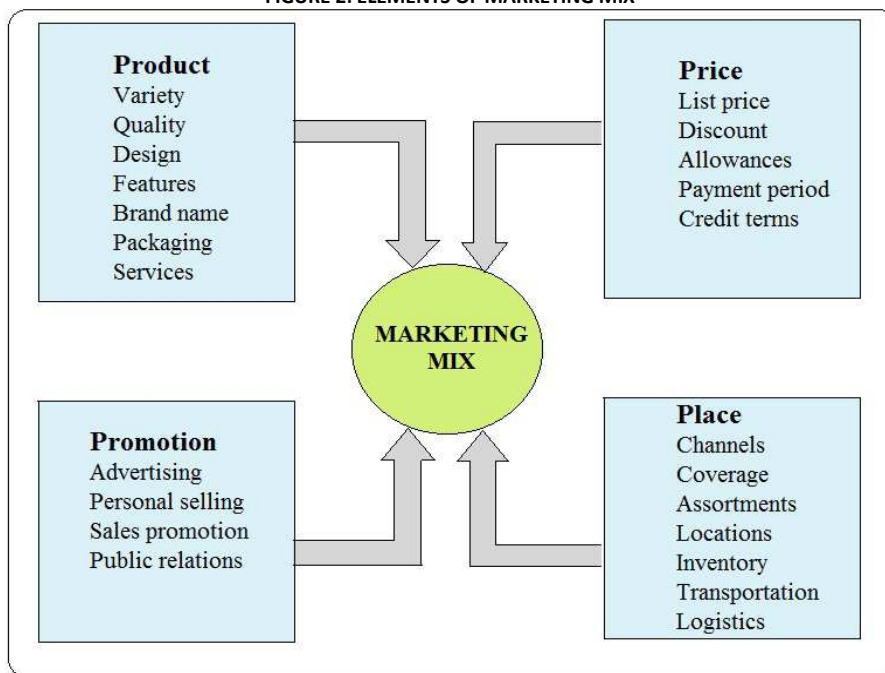
Present study aims in fulfilling two key research objectives:

1. To determine the problems in fertilizer marketing in Chhattisgarh.
2. To study the marketing mix of fertilizer Industry in Chhattisgarh.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

"Marketing mix is the set of the marketing tools that the firm uses to pursue its marketing objectives in the target market" (Kotler et al. 1999). "Theories of marketing management and strategy need to evolve and change to keep pace with changes in the marketplace and in marketing practice" (Goldsmith, 1999). "Central to marketing management is the concept of the marketing mix (Figure 1). The marketing mix is not a theory of management that has been derived from scientific analysis, but a conceptual framework which highlights the principal decisions that marketing manager's make in configuring their offerings to suit customers' needs. The tools can be used to develop both long term strategies and short term tactical programmes" (Palmer, 2004). The original marketing mix includes product planning, pricing, branding, channels of distribution, personal selling, advertising, promotions, packaging, display, servicing, and physical handling. Marketing variables is divided in two parts. The first part covers the offering that includes product, packaging, brand, price and service. Second part refers to the methods and tools that include distribution channels, personal selling, advertising, sales promotion and publicity (Frey, 1961). Three more elements called goods and services mix, the distribution mix and the communication mix (Lazer and Kelly, 1962; Lazer et al. 1973; Rafiq and Ahmed, 1995) are identified as a part of marketing mix. McCarthy (1964) regrouped these broad elements into four P's.

FIGURE 2: ELEMENTS OF MARKETING MIX



PROBLEMS IN FERTILIZER MARKETING IN CHHATTISGARH

Following are some of the basic problems in marketing of fertilizers in the state of Chhattisgarh:

- Underdeveloped and tradition bound people:** Chhattisgarh people are underdeveloped and traditional bound. They follow old tradition and custom. They don't easily adopt new practices. Change is a continuous process but rural people accept change gradually. The majority of the farmers are still practicing the traditional methods of cultivation, resulting in low growth rates and productivity.
- Inadequate Transport Facilities:** Many rural areas are not connected by rail transport. Many farmer use bullock cart for transporting their produce from the village to the market and this method of transport is time consuming. Kacha roads become unserviceable during the monsoon and interior villages get isolated. Physical communication to these villages is highly expensive. During rainy season about 50% of villages in Chhattisgarh are not accessible as the road gets flooded.
- Warehousing:** There is always gap between demand and supply of product. Warehousing play important role to fill this gap and create balance in demand and supply. It is almost impossible to distribute effectively in the interior outlets in the absence of adequate storage facilities.
- Underdeveloped markets:** Chhattisgarh markets are underdeveloped market, which is also big hurdle in fertiliser marketing.
- Differences in languages and dialects:** In Chhattisgarh main language in hindi but in most of villages in Chhattisgarh is hindi speaking belt and villagers speak and understand only Chhattisgarhi. Since fertiliser product is technical product so there is much more problem in convincing farmer to their own typical Chhattisgarh language.
- Seasonal Demand:** Demand for goods in rural markets depends upon agricultural situation, as agriculture is the main source of income. Agriculture to a large extent depends upon monsoon and, therefore, the demand or buying capacity is not stable or regular.
- Low literacy levels:** Literacy is one of the important factors in developing awareness and knowledge about technological changes. 70% farmers are illiterate or semilliterate. Due to low literacy rate in famers many difficulties and problem are faced by them, like not having information about proper paper procedures for getting loans and insurance.
- Inadequate Credit Facilities:** Inadequate credit facility is also big hurdle in fertiliser marketing. The farmers facing high interest rates for their credits (local money lending system) fertiliser dealers do not give easily credit facility to farmers. The provision of credit at right time and in right quantity through local and specialized banks and microfinance institution is necessary for promoting balance use of fertilizer.
- Low per capita income and disposable income; financial instability:** Most farmers have small lands and many villages are brought prone, this result in low per capita income. In additions, the farmers with small agricultural land holdings have also been unable to take advantage of the new technology. Due to low per capita of income their consumption pattern is also very low.

MARKETING MIX OF FERTILISER INDUSTRY IN CHHATTISGARH

Fertilizer product is chemical product and for making fertilizer rules of chemistry are followed by manufacturer. Farm land require mainly three types of nutrients N P K and fertilizer product is made through right combination or proportion of nutrient, therefore manufacturer of fertilizer has nothing to do. According to the crop and soil requirement combination and proportion of nutrient NPK are made. According to need of farm land and crop, right combinations of nutrient are converted into fertiliser product. Therefore scope of innovative and new product is low in case of fertiliser product. Basic purpose of the product is to supply N, P, K nutrients.

PRODUCT

According to legislation fertiliser product cannot be marketed by trade or brand name. Fertilizer is to be marketed only by generic name therefore fertilizer companies add their brand name to the generic name, example IFFCO urea. Most of the farmers are generally illiterate in rural area. They would remember brand only by picture, logo, and symbol instead of name. This is also widely used in fertiliser market. Marketing of fertilizer is highly controlled by government regulation. Government laws, rules and code of conduct are applied in fertilizer market, with view to protect the interest of sellers and buyer by both essential commodity act (ECA) and fertilizer control order (FCO).

PRICE

Government play important role in ensuring that farmer receive fertilisers at the lowest possible cost commensurate with a reliable and timely supply. Before 1992 all fertilizer Industry was in complete control with government of India. But after 1992 partial deregulation and decontrol were implemented. At present urea is such fertiliser product which is controlled by government of India. Except urea all other fertiliser are decontrolled or free of control by government. Price is totally governed and regulated by the government. However manufacturer may offer discount to their dealers but such discount or rebate is not covered as subsidy, government also decide margin for channel members. Figure 2 shows the quarterly MRP of different fertilizers during the period 2008-13.

FIGURE- 2: QUARTERLY MRP OF FERTILIZERS DURING THE PERIOD 2008-09 TO 2012-13

Grade of fertilizers	18-06-2008 to	2010-11(QTR WISE)				2011-12(QTR WISE)				2012-13(QTR WISE)	
	31.3.2010	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II
1 DAP :18-46-0-0	9350	9950	9950	9950	10750	12500	18200	20297	20000	24800	26500
2 MAP:11-52-0-0	9350	9950	NA	NA	NA		18200	20000	20000	20000	24200
3 TSP:0-46-0-0	7460	8057	8057	8057	8057	8057	8057	17000	17000	17000	NA
4 MOP:0-0-60-0	4455	5055	5055	5055	5055	6064	11300	12040	12040	16695	23100
5 16-20-0-13	5875	6620	6620	6620	7200	9645	14400	15300	15300	15300	18200
6 20-20-0-30	6295	7280	7280	7395	8095	11400	14800	15800	15800	19000	24800
7 23-23-0-0	6145	NA	NA	NA	7445	7445	7445	NA	NA	NA	NA
8 10-26-26-0	7197	8197	NA	8300	10103	10910	16000	16633	16386	21900	22225
9 12-32-16-0	7637	8637	8237	8637	9437	11313	16400	16500	16400	22300	23300
10 14-28-14-0	7050	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	14950	17029	NA	NA	NA
11 14-35-14-0	8185	NA	NA	NA	9900	11622	15148	17424	17600	17600	23300
12 15-15-15-0	0	NA	NA	NA	7421	8200	11000	11500	11500	13000	15600
13 AS:20.3-0-0-23	10350	8600	8600	7600	8700	7600	11300	10306	10306	11013	11013
14 20-20-0-0	5343	5943	NA	6243	7643	9861	14000	15500	18700	18700	24450
15 28-28-0-0	7481	NA	NA	NA	11181	11810	15740	18512	18700	24720	24720
16 17-17-17-0	5804	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	17710	20427	20522
17 19-19-19-0	6487	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	18093	19470	19470
18 SSP(0-16-0-11)	*	3200	3200	3200	3200	3200	4000	TO	6000	6500-7500	6500-7500
19 16-16-16-0		NA	NA	NA	7100	7100	7100	15200	15200	15200	NA
20 DAP lite(16-44-0-0)		NA	NA	NA	NA	11760	17600	19500	19500	19500	24938
21 15-15-15-09		NA	NA	NA	6800	9300	12900	15750	14851	15000	15000
22 24-24-0-0		NA	NA	NA	7768	9000	11550	14151	14297	14802	16223
23 13-33-0-6		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	16200	17400	17400	17400	NA
24 MAP lite(11-44-0-0)		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	16000	18000	18000	18000	NA
25 DAP lite-II(14.4-0-0)		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	14900	18690	18300	18300	NA
26 Urea	4830	5830									

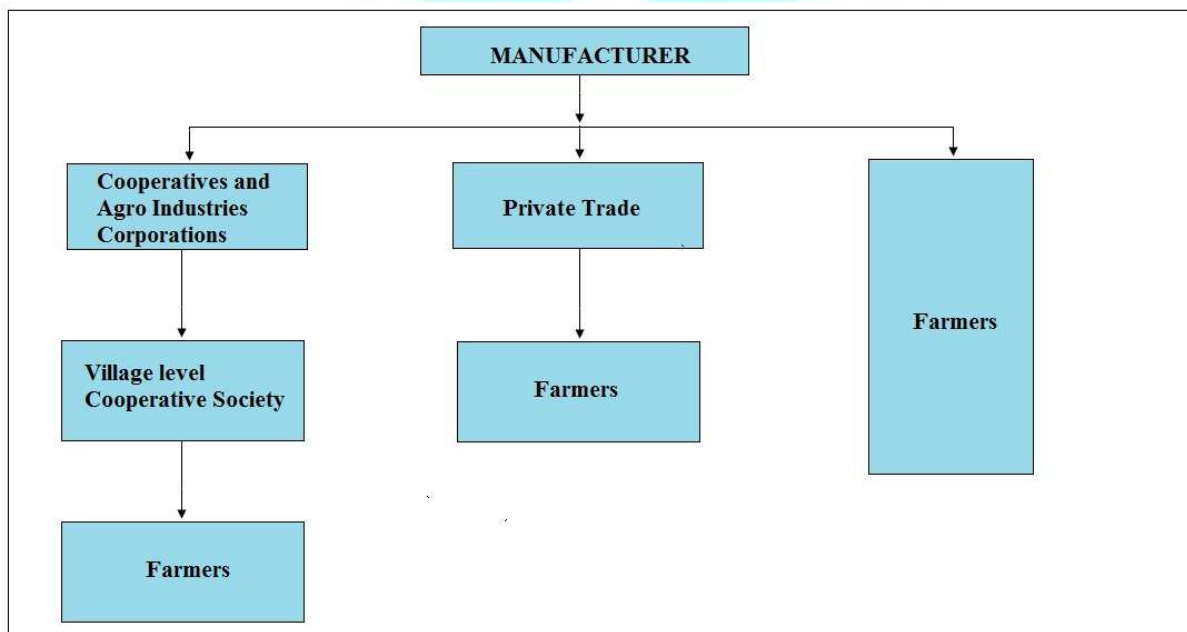
Source: Department of fertiliser, Government of India

PLACE

A channel of distribution (or marketing channels) is “a set of interdependent organizations involved in the process of making product or service available for use or consumption by the consumer or buyer”(Kotler, 2009). A distribution channel is a pathway through which final products of manufacturers reach the end users. If a company’s product is good, available in appropriate price and promotional strategy are very attractive but distribution channel by which product are transferred from manufacturer to final user is not effective and appropriate, company cannot strive for the targeted goal to earn long term profit in a market place. Channels of distribution plays an important role in marketing of fertilizers because of many vital function performed by them. Distribution system has to carry out the function of storage, transportation and sales to the farmers spread throughout the country.

It is not possible for manufacturer to reach out farmers scattered in whole Chhattisgarh state. In order to reach farmers, fertilizer companies take help of distribution networks. Traditionally the Cooperatives and Agro industries Corporations played a significant role, but of late private trading have also taken to the fertilizer distribution in a big way, because of attractive margins. Earlier the proportion of fertilizer distributed between the cooperative and private trade was in the ratio of 60:40. Presently trend is reversed and private trade account for 60 percent, while cooperative and agro industries cooperation for only 40 percent. So mostly the fertilizer marketing is through a dealer network which consists of Cooperatives, Agro-industries Corporation and private trade. Some fertiliser companies have their own retail outlets where directly farmers are contacted and promotional activities are done. All under one roof farmers are not only provided with all agricultural input like fertilizers, seeds but also with technical assistance.

FIGURE 3: DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL FOR FERTILIZER



Source; Hand book on Dealer development FAT, 1988

Above shown figure indicates distribution system of fertilizer through different tier. There are many tier systems for fertilizer marketing in India. Some manufacturing companies supply product to marketers. Marketers reach farmers through dealer (wholesalers or retailers). This is called three tier systems. This system is preferred by manufacturer when company directly does not want to pay more attention for marketing of product. Here all the essential functions are

performed by the marketers on the behalf of Fertilizer Company. Some companies prefer two tier systems where fertilizer companies supply fertilizer product to dealer (wholesaler or retailer) and dealers distribute fertilizer product to farmer or final user. Some fertilizer companies establish their own retail outlet here fertilizer company directly connects with the final user. There are no intermediaries' in this channel. In retail outlet farmers can get all types of fertilizer products, seeds, and agricultural products under one roof. Here Manufacturing Company does not take support from marketers or dealers. All activities are self performed. It is very clear that if channels is long than final user get product at higher cost because of profit margin are distributed to all intermediaries'. In shorter channel farmers get fertilizer products at low price. There are many factors which decide channel of distribution of marketing of fertilizer in India. Cooperative society help in efficient distribution of fertilise so as to ensure that the right products are available to the farmer at the right time and at the optimum price, consistent with the provision of a reliable service.

DISTRIBUTION OF FERTILISER THROUGH COOPERATIVE CHANNEL

MEANING OF COOPERATIVE MARKETING

The cooperative sector has been playing a distinct and significant role in the country's process of socio-economic development particularly the weaker sections in rural areas during the last hundred decades and more. They has been striving to provide better marketing facilities to the Chhattisgarh agriculturists, fair prices for their produces, even direct purchase of the commodities whenever required for stabilizing the commodity market, elimination of intermediaries and middlemen, uninterrupted supply of agricultural inputs at fair prices and on easy terms of payment. MARFED is now successfully handling and distribution of agricultural fertilizer and pesticides etc. They function as a bridge between producers and farmers.

Since there are many problems in fertilizer marketing in Chhattisgarh. Cooperative society is widely spread all over Chhattisgarh to ensure fertilizer products are easily distributed to farmers in unreached areas. There are many institutional agencies which are engaged in distribution of fertilizer. They are state agro-industries development corporations, commodity federations and state department of agriculture, cooperative etc. Cooperatives are the main institutional agency in the country for handling fertilizers.

According to Reserve Bank of India "Cooperative marketing society is an association of cultivators formed primarily for the purpose of helping the members to market their produce more profitably than possible through the private trade". Cooperative society is to provide high quality fertilizers in right time and in adequate quantities to farmers with an objective to increase crop production and productivity is the prime objective. The cooperation department is mainly concerned with agricultural credit, market agricultural produce, distribute fertilizers and essential commodities and with the legal framework which governs the functioning of all cooperatives.

In Chhattisgarh, cooperatives have a three tier structure with Chhattisgarh State Cooperative Marketing Federation (MARKFED) at state level, district or regional marketing society at the district level and primary cooperative stores at the base level.

MARKFED

In Chhattisgarh State level Apex Cooperative Marketing Federation act as wholesalers. This State level Apex Cooperative Marketing Federation is called MARKFED. The Chhattisgarh State Cooperative Marketing Federation (MARKFED) is an Apex level Federation of Cooperative Marketing Societies in the State of Chhattisgarh. Chhattisgarh State Cooperative Marketing Federation Limited, Raipur (Registration No. 216 dated 31.10.2000) came into existence simultaneously with the creation of new Chhattisgarh State on 1st November 2000. MARKFED executes the work of paddy procurement under Price Support Scheme and supply of chemical fertilizers and plant protection material to the farmers of the state as per the instructions of Government.

MARKFED'S present activity consists of Sale of farm inputs like chemical fertilizers, pesticides and seeds and maintenance of warehouse and procurement of agricultural commodities through its member societies. In fact, the cooperative channel in Chhattisgarh has very strong infrastructure and through this channel, farmers get agriculture inputs and therefore private traders can save them from exploitation. Cooperative societies are formed and functioned with the help of the government at the state, district and village levels. Cooperative has good infrastructure of bulk purchases and distribution of fertiliser to their member societies, even in remote rural areas.

OBJECTIVES OF CHHATTISGARH MARKFED

1. Supply of inputs like Fertilisers.
2. Undertaking price support operations.
3. Acting as an agent to the Govt for procurement, supply and distribution of paddy. Commodities and also nodal agency for supply of inputs.
4. Undertaking commercial operations of agricultural produce.
5. Supply of quality products to customers.

PROMOTION

Promotion is the method used to spread the word about product or service to customers, stakeholders and the broader public. Promotion is the one of marketing mix element. Good products with reasonable price, reaches the right place creates the right marketing mix. But without promotion, the above three P's are ill functioned. Therefore it is important to create product awareness by the means of communication to create influence for product purchase. Promotional strategy is the function of informing, persuading, and influencing a consumer decision. Highbrow strategies of promotion of rural marketing will not work. They have to be down to earth strategies; literally many products are sold well in Indian rural markets if the wares are put on the ground. Since fertiliser products are technical product used by farmer in rural market where farmer are illiterate and unbound traditional people, so there is big difficulty for promotion of fertiliser product to farmer.

The main purpose of fertilizer companies' promotional activities is to educate farmer and cooperative personnel to increase crop productivity through integrated and balanced use of fertilisers. In order to reach the target customer, fertiliser companies uses media that are not only flexible and feasible, but also relevant and appropriate for fertiliser markets. Modern promotional activity of fertiliser companies inform, guide, educate as well as protects farmers, so that they can buy intelligently and raise their standard of living.

AIDA model is considered by fertiliser marketers or companies. AIDA model consist attention, interest, desire and action. The marketer should make attention of prospective farmers, then create interest in the fertiliser product, inspire desire to buy and make the farmer act favourable to purchase

Large number of programmes are being organised by the fertiliser industry to educate farmers, fertiliser dealers on various aspects of fertiliser use and agricultural development. Since the normal promotional mix tools were inadequate for rural market, fertilizer marketers innovate many interactive ad interpersonal media to reach the farmers.

1. Demonstration: People believe what they see. The concept is exhibited on the farmer's field. Demonstration is the most convincing tool to address the gap existing between awareness and adoption of technology by the farmers which culminates ultimately to its adoption. Participation of farmers is essential in the demonstration process. Product Demonstrations can be the key to improve retail sales, enhance brand awareness, and increase customer satisfaction. Many private fertilisers companies go to the villages and do soil testing for the villages as a whole and/or for individual farms. Thereafter they advise the dose-specific use of different types of fertilisers. Soil samples are collected and tested at the company's factory at Kakinada for N, P and K and other important micronutrients like zinc and sulphur and the results are provided to the farmers for obtaining higher yields.
2. Positive word-of-mouth through local reference groups and opinion leaders is considered as the key to success in the rural markets. If farmers are satisfied by Fertiliser Company and their products, then they will buy the product again and again and spread the same message of their personal buying experience. If farmers feel unsatisfied they won't go for repeat purchase and will discourage others to buy the same.

3. Publication and distribution of Technical Literature: Technical bulletins are published on various crops. Printed material cannot be always very effective for fertiliser promotion in Chhattisgarh because of low literacy rate of farmers, traditional bound people, diversity in language, culture, and economic backwardness. Manufacturers know that the consumer wants to see and test products in a no-pressure environment.
4. Farm visits / individual contacts: Companies send their technical field staff for individual farm visit. Fields are visited, problems are identified and solutions are suggested. Since technical field staff visit individual farm so individual farmer have sufficient time to discuss their problem in detail and establish direct interaction with them. Technical field staffs identify the problem of farmer and on spot, give suggestions to overcome those problems.
5. Audio-Visual Van Programmes: To create demand and consumption of fertilisers, AV van programmes are conducted by meeting farmers in the villages throughout the year. With the help of power point presentation and audio visual program related to balance use of fertiliser, soil testing; seeds; irrigation and water conservation methods; crop management are explained in very attractive and communicative way to farmers.
6. Small farmer meeting is organised by fertiliser companies and time and date schedule is decided according to farmer so that more farmer may present in this meeting farmer are educated about balance use of fertiliser, time for using fertiliser, so that productivity of fertiliser may increase.

SUGGESTIONS

Following suggestions can be made in context of the article:

1. Farmers of Chhattisgarh need to be educated, in order to understand their requirement in the farm land. More of orientation programmes should be organised by the fertilizer marketers to educate the farmers at their base level. Government in this regards should encourage education in the state to enhance the literacy rate. This will minimise the regional disparity and will bring more cultural balance.
2. Infrastructural arrangements in the state should be strengthened, so as to facilitate the communication process. This will make the product available at the right time of need.
3. Promotional tools should encompass more of information, so that farmers can take decisions on their own. Traditional means of promotion should be banned and blend policies should be formulated and implemented, basing on the need of the situation.
4. Government should design the pricing policies, keeping in view the affordability of the farmer class. Since agriculture is a cumbersome process appropriate offers (subsidy), should be provided to encourage the farmer class.
5. All the four P's needs to be integrated in a well planned and organised way, so as to strengthen the marketing mix of fertilizer industry in Chhattisgarh.

CONCLUSION

Chhattisgarh is an emerging state in the field of agriculture. Its potential for growth can be stated in terms of opportunities it receives from the supporting agencies. Various problems persist in the state in context of marketing of fertilizer. There are issues and concern associated with fertilizer marketing mix. Practice of the right blend of marketing theories can help in improving the condition of the rural farmers, leading to more productivity and higher growth. From a marketers perspective dissemination of correct information will help in educating the farmers, together with effective promotion and pricing policies can lead to effective results.

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