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UNDERSTANDING NEED OF FLOWER GROWERS OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

Bestowed with rich biodiversity and congenial climatic conditions, floriculture in Himachal Pradesh has immense scope. The potential of floriculture have not been fully tapped yet. A study was carried out to get first hand information regarding technological and management problems faced by floriculturists and to understand their research needs for enhancing quality flower production from the region. The analysis of survey indicates that flower growers are adopting protective cultivation, as it enables production of good quality flowers and fetches a higher return. No major problem was evident in procurement good quality planting materials, but high price was the key concern. Mites and other sap sucking insects were common pest problems. It was noticed that farmers were getting farm inputs easily at affordable cost. Certain Govt. policies such as subsidy on the construction of polyhouses promoted floriculture in the region. Establishing cooling chain facility emerged as one of the major needs of the farmers.

KEYWORDS

floriculture, R&D issues, policies, linkages, marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Government of India identified floriculture as a sunrise industry and accorded it 100 percent export oriented status. Hence, floriculture is presently considered as a promising commodity. Floriculture industry has been experiencing rapid growth. The annual growth rate for world floriculture is 8- 10 % (Thankan Ghule and Shreekumar Menon, 2013). While Indian floriculture industry is flourishing with a growth rate of 24% per annum (The Economic Times, 20th Jan., 2015). During 2012-13, there was about 232.74 thousand hectares land under flower cultivation producing 1729.2 thousand MT of loose flowers and 76731.9 lakh of cut flowers in India. During 2013-14, India also exported 22,485.21 MT of floriculture products worth of Rs. 455.90 crores (http://apeda.gov.in/apedawebsite/SubHead_Products/Floriculture.htm).

The production of flowers has increased in the traditional as well as non-traditional areas. Domestic Market, both for cut and loose flowers, has increased significantly due to rapid urbanization, shift in social outlook, increase in income and frequent use of flowers as gift and bouquets (Mishra, P.K, 2007). For becoming the hub of world floriculture trade, India has in fact all the favorable conditions like varied agro climatic profile, land resources, availability of skilled labour and agricultural scientists (Radha Nagaraj, 2005). In India, Himachal Pradesh has one of the most congenial agroclimatic conditions for growing of flowers and potted plants, but the state is yet to carve a niche in floriculture trade. Farmers of Himachal Pradesh are supported by Himachal Technology Mission, the National Horticulture Board and the State Horticulture Department for establishing green houses. During 2012-13, there was about 1000 ha area under floriculture in H.P., producing 37.7 thousand MT loose flowers and 1760.3 lakh cut flowers (Indian Horticulture Database- 2013). Certain areas in the state like Palampur in Kangra, Bharmour in Chamba, Rajgarh in Sirmour, Bilaspur, Mashobra in Shimla have emerged as the major flower growing areas. Certain subsidy schemes have also been provided to the flower growers (Pratibha Chauhan, 2013).

Although there is immense potential (protected as well as open field cultivation) for floriculture in the state and that Govt. is supporting to boost floriculture trade but still certain bottlenecks are hampering the interests of farmers and restricting the growth in this sector.

The present study was carried out to understand the technological needs and challenges faced by the farmers such that appropriate steps could be taken at policy level to address the need of the farmers holistically.

METHODOLOGY

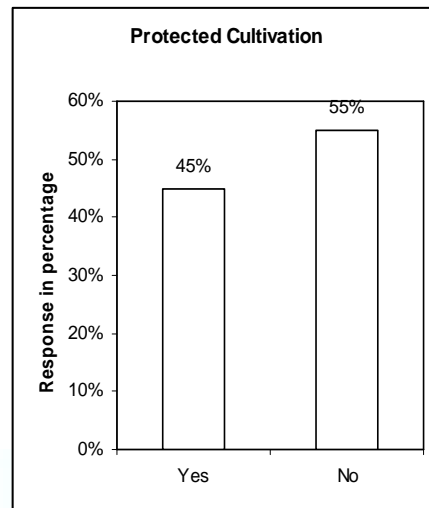
The study on problems of floriculture industry in H.P. is based on primary data. Primary data was collected using a pre-tested structured questionnaire. Data was recorded after personally interviewing top management. The questionnaire was structured to include information on land holding, type of cultivation (open/protected), planting material issues, farm management issues, R&D issues, linkages and marketing issues. Data collected was analyzed using simple analytical methods. Respondents (flower growers) for primary data collection were selected purposively on the basis of the concentration of flower growing area. As per the information available from Dept. of Horticulture, in Himachal Pradesh most of the flowers are cultivated in Kullu, Kangra, Bilaspur, Solan, Chamba, Una and Lahaul & Spiti areas. In our study we covered flower growing areas of Kangra, and Lahaul & Spiti

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Data collected from the respondents were analysed and key issues are as under:

LAND HOLDING AND CULTIVATION TYPE

FIG. 1



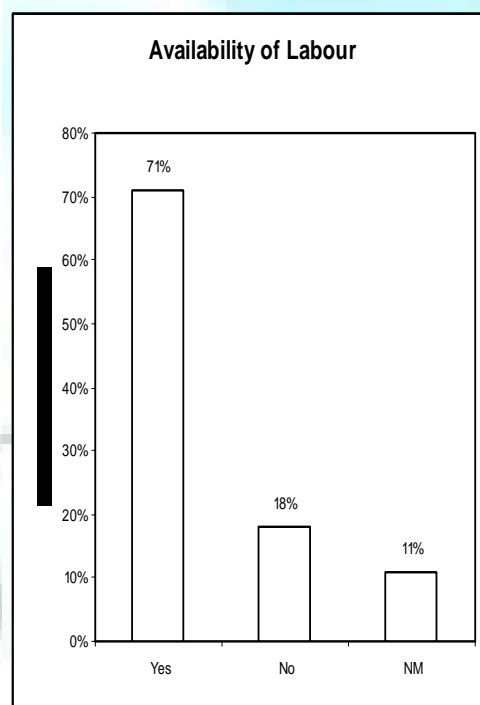
Majority of the farmers in the area have 2-3 kanal of land under floriculture. Some of them have maintained traditional cultivation and have used only a portion of their land towards floriculture. Only a few have large scale land dedicated for commercial cultivation. Greenhouse is popular and 45% of farmers have taken up protective cultivation as it yields good quality flowers and provides higher return. Also, Govt. provides subsidy for green house cultivation under different schemes. Crops like rose, gerbera, lilies, carnation, alstroemeria and other potted plants are grown in green house while crops like gladiolus and marigold are cultivated in open fields.

• **PLANTING MATERIALS**

The majority of the planters expressed that they get good quality materials at affordable prices with a success survival rate of over 80%. The preferred sources of planting material are Pvt. Houses in Bangalore and Pune. At times National Horticulture board, State Universities and Central Govt. Institute like IHBT also provide high quality materials. A few planter also import planting materials from Holland and other countries. Many a times farmers retain selective planting materials for next season. The planters expressed that there is no problem is getting good quality material, but they are often expensive.

• **CULTIVATION PRACTICE**

FIG. 2



Most of the planters are trained in the art. Many of them have attended training programmes organized by IHBT and Solan Univeristy. They feel that arranging trainings at block level can sensitize more people on taking up floriculture as a business. Also, advisory services rendered by IHBT and other technical institutes have helped them to overcome the field problems pertaining to cultivation, both under open and polyhouse conditions. Technical information regarding the package of practices are available in local language in print media and web. Farmers also get relevant information through Krishi darshan programmes. Occasionally, the farmers face disease problems particularly that of rotting of plants under the polyhouse condition. Mites and other sap sucking insects was found to be a common pest problem which reduce their yields and return. No major problem was expressed regarding availability of farm inputs like fertilizer, FYM, pesticides etc. Labour is not a serious problem and availability and skilled labours are adequate to meet the requirement. Several planters expressed in addition to floriculture they are further interested in taking tissue culture training to establish their own small units.

FIG. 3

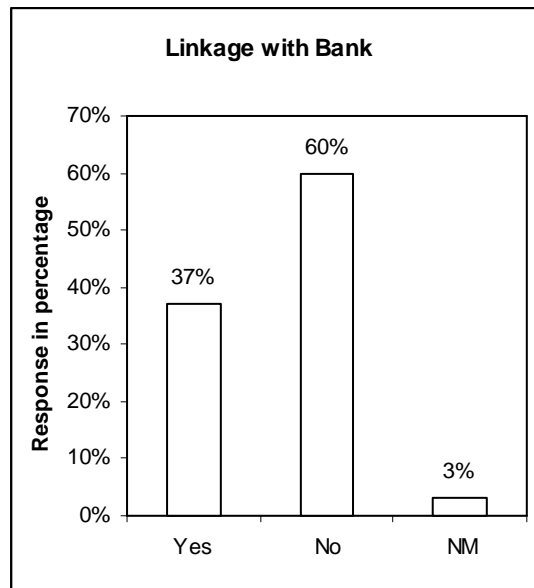


FIG. 4

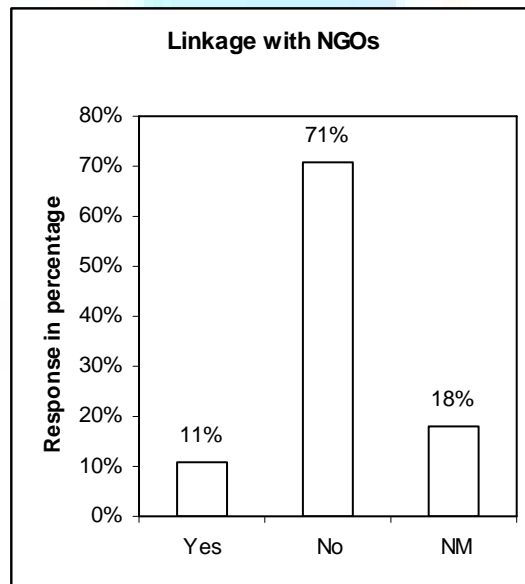
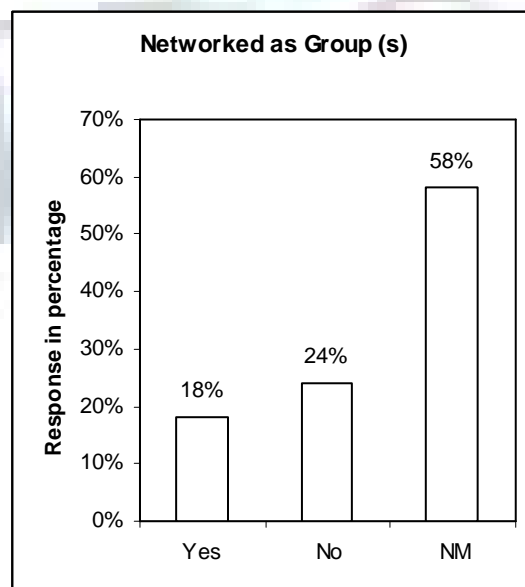


FIG. 5



It was observed that about 37 % of the farmers have linkages with banks as they have availed soft loan schemes. About 11% have linkage with NGOs. Interestingly, about 18% have formed group(s) for joint marketing of the produce and seed availability. It was felt that linkage and self help group would become stronger if more and more farmers of a particular locality join the trade. It emerges that there is ample scope to develop and strengthen linkage between farmers, bank and NGOs.

• **R&D ISSUES**

During the survey it was felt that though farmers do not face any major problem in getting good quality materials at affordable price but they aspire for new varieties of ornamentals to gain a competitive edge in marketing. Hence, they feel generating attractive new varieties of crops like gerbera, carnation etc. is one of their sustained needs. They also felt that work should be done in the area of post harvest technology as it will help in enhancing the shelf life of cut flowers which is crucial for longevity. With respect to crop management practices, farmers opine that work should be done to assess the water requirement of different crops as moisture level affects productivity. Since most of the farmers have faced the problem of soil borne pathogens they expressed that developing control measures of fungal disease particularly in polyhouse condition would highly beneficial.

MARKETING

Fig. 6

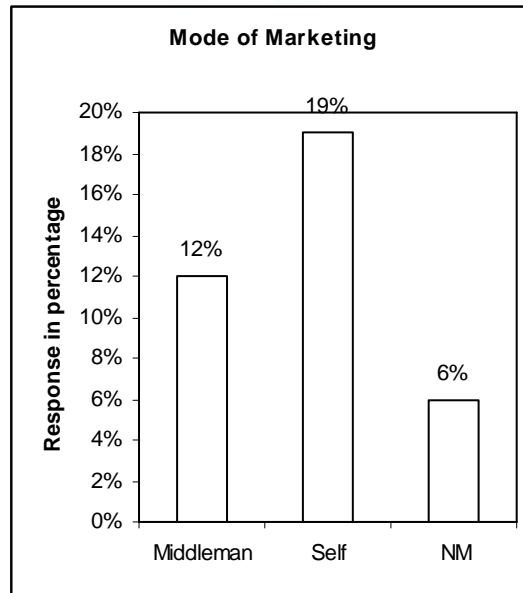
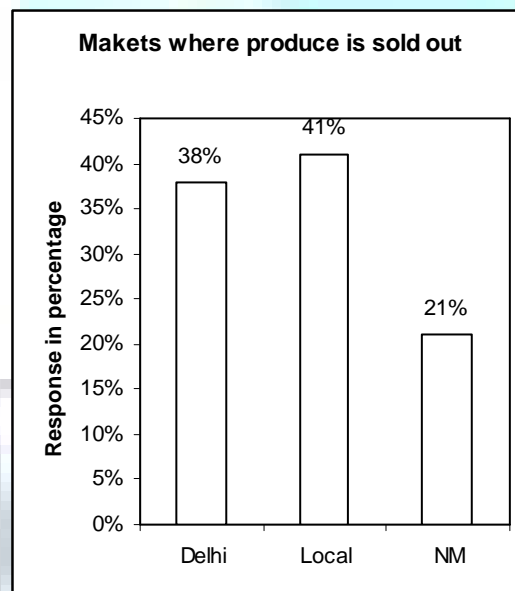


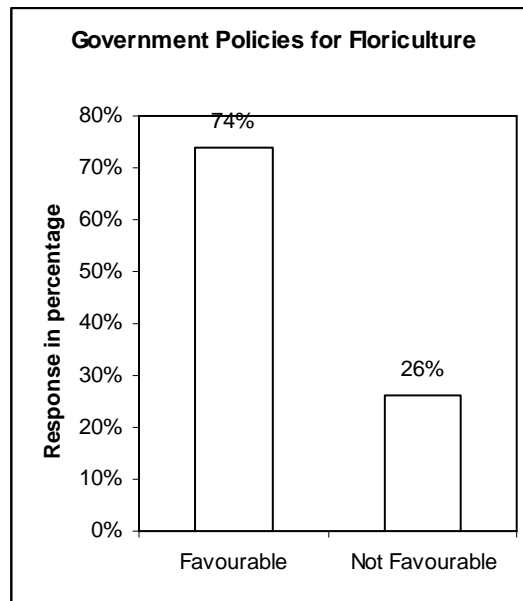
FIG. 7



Delhi is the major flower market for the region. Hence the cut flower produce is mostly sent to Delhi market. The marketing is done either through a middle man or self. Though there is involvement of middle man but the payment is prompt, this however reduces their share of returns. In case of self marketing a family person is dedicatedly deputed in the Delhi market. The farmers expressed that there is no major problem of marketing but often the rates fluctuate which results in uncertainty in return. Further, the flower markets strictly adheres to the grading norms and thus the condition of the produce plays an important role in determining the price, as good quality materials are sold at premium rates and price drastically fall if the flowers are slightly withered.

• GOVERNMENT POLICIES

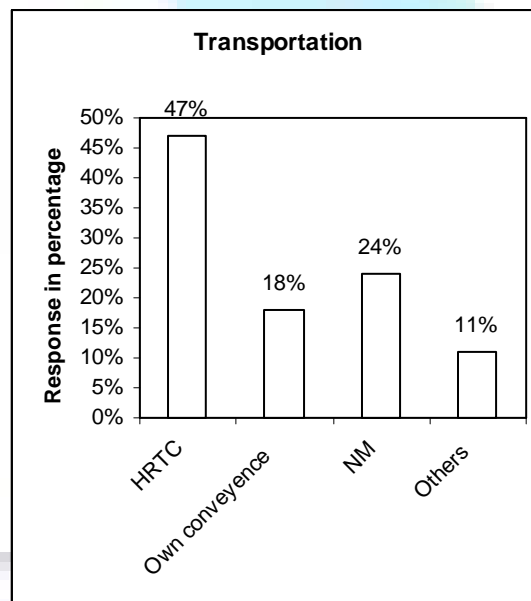
FIG. 8



About 74% of the farmers expressed that Govt policies are favourable and they have been benefitted particularly in construction of green houses. Some of the planters feel that Govt. should provide subsidy on self fabricated cheap polyhouses as well. Apart from polyhouse support Govt. also provide good quality planting materials of different ornamentals from various Govt. agencies/departments. Looking into the high returns, Govt. of Himachal Pradesh is now promoting floriculture in a big way and it is emerging as the preferred choice of trade in the state.

• TRANSPORTATION

FIG. 9



Most of the planters felt that transportation is a major problem and that they are using the Himachal Road Transport Corporation bus services to send their produce to the market. As flowers are very delicate and have limited shelf life, the mode of transportation effect their returns. Most of the planters expressed that cold chain is a critical need of the area as it would help them to keep their material fresh and attractive for a longer time.

DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTION

- 1. EXPANSION OF EXISTING PRODUCTION AND PRODUCT RANGE:** Looking into the prospect of floriculture world wide and considering the favourable attributes of Himachal Pradesh, the States needs to gear up expansion of commercial floriculture at a large scale. Thrust could be laid on : hi-tech cultivation of orchids, arthurium, gladiolus, tuberose, and foliages; developing state-of-the- art nurseries for generating high quality planting materials to attain the status of regional hub for supply of elite materials; making novel products for decorations and as gift items using dried flowers and foliages
- 2. TARGETING NEW EMERGING FLOWER MARKETS:** It has been observed that except for Saudi Arabia and UAE, India has not been able to make its presence felt in the regional floriculture markets such as Japan, Singapore, Korea, and Russia. While China, Thailand and Malaysia are consistent suppliers. Therefore, more targetted efforts are required by the Indian floriculture industry to make a significant mark in the regional, new and emerging markets. Since flowers of Himachal are well known for its quality, Himachal Govt. should emphasise on the cultiuvation of flowers having export potential.
- 3. CREATING COLD STORAGE FACILITIES:** The first and foremost requirement is to develop a state-of-the art Integrated Cold Chain, right from the point-of-origin (growers) to the point-of- consumption (customers). This will help in retaining the freshness of flowers and enhance their shelf life. Although it will slightly raise the total production cost, but will be several fold advantageous in long run as there will be less wastage and farmers will get premium prices for their fresh produce.
- 4. ENCOURAGING PRIVATE SECTOR FOR COINVESTMENTS:** Government of Himachal may consider framing of favourable policies for participation of private sector for coinvestments in the supply-chain infrastructure.

5. **DEVELOPING THE NON-TRADITIONAL PRODUCTION AREAS:** Expansion of floriculture in non-traditional areas. There are several areas which are congenial for flower production but are either in neglected condition or still under traditional cropping pattern. Bringing these areas under floriculture may help in meeting the growing needs of both domestic and international market.

6. **DEVELOPING COST EFFECTIVE POLYHOUSES:** By employing low cost indigenous technologies for modern floriculture suiting to the agro-climatic condition of Himachal will reduce the production cost and hence will increase the net returns.

7. **CREATING TRAINED MANPOWER:** Trained manpower is crucial to meet the demand of expanding floriculture. This can be achieved by establishment of training centres on modern techniques for commercial floriculture and skill development.

8. **ESTABLISHING A NETWORK OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS:** Establishing a network of support systems with the involvement of Government, private sector and research institutions / universities will be another strategy for development of the floriculture sector in the state. A "consortium" approach may be encouraged among the units for branding, grading, packaging, transporting, quality control, supply assurance, market development, market promotion, and research and development.

9. **SETTING UP NEARBY AUCTION CENTRES:** As most of the farmers go to Delhi auction centres. State Govt. needs to set up regional auction centres to remove transportation and marketing hurdles. A great deal of attention will have to be given to the rules governing the auction, transparency in the transactions, and dispute resolutions. Auction should be managed by growers and buyers, and government should act only as a facilitator. A system of dedicated transportation also needs to be organised on commercial lines facilitating transfers from production sites to auctions and auctions to the market at an economical cost. Lastly, efforts should be made to develop and strengthen backward linkages on a continuous basis to benefit from trade.

Himachal floriculture industry has inherent strengths such as favourable geographical situation, soil and environment and labour costs. With the positive investment sentiments of Indian corporate players and smaller players consolidating their efforts, Himachal's floriculture sector is expected to blossom in the coming years.

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NOTE

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