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A STUDY ON PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF TEA GROWERS WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO NILGIRIS DISTRICT (TN) IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The Indian tea industry provides source of revenue for more than a million workers and several lakh of small growers. Being the largest producer and exporter of tea, the industry receives implication at both micro and macro levels. But the ongoing crisis in the agricultural sector in general and the tea growing sector in particular lends more significance to the industry. It seems a paradox that when small Indian growers and workers are struggling for their existence, big multinational tea brands accumulate huge profit by exerting pressure on the tea supply chain, and through better networking and lobbying. At the same time, the government and the tea boards at national and regional levels launch a large number of programmes to upgrade the livelihoods of people who are involved in tea cultivation and processing. The condition of small growers in major tea growing areas of India is pathetic; owing to small landholdings and poor quality of the produce thus the small tea growing industry in Nilgiris is facing many problems which require attention from the state government. Initiatives should be taken to give them ownership titles of their lands to help those getting financial assistances from the Tea Board of India and financial institutions. The study aims to identify the constraints of small tea growers in Nilgiris district of Tamilnadu.

KEYWORDS

tea industry, Nilgiris district, agriculture sector.

INTRODUCTION

Tea industry contributes substantially towards the national and state economy by way of enriching the foreign exchange reservoir and State exchequer besides employment. Today the major tea growing states are Assam, West Bengal, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka. It may be observed that major portion of country's plantation is located in NILGIRIS accounts for nearly 53 per cent of the all India production. Nilgiris tea is well known for its rich taste and colour. Being an agricultural plantation crop and a major revenue generator, tea cultivation has become a lucrative profession in the Nilgiris that has very few business opportunities and plays a vital role in improving the socio-economic condition of the region.

SMALL TEA GROWING INDUSTRY IN NILGIRIS

In Nilgiris, the concept of growing tea in small holdings was unheard of until 1975, when a small beginning was made in Nilgiris. Small farmers in these States started taking up tea cultivation on a large scale during the mid 90's due to good prices that prevailed during 1996-98. The average size of such holdings is less than one hectare. These small and marginal farmers are dependent on tea and derive major portion of their cash income from tea. Presently around 45,000 small growers are operating in Nilgiris. Since 1995, the quantity of tea produced and sold by the small growers has gone up many folds over the years. At present, the quantum of tea produced by the small growers in Nilgiris is around 65 million Kgs. But many problems and constraints have weakened this small tea growing industry in the region.

The small tea growers don't get proper price for their produce from the large tea estates. They don't have "possession certificates" for their cultivating land due to which they are unable to register themselves with the Tea Board of India and get benefits from various policy initiatives. Due to the same reason they are also unable to get loans from banks. Thus, the small tea growing industry in Nilgiris is facing many problems which require urgent attention from the state government. Initiatives should be taken to give them ownership titles of their lands to help them getting financial assistances from the Tea Board of India and financial institutions.

BACKGROUND OF SMALL TEA GROWERS

India is the largest producer and consumer of tea in the world. Tea industries provide employment for more than 1.1 million laborers in large plantations and provide income for about 2.5 lakh small tea growers. The tea industry is accountable for the livelihood for major chunk of population in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu. Marginalization of a community results in their exclusion from meaningful participation in society. One such group which is affected worse from such marginalization is the "Small Tea Growers" community in Nilgiris district. As small tea growers, their livelihood is in the verge of collapse due to lack of streamlined business plan, congenial structure and absence of bargaining power.

The low quality of cultivation due to the unscientific mode of cultivation is also acknowledged as one of the problem for poor economic returns. There is no alternate source of income, making their scope very limited for survival. They have no other technical skills and depend on tea plantation for their livelihood and Team Explore believes empowerment is a process that allows small tea growers to gain the knowledge, skill-sets and attitude needed to cope with the changing world and the circumstances in which they live.

PROBLEMS OF SMALL TEA GROWERS

- Small Tea Growers (STGs) are not organized and not aware of their rights.
- Dependency on leaf agents or sub agents to sell their produce.
- Insufficient income which leads to indebtedness which in turn make them not able to meet basic family expenses.
- Lack of knowledge on provision and processes for availing government facilities meant for small growers.
- Lack of credit facility to procure fertilizers, pesticides and other farm equipments for effective cultivation and better yield.
- No access to technical training institutes on management of crops.
- Problems in getting fair price for their produce.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Small Tea Growing Industry in Nilgiris has immense potential from the points of both providing employment as well as generating revenue. It can be a lucrative profession and can play a vital role in improving the socio-economic condition of the economically backward state. But the small tea growers are facing many problems related to availability of finance, processing of tea leaves etc. They are forced to sell their tea leaves to big tea gardens at through away prices due to the absence of tea factories of their own. The study aims at identifying the constraints faced by the small tea growers in Nilgiris district. The study is focused on factors that influence the tea growers to involve in tea cultivation, satisfaction level and problems faced by small tea growers .

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To know the Socio economic background of tea growers in Nilgiris District.
- To study about the factors that influences the tea growers to involve in tea cultivation and to know the satisfaction level of the tea growers in Nilgiris district.
- To identify the problems faced by tea growers in Nilgiris district.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study has been undertaken in Nilgiris. Primary data has been collected from the small tea growers with the help of both open and close ended questionnaires. The size of the sample is 150, who are small tea growers. Convenience sampling technique is used in selecting the sample. Simple Percentage analysis and Weighted Average Method have been used to analyze the data,

HYPOTHESIS

The suitable hypothesis is framed and tested in the relevant places.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**TABLE-1: GENERAL PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS**

Personal Details		No of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	98	66
	Female	52	34
Education	Illiterate	11	8
	School level	30	20
	Higher secondary	53	35
	Under graduate	48	32
	Professional	8	5
Income per Annum from Tea Cultivation	Below Rs2,00,000	76	50
	Rs.2,00,000-Rs 4,00,000	58	38
	Rs.4,00,000-Rs 6,00,000	10	8
	Above Rs6,00,000	6	4
	Total	150	100

It is observed from the above table that, out of 150 respondents 66 per cent are male, 35 per cent have completed higher secondary education and 50 per cent of the respondents are earning an income of Rs.2, 00,000 per annum.

TABLE-2: CULTIVATION DETAILS

Cultivation Details		No of Respondents	Percentage
Type Of Cultivation	Traditional	49	32
	Modern	101	68
Source Of Knowledge	UPASI	35	34
	Tea board	66	66
Class Interval of Plucking of Tea Leaves	Less than 10 days	13	8
	11-20 days	103	68
	21-30 days	34	24
Quantity Supplied Per Month	Less than1000kg	67	44
	1001-2000kg	62	42
	Above 2000 Kg	21	14
Mode of Supply	Private	96	64
	Co-operative society	54	36
	Total	150	100

The above table reveals the respondents according to the type of cultivation. Out of 150 respondents 68 per cent of respondents have done modern method of tea cultivation and 32per cent of respondents have done traditional method of tea cultivation.

TABLE-3: LEVEL OF SATISFACTION OF RESPONDENTS

Factors	Highly Satisfied		Satisfied		Neutral		Not satisfied		Highly satisfied	
	No	per cent	No	per cent	No	per cent	No	per cent	No	per cent
Marketing facilities	13	9	61	41	24	16	49	33	3	2
Profit	15	10	27	18	77	51	22	15	9	6
Loan facilities	9	6	34	23	55	37	41	27	11	7
Price of tea	12	8	24	16	61	41	50	33	3	2
Availability of labour	16	11	22	15	75	50	27	18	10	7
Availability of saplings	11	7per cent	28	19	41	27	55	37	15	10
Storage facilities	20	13	22	15	63	42	33	22	10	7
Subsides by the government	7	5	26	17	50	33	61	41	8	5
Activities of tea board	6	4	36	24	58	39	36	24	14	9
Transport facilities	14	9	19	13	63	42	48	32	6	4

It is evident from the above table that 41per cent of the respondents are satisfied with marketing facilities. The respondents are neutral in their satisfaction level towards profit earned (51 per cent), loan facilities available (37 per cent), price of tea (41 per cent), availability of labour (50 per cent), storage facilities (42 per cent), activities tea board (42per cent) and transport facilities (42per cent). The respondents are not satisfied with availability of saplings (37 per cent) and the subsidies of the government (41per cent).

TABLE-4: PROBLEMS FACED BY TEA GROWERS IN TEA CULTIVATION

Problems	No of Respondents							Total	Avg	Rank
High cost of manure	49	156	25	152	165	18	7	572	3.81	6
Poor saplings	245	120	50	116	48	42	0	621	4.14	4
Soil Erosion	210	324	80	36	33	44	10	737	4.91	3
Poor rainfall	266	330	25	104	27	14	19	785	5.23	2
High cost of pesticides	133	174	100	140	30	32	8	617	4.11	5
Lack of skilled labour	77	48	110	64	27	108	10	444	2.96	7
Lack of co-operation from workers	413	126	70	76	93	6	21	805	5.37	1

The above table clearly depicts that lack of co-operation from workers is ranked as first and it has been the foremost problem faced by Tea growers. Poor rainfall is second and followed by soil erosion. Poor sapling is the fifth problem followed by high cost of manure and lack of skilled labour.

TABLE-5: PROBLEMS OF TEA GROWERS IN MARKETING OF TEA

Problems	1	2	3	4	Total	Avg	Rank
Inadequate storage facilities	204	66	64	45	379	2.52	4
Lack of transportation facilities	240	93	58	30	421	2.81	1
Lack of market information	232	75	38	48	393	2.62	3
Lack of insurance coverage	172	165	62	21	420	2.8	2

According to the above table lack of transportation facilities is the main problem faced by respondents and it is ranked as first followed by lack of insurance coverage. Lack of market information is ranked as third problem and an inadequate storage facility is ranked as fourth problem.

TABLE-6: FINANCIAL PROBLEMS FACED BY TEA GROWERS

Factors	1	2	3	Total	Avg	Rank
Lack of finance for tea cultivation	150	88	56	294	1.96	3
Unavailability of Loans	183	106	36	325	2.17	1
High interest rates	171	100	43	314	2.09	2

From the analysis through weighted average method on financial problems faced by tea growers have revealed that the unavailability of loans is the first problem faced by the respondents. High interest rate is the second problem faced and lack of finance is third problem faced by the tea growers in Nilgiris.

TABLE-7: REASON TO CHOOSE TEA CULTIVATION

Reasons	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Avg	Rank
Requires less water	120	244	39	98	3	504	3.36	4
Ancestral practice	385	108	66	18	15	592	3.95	1
Less cost of cultivation	170	220	123	22	9	544	3.63	3
Less pest and disease	80	88	225	54	10	457	3.05	5
Sufficient profit	315	132	66	24	20	557	3.71	2

The above table reveals that, ancestral practice has been ranked first and it is the primary reason for choosing tea cultivation, sufficient profit has ranked second. Less cost of cultivation has ranked third, requires less water has ranked fourth and less pest and disease scored last reason for choosing this tea cultivation.

CHI-SQUARE

The Chi-Square Test is used mainly to test the independence of the attribute factors. In other words chi-square test is used to test whether one factor has significant influence over the other.

a) EDUCATION VS MARKETING FACILITIES

Hypothesis: "There is no significant relationship between education and satisfaction with marketing facilities"

TABLE-8 EDUCATION AND MARKETING FACILITIES OF TEA

	Calculated Value	Table value	df	Significance
Chi-square	157.8403	31.4	20	NS

Chi-square test is applied to find whether there is significant relationship between educations of the respondents with satisfaction with marketing facilities of tea. The calculated value of chi-square is 157.8403 which is greater than the table value of 31.4 at 5% level of significance. Since calculated value is greater than the table value it is inferred that there is relationship between education and satisfaction with marketing facilities of tea, hence the hypothesis is accepted.

B) OCCUPATION VS UNAVAILABILITY OF LOANS

Hypothesis: " There is no significant relationship between occupation and unavailability of loans for tea growers"

TABLE -9 OCCUPATION AND UNAVAILABILITY OF LOANS

	Calculated Value	Table value	df	Significance
Chi-square	69.34	15.5	8	NS

Chi-square test id applied to find whether there is significant relationship between occupation and unavailability of loans for tea growers. The calculated value of chi-square 69.34 is which is greater than the table value of 15.5 at 5% level of significance. Since calculated value is greater than the table value it is inferred that there is relationship between occupation and unavailability of loans for tea growers.

SUGGESTIONS

- ❖ In India a substantial amount of tea comes from small tea growers. The quality of raw material provided by them is of poor standard. The regulatory authority should formulate strict measures so that these teas should get quality raw material.
- ❖ The marketing related aspects are not at par with International standards. The best way of marketing tea is through auction system. Auction centre acts as a single window where the quality, quantity and prices are regulated. However the Government of India should see to it that the entire tea produce should come to the auction floor. The auction systems should further be strengthened.

- ❖ It is suggested that tea growers can be given more transportation facilities for marketing of tea and loan facilities can be availed to tea growers which is the major problem faced by tea growers.

CONCLUSION

Tea is the most widely consumed drink in the world. 3.5 billion cups of Tea is consumed daily, across the world. The medicinal use of tea was known long before it was used as a beverage. Tea is one of the most important non alcoholic drinks and is popular due to its stimulating property. In India tea is the main beverage for each and every household. The study on problems and prospects of Small Tea Growers at Nilgiris helps to identify the reasons of choosing tea cultivation at Nilgiris. The study also revealed problems faced by tea growers at Nilgiris district. The various problems faced by tea growers such as lack of co-operation, unavailability of loans, lack of transportation facilities. The study also brought out some suggestions as to how the production of tea by small tea growers has to be improved. Small Tea growers should bring down the cost production and improving the worker's productivity through various reforms. It is suggested to introduce some promotional campaigns so as to make people aware of the quality of Indian tea abroad and Value added products can also be marketed in International markets.

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