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A Study on the Scope of Agricultural Marketing with Reference to Mushroom Cultivation and Marketing in Indian Context: Explanatory Approach

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Abstract: *In India 70% of the total population living in villages depend on agriculture as one of their main occupations. After the economic liberalization and globalization Agricultural marketing crosses every limit and starts growing like anything. Communication becomes faster and lots of evolutions happen in IT industry which leads to the advancement of the agricultural marketing in India. The information about the marketplace, pricing of the agricultural products enable farmers effectively to quote the actual price tag and to find out the actual marketplace where they have to explore effectively. The information is available through different media like radio, TV, newspaper, different advertisement campaign by Govt. etc. Mushroom cultivation in India first done at Solan, HP, in mid-sixties. It was being started by Dr. E.F.K.Mental from Germany. In the project his partners were late Dr. P.K. Seth from the Dept. of Agriculture and Dr. S. Kumar. Though mushroom is having a great food value, it not being used much in India. This may due to the unawareness of the local people. The basic reason behind this, is that the lack of marketing in the Indian market. This product not being promoted properly in the Indian market that's why people still are not quite aware about the product. Protein content in mushroom is much higher than the fish, chicken and egg. Most importantly mushroom is highly proteinaceous, but fat (cholesterol) free product and a heart patient also can take that. So if the promotion of this product has done in proper way then it could be a fruitful business in Indian market.*

Keywords: *Agricultural Marketing, Mushroom, Mushroom cultivation, Food value*

I. INTRODUCTION

Primarily agricultural marketing system depends on the various sectors. It also operates according to the forces of supply and demand in the private sector. The participation of Indian Govt. wasn't very much to protect the interests of producers and consumers and promoting organized marketing of agricultural commodities. Central Govt. provides very helpful assistance to develop the infrastructure of agriculture marketing. Various other Central Govt. organizations like The Food Corporation of India, The Cotton Corporation of India, The Jute Corporation of India etc. also involved themselves to develop the marketing activities of agriculture product.

Firstly, the button mushroom was cultivating in India by Mr. Stewart along with a team of workers from the Dept. of Agriculture at Lalmandi. It started as Pilot project in Srinagar. Mushroom is a vegetarian food and it is a suitable substitute for meat and eggs. It is very easily digestible. It is very popular in developed countries but it is just start getting popular in developing countries like India. It has a very special taste and high nutritious value. Many other preparations like soup, pickles are also made by it. Mushroom is having very short life after harvesting and hence they are sold in fresh form. Mushroom consumption increasing in the North-East region like Guwahati, Shillong, Kohima etc. and for that, these are the potential market.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study have mentioned below:

- 1) To study various scopes of agricultural marketing in India
- 2) To understand different opportunities and challenges faced by farmers during mushroom cultivation
- 3) To study the growth potential of mushroom marketing in India
- 4) To study various marketing strategies applied for promoting mushroom in India

A. Objective of agriculture marketing in India

- 1) First to make sure that the primary producers i.e. the farmers should get the good value after the business. Many a times it happens that the farmers who are the actual producer of the agricultural product, not benefitted much due to the presence of the middle parties. So the farmers should get a good value for his labor.
- 2) Farmers should get all the facilities on the field whenever they are producing for the common people of the country.
- 3) Due to the presence of many middle parties, when the product comes to the ultimate consumers then the product become costly. The profit margin should be reasonable from top to bottom.
- 4) Farmers should first focus on quality of the product then everything (especially marketing) should taking into the account
- 5) Products should be available at every level at every kind of market, so that there shouldn't be any gap.
- 6) Channel members' performance has to be very effective to increase the productivity at each and every level.

B. Ways of Agriculture Marketing in India

The ways of agriculture marketing are describing below –

Sell to money lenders or traders – From the total production farmers used to sell the maximum part to the money lenders or the traders. According to an estimate 85% of wheat, 75% of oil seeds in U.P., 90% of jute in West Bengal and 60% of wheat, 70% of oil seeds and 35% of cotton in Punjab are sold by the farmers in the villages themselves. Money lenders used to act as commission agent. They are basically the middle man between the farmers and the wholesalers.

Hats – Hat is purely a village market which happens once or twice a week. People used to come over there for both of the purposes i.e. buying or selling goods. This is absolutely an unorganized marketplace.

Wholesale Market – Generally situated at city area. Farmers used to come to wholesale market to sell their product. From there only the ultimate consumers are getting their product.

Co-operatives – This is a kind of society formed by the farmers only. This form helps them in collective bargaining. This society is being formed to facilitate the farmers work and to save them from any kind of market exploitation.




III. MUSHROOM

Mushroom with some other fungi are something special and different in the living world, being neither plants nor animals. They come under a special kingdom called myceteae. In broad sense mushroom is a macro fungus with a distinctive fruiting body, which can be either epigeous or hypogeous and large enough to be seen with naked eyes and to be picked by hand.

A. Mushroom Cultivation in India

Generally three types of mushroom are cultivated in India. These are shown in table no.-1

Table No. – 1: Types of mushroom cultivated in India

Sr. No.	Name	Botanical Name	Photo
1	White Mushroom	Agaricus bisporus	
2	Paddy Straw Mushroom	Volvariella volvacea	
3	Oyster Mushroom	Pleurotus-sajor-kaju	

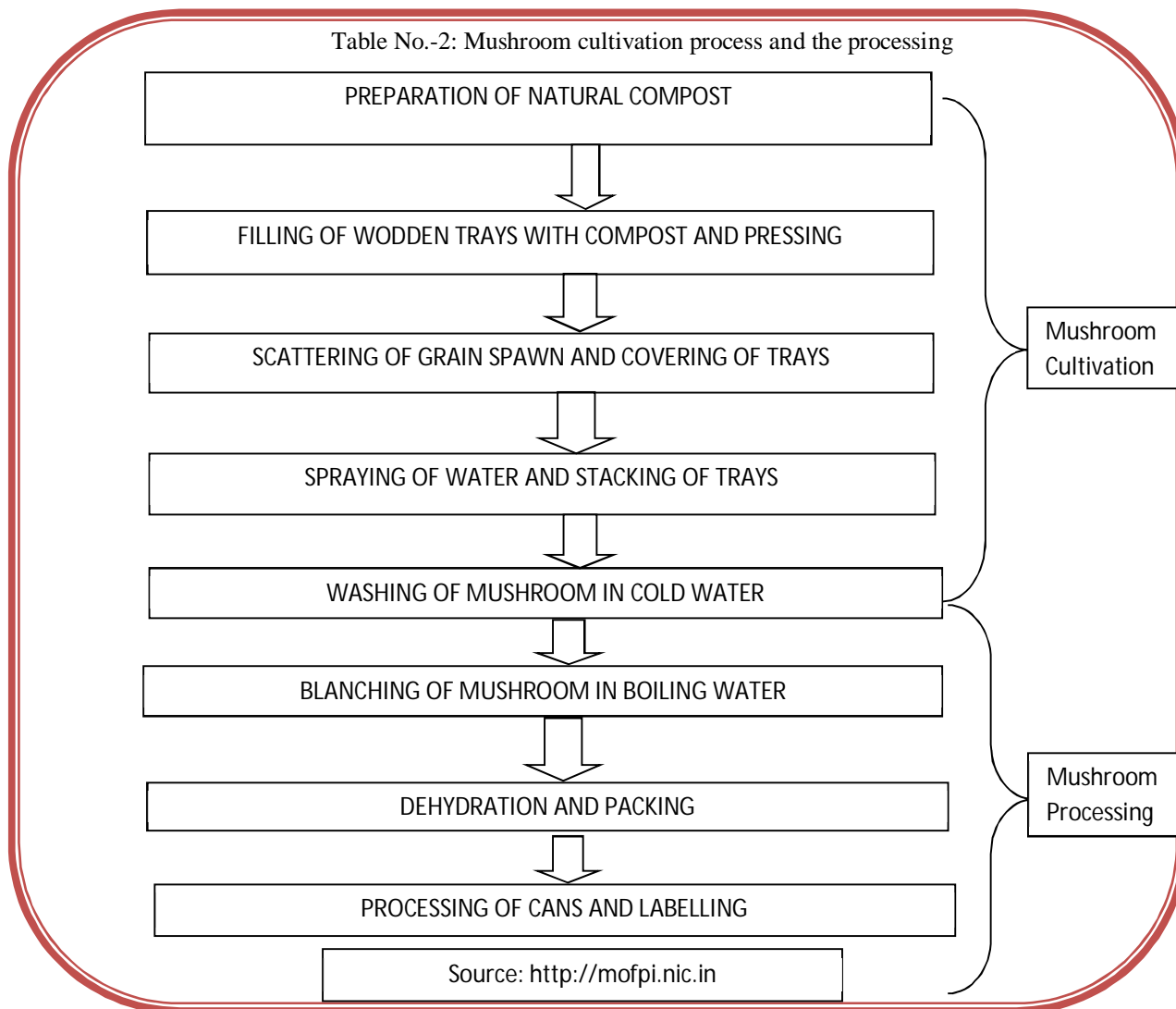
Compiled from different sources

B. Cultivation Process & Mushroom Processing

- 1) Selection of strain
- 2) Maintenance of strains
- 3) Spawn
- 4) Compost

During the mushroom cultivation most important things that are required - good compost, good quality reliable spawn and right temperature throughout the process. Natural compost is prepared from horse dung, wheat or barley straw. Compost preparation is very important and vital. Mushrooms are grown in wooden trays or boxes. Firstly the trays are filled well by the compost and there should be some space on top of the tray. Then the spawn is mixed with the compost and again a thin layer of compost is given. Then the trays are covered gently by newspaper sheet or polythene bag and the water is being given regularly to maintain a specific humidity. At a maintained temperature of 24C – 25C white comma shaped mycelium comes out. Firstly the maintained temperature will be 24C-25C then it should be 18C. After that it will take almost 12 – 15 days for spawn running. Then some quantity of casing soil is put over the culture and treated with formalin solution properly. Sterilization is required to kill insects, nematodes and molds. After this procedure trays are prepared for regular production.

Fresh Mushroom has very limited life and for that proper processing is recommended to increase their shelf-life. Firstly fresh mushrooms are washed in cold water and then in boiled water for about 3-4 min. Then they are dehydrated in a dryer and packed. It has to be pretreated in a solution containing brine to prevent discoloration. Packing is very crucial and critical as moisture affects mushroom very quickly. Plain cans and a brine of 2% salt and 0.2% citric acid are used for packing. The cans are exhausted at 19c for 7-8 mins, sealed and processed under pressure for 20-25 mins. The process flow chart as follows (Shown in Table No.-2):-



C. Nutritional Value of Mushroom

100 gm of uncooked, white button mushroom contains the following nutrients. (Shown in Table No.-3)

Table No. – 3: Nutritional value of mushroom

Nutrients	Value
Folate (Vitamin – B9)	16 mcg
Niacin (Vitamin – B3)	3.6 mg
Pantothenic Acid (Vitamin B5)	1.5 mg
Riboflavin (Vitamin B2)	0.4 mg
Thiamin (Vitamin B1)	0.1 mg
Vitamin B6	0.1 mg
Copper	0.3 mg
Iron	0.5 mg
Magnesium	9 mg
Phosphorus	86 mg
Potassium	318 mg
Selenium	9.3 mcg
Zinc	0.5 mg
Fibre	

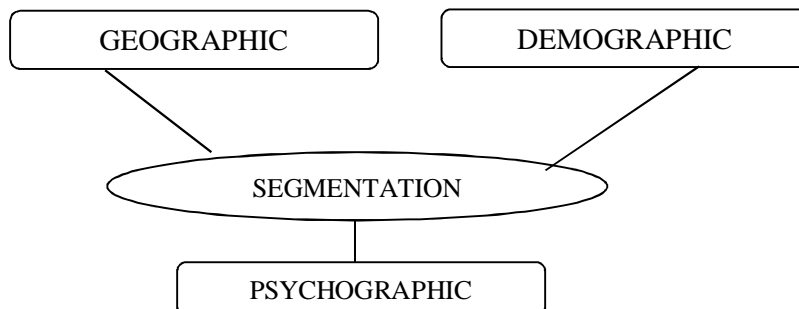
Source: <http://lifestyle.iloveindia.com>

D. Marketing Plan for Mushroom



Mushroom a very nutritious food product, not accepted in India in large scale. People are taking fish, egg, chicken, meat, milk as proteinaceous food items but unfortunately the people are not aware about the item which contains more protein than these food items and i.e. mushroom. The marketing of mushroom in India (especially in rural area), is not a very easy task. Though the urban people aware about the food value of mushroom but in rural India still it is unsatisfactory.

Mushroom contains cholesterol free protein and for that a heart patient also can take that as a substitute for egg, milk, meat etc. For effective marketing of mushroom it is mandatory to segment the total market in a proper way. The major segmentation variables for consumer market are:-



E. Geographic Segmentation

- 1) *East India* – People from Eastern side well accepted this nutritious food. They are aware about the mushroom. So the promotion activity in this part will be easier than the other part because the people are already aware about the product. Especially in the north-eastern part of India people are using mushroom more frequently.
- 2) *West India* – The urban people from western part has accepted this food but in the rural part still promotion required because of the unawareness.
- 3) *North India* – In Northern part still the total market is untapped for this product. So there is a better scope for marketing in this area. Awareness campaign, proper communication through the effective media could be the best solution for this untapped market.
- 4) *South India* – In Southern part of India except Chennai almost everywhere it is an equal distribution. In Chennai, the use of mushroom is much more than other places in South India.

F. Demographic Segmentation

This demographic segmentation is done basically on the basis of age group. The age groups that have been taken are:-

- 1) *16-25* – This is basically a very young age group. They are going to take mushroom for some different taste and to try something new. High food value could be a good alternative factor over here.
- 2) *25-40* – This age group are young to middle aged people. This age group accepts the high food value of mushroom and they start taking this food
- 3) *Above 40* – Here the people are more exposed to the risk of heart diseases. As mushroom is a cholesterol free proteinaceous food so people from the different parts of India accept that.

G. Psychographic Segmentation

It is divided into two basic segments. Firstly the people who are actually eager to eat outside more, they can have this food for some change like instead of having egg, fish they can have this. And most importantly this can be taken by the vegetarian people also. So in hotels, food plaza this can be promoted as a nice, tasty food.

Secondly it can be made at home, because the preparation of this is very easy and due to this segment the raw materials (raw mushroom) can be promoted and sold in the market.

H. Target Audience

Once the market is being segmented properly then the marketer targets its client base. Here the target customer will be the total untapped market. Basically there is a problem with the rural marketing. Because of unawareness, lack of knowledge the rural people is still not aware about the usefulness and the food-value of mushroom. So the target audience will be the urban people, who are already, use the product but the marketer has to ensure more selling in that part and the other part will be the rural people where there is a lots of opportunity.

I. Advertising

One of the major reasons due to which mushroom unable to reach in consumers' mind is advertising. Not a single effective advertising campaign is being done. So, to increase its reach in Indian market marketer has to use some proper media like Television, radio, posters, banners, Newspapers etc. Awareness campaign about the food value and alternative source of protein could be very effective. Television and radios are there almost at every room in rural places also. So the marketer can start with some awareness program in television and radios. Information could be pass through roadside posters, banners etc. In newspaper, the marketer can give the advertisement of the importance of mushroom in local language.

J. Challenges

- 1) *Unawareness* – As it is being said earlier that the maximum populations are the rural population, so due to the unawareness about the food value of the mushroom it could be a great challenge for the marketer.
- 2) *Lack of Knowledge* – Lack of knowledge regarding the food value of mushroom amongst the rural people one of the major factors. There are many types of mushroom, but some of them are poisonous. Due to lack of knowledge the rural people many a times take these mushrooms for cooking which leads to lots of fatal diseases.

- 3) *Communication - Gap* – Communication gap between the marketer and the consumers is also a problem. There is no such promotion program has been taken to make people aware about the food value of this nutritious food.
- 4) *Lack of Proper Distribution Channel* – There is also a problem with distribution channel and due to this fact this product is not being reached properly in consumers' hand. Distributors want the mushroom at a very low cost and for that the primary producers don't select the distributors. Sometimes the cost becomes lower than the production cost. But ultimately the sufferer are the customers, in spite of having interest to mushroom they are not getting the things at proper time.

K. Important Support

There are two main governing bodies that infrastructural support to do mushroom business in India. That are - Govt. of India and The New Delhi Municipal Council. Locally the Japanese Ladies Group in New Delhi promoted the sales of the product.

In modern days a new training package focusing on both mushroom cultivation techniques and marketing strategies has been developed. With this effort there are many institution have shown interest in setting up similar program for the mentally challenged people throughout the developing world. So with all these effort mushroom cultivation now-a-days becomes very popular.

IV. CONCLUSION

So, mushroom can be used as nutritious food substituted for milk, egg, meat etc. They rise up from lignocellulosic waste but still they are very nourishing. Mushrooms are also environment friendly. Out of about 2000 edible mushroom knows, about 280 species are produced in India. The most important mushroom is Guchhi (*Morchella* sp.), which is dried and exported to western countries, collected from India. This Species are not being used domestically.

Mushroom can serve as agents for promoting equitable economic growth in the society. They are unique group of fungi through which we can pilot a non-green revolution in less developed countries and in the world at large.

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