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Constraints Faced By the Farmers in the Production and Marketing of Tea: A Study in Wayanad District of Kerala

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Abstract: ***Wayanad holds the second position with respect to area and production of tea in Kerala after Idukki district. Among the plantation crops in Kerala, tea plantations are very important in terms of employment and income to the people of hilly region. This high altitude district is characterised by the cultivation of perennial plantation crops and spices. Tea is one of the major plantation crops produced in Wayanad. The major tea producing district is Idukki with 21,970 hectares area, followed by Wayanad with 5,306 hectares and production of tea was 44.9 MT and 12.4 MT respectively. The present study was conducted at Wayanad district. For studying the constraints faced by the farmers, a survey was conducted in Kalpetta and Sulthan Bathery blocks which stood first and second respectively in terms of acreage and production. From the selected two blocks, a list of village panchayats growing tea crop was arranged in descending order according to their acreage. One gramapanchayat from each block having maximum area under tea was selected for the study. The selected panchayats were Muppainad from Kalpetta block and Ambalavayal from Sulthan Bathery block. The study was based on primary data. From each of the selected gramapanchayats, 12 farmers each of small and large size were selected. The total sample size of study was thus 48. Garrett's ranking method was used for the constraint analysis. High labour cost was considered as major production constraint faced by tea growers and high price fluctuation of green tea leaves was considered as the most important marketing constraint faced by the tea growers in Wayanad district.***

Keywords: Constraints, Labour cost, Marketing, Garrett's ranking

I. INTRODUCTION

India is the second largest producer of tea in the world after China. The country is home to a wide variety of teas including CTC tea, orthodox tea, green tea and organic tea. Unlike many other tea producing and exporting nations, India has a manufacturing base for both CTC and orthodox tea, in addition to green tea. India offers high quality speciality teas, such as Darjeeling, Assam Orthodox and high-range Nilgiri tea, Munnar tea which have a distinct aroma, strength, colour and flavor. The tea industry in India is about 172 years old and it is perhaps one of the industries which have maintained their leadership in terms of production over the past 150 years. Indian tea is among the finest in the world owing to strong geographical indications, heavy investments in tea processing units, continuous innovation, augmented product mix and strategic market expansion (Tea Board of India, 2018).

In 2017-18, the major tea producing district in Kerala is Idukki with 21,970 hectares followed by Wayanad with 5,306 hectares and production of 44.9 MT and 12.4 MT respectively. Other major tea producing districts are Kollam, Kottayam, Thiruvananthapuram and Palakkad. Though tea is grown in all these districts there is considerable spatial concentration in two districts, Idukki and Wayanad. They account for about 87.24 per cent of the total tea area of Kerala, Idukki has 72.40 per cent and Wayanad has 14.84 per cent of tea growing area in the state (Tea Board of India, 2000). In 2017-18 cash crops (cashew, rubber, pepper, coconut, cardamom, tea and coffee) constituted 61.6 per cent. The area under crops like rubber, coffee, tea and cardamom was 27.3 per cent of the total cropped area in Kerala (Tea Statistics, Tea Board of India, 2018).

Tea is marketed through the different channels such as i) sale by auction, ii) sale by mutual treaty iii) by forward sales through selling or buying agents, iv) packaging and retailing the produce directly. Of these, public auctions are the most popular channel of marketing. There are three auction centers in south India and Kerala has one auction center in Kochi. Tea trade is highly sensitive and the domestic demand and the unexported surplus tea remaining within the country dictate the price levels. In addition to this many farmers who were not taking part in the auctions sold through the commission agents also.

Therefore, the present study was conducted to assess the major constraints faced by the tea farmers in Wayanad district of Kerala in order to derive solutions to improve the net returns and socio-economic status of the farmers.

II. METHODOLOGY

A. Sampling and Data collection

Wayanad district was purposively selected as it is the major producer of tea in Kerala after Idukki district. Out of four blocks, Kalpetta and Sulthan Bathery which stood first and second respectively in terms of acreage and production were selected purposively for the present study. From the selected blocks, a list of villages growing tea crop was arranged in descending order according to their acreage. One gramapanchayat from each block having maximum area under tea was selected for the study. The selected villages were Muppainad from Kalpetta block and Ambalavayal from Sulthan Bathery block. The study focused mainly on primary data, collected from 48 tea farmers *viz*, 12 farmers each of large and small from each of the selected gramapanchayats. Method of sampling adopted was simple random sampling. The detailed assessment and interpretation of constraints faced by tea farmers was required to find solutions to improve the net returns and also to suggest policy implications.

In order to analyse the production and marketing constraints faced by small and large tea farmers, Henry Garrett's ranking technique was used. This technique helps in converting the changes of orders of constraints in to numerical scores (Zalkuwi *et al*., 2015). Several constraints were noted and enlisted in tabular form based on prevailing conditions in the selected area. During the survey, respondents were requested to rank the constraints without any bias. The obtained ranks were then converted to per cent position by using the formula shown below.

Per cent position = $\frac{100 \times (R_{ij} - 0.5)}{N_j}$

Where,

R_{ij} = Rank given for the i^{th} factor by j^{th} person.

N_j = No. of constraints ranked by the j^{th} person.

(Garrett and Woodworth, 1969)

Using Garrett's conversion table, the calculated per cent positions were converted to Garrett score. The sum and mean value of Garrett scores were worked out from the scores attributed to each constraint by the individual respondents. Mean scores obtained for each constraints were arranged in the ascending order and the constraint with the maximum mean score was identified as the serious problem faced by tea farmers in the selected area.

Fig 1: Political map of Wayanad district

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III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Production Constraints faced by tea Growers in Wayanad District

A lot of production constraints were being faced by the farmers cultivating tea in the selected gramapanchayats. Farmers from the selected villages were surveyed for obtaining information. Detailed assessment and interpretation of the constraints was required to improve the net returns and thereby livelihood of the farmers. A total of 15 general production constraints in tea cultivation were enlisted and the farmers were asked to rank based on its severity. From this the most important 10 constraints ranked by majority of farmers were tabulated and presented in table 1. The results revealed that, high labour cost was considered as major problem faced by tea growers with Garret's score of 80.50 followed by non-availability of labour having a score of 69.50. Lack of adequate finance was the next major problem with Garrett's score of 62.00 followed by high price of input (56.00). Other production constraints faced by farmers in the study area were incidence of pests and diseases having a score of 50.00 followed by lack of government support (44.00), lack of technical knowledge about chemical use (38.00), lack of irrigation facilities (31.00) and unfavourable weather (19.00).

Table 1. Production constraints faced by tea growers in Wayanad district

Sl. No	Production constraints	Garrett's mean score	Rank
1	High labour cost	80.50	1
2	Non availability of labour	69.50	2
3	Lack of adequate finance	62.00	3
4	High price of input	56.00	4
5	Incidence of pests and diseases	50.00	5
6	Lack of government support	44.00	6
7	Lack of technical knowledge about chemical use	38.00	7
8	Lack of irrigation facilities	31.00	8
9	Unfavourable weather	19.00	9

Source: Primary data

B. Marketing Constraints faced by tea growers in Wayanad District

Marketing constraints involved problems faced by the tea growers during marketing of green tea leaves. The tea farmers in the selected gramapanchayats of Wayanad district were facing a number of marketing constraints and were given in table 2. The results revealed that high price fluctuation of green tea leaves was considered as the most important marketing constraint faced by the tea growers in Wayanad district with Garrett's score of 80. The tea growers expressed the view that exploitation by middle men was the second most important constraint in green tea leaf marketing in the study area with Garrett's score of 67.50. Most of the tea cultivators sell their tea leaves to intermediaries and they get only 10 or 11 rupees for 1 kg of green tea leaves. High transportation cost was third constraint having a score of 59.50. The cultivators are mainly in hilly areas and the public transportation facilities are very less in this area and the climatic conditions adversely affected the tea cultivation. The other marketing constraints were delayed payment with Garrett's score of 53 followed by defective and faulty weighing of green tea leaves (47.00), lack of market information (40.50), lack of adequate storage facilities (32.00), and lack of adequate processing facilities with the Garrett's score of 20.00.

Table 2. Marketing constraints faced by tea growers in Wayanad district

Sl. No	Marketing constraints	Garrett's mean score	Rank
1	High price fluctuation of green tea leaves	80.00	1
2	Exploitation by middle men	67.50	2
3	High transportation cost	59.50	3
4	Delayed payment	53.00	4
5	Defective and faulty weighing of green tea leaves	47.00	5
6	Lack of market information	40.50	6
7	Lack of adequate storage facilities	32.00	7
8	Lack of adequate processing facilities	20.00	8

Source: Primary data

A similar study by various researchers reported that high labour cost was the major production constraint and high price fluctuation of green tea leaves was the major marketing constraint faced by farmers (Vidya, 2018; Das, 2019; Sharma and Sharma, 2019).

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IV. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Garrett's ranking method was used for analysing the constraints. High labour cost was considered as major production constraint faced by tea growers and high price fluctuation of green tea leaves was considered as the most important marketing constraint faced by the tea growers in Wayanad district. The main reason for high labour cost and shortages of labour is that, the MNREGP started in the Wayanad district mainly the women labourers going for this work. Another reason is the price of tea leaves is very low. Most of the tea cultivators sell their tea leaves to intermediaries and they get only 10 or 11 rupees for 1 kg of green tea leaves. Another important problem faced by the tea cultivators is the high cost of transportation. The cultivators are mainly in hilly areas and the public transportation facilities are very less in this area and the climatic conditions adversely affected the tea cultivation. Inspite of these problems, lots of farmers came to tea cultivation, the main reason is that compared to other plantation crops, tea gives a steady monthly income to farmers. Farmers pluck the tea leaves twice in a month this helps to increase their monthly income and it is profitable. Most of the farmers support sustainable agriculture in their farms.

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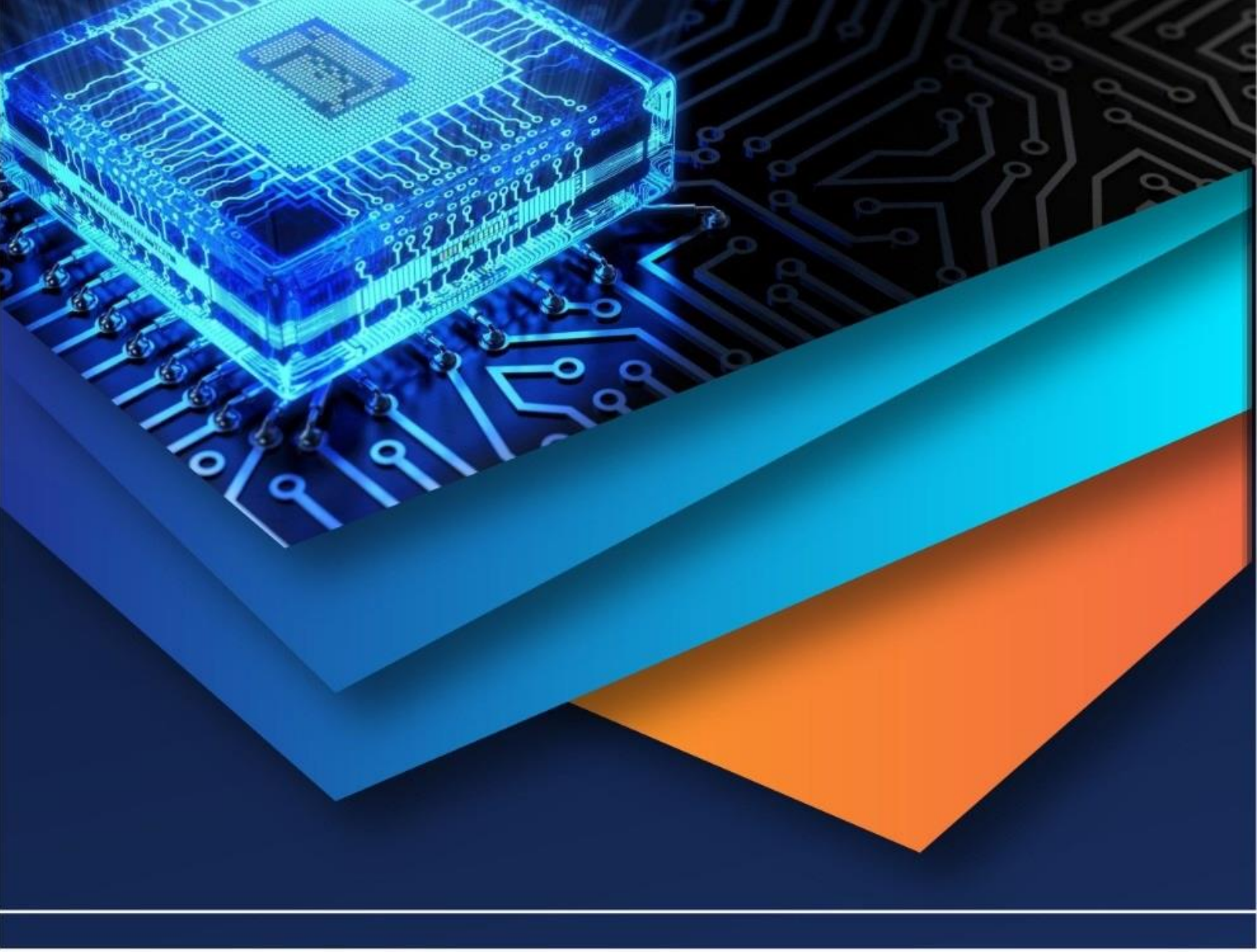

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