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Constraint analysis of Cassava growers and strategies for increasing production and productivity in Salem, Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

In Salem district for the last three years the Cassava area and production has been reduced due to many reasons. Hence, a study was conducted among the Cassava growers in Salem district to assess and identify the constraints influence the low yield and reasons for area shrinkage. It was found that, among the several constraints marketing constraints like exploitation by middle man (88.33 per cent), malpractices in Point scale fixation (86.66 per cent), lack of regulated market (83.33 per cent) low price for tubers due to fluctuations in price (80.00 per cent) followed by production constraints like mosaic and tuber rot diseases (83.33 per cent), labour scarcity (80.00 per cent) un availability of quality planting materials (73.33 per cent) and lack of short duration varieties (68.33 per cent) were the major constraints expressed by many of the cassava growers.

Key words : Cassava, Constraints, Strategies

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INTRODUCTION

Cassava is an important tuber crop in India grown in 2.7 lakh hectare area with a production of 71 lakh tonnes. The average yield of tapioca is 22 tonnes per hectare. Cassava is a richest source of starch (25 to 35%) mainly processed for starch and sago. Cassava is an industrial crop of Tamil Nadu which occupies 32.97% of the area with 45.98% of the production in India (Edison *et al.,* 2006). In Tamil Nadu major traditional tapioca growing districts are Salem, Namakkal, Erode, Cuddalore, Dharmapuri and Kaniyakumari mostly as rainfed. Among the districts Salem district stands first in area (27000 ha) and with the production of 10.475 lakh MT(Anonymous, 2006).

There are about 900 sago and starch factories in and around Salem, Erode, Namakkal and Dharmapuri districts which depends on tapioca tubers**.** The number of factories in Salem district alone is 650. It is estimated that 60% of the starch produced in India is from Salem district. Because of ease in cultivation, drought tolerance and raise in prices of tubers, the area under tapioca is on increase in other District of Tamil Nadu *viz*., Erode, Trichy, Coimbatore.

Yield gap:

Even though the area is increasing the production is not sufficient to meet the demand of the food and textile industries. Even though the area is increasing, the farmers are cultivating tapioca in larger area; the scientific method of cultivation is poor. Scientists are developing lot of varieties, new improved technologies etc., while seeing the knowledge and adoption of recommended practices were found to be least (Lakshmi and Pal, 1986).

It has been well demonstrated by the research system through its out reach programmes that yield of tapioca could be boosted to a level of 35 tonnes per hectare in farmer's field if farmers adopt the recommended practices. But in practical farmers are getting 20-25 t/ha.

Shrinkage in area:

For the past three years, particularly in Salem district, the tapioca area and production has been reduced. In 2005-2006 the area was about 27,000 ha but this had comedown drastically to 10,564 ha in 2007-2008. It slightly increased to 15,728 ha in 2008-2009. This had created a shortage in the supply of tuber to starch mills and affected the production. Shortage in the supply of tapioca tubers is posing a serious threat to the survey of tapioca starch manufacturing units in Salem districts. Due to the low production about 300 factories have already been closed.

Many farmers switching over to short term crops such as sunflower and maize in