

Research Paper

Constraints Faced by Officials and Farmers in Implementing Vegetable Development Programme

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ABSTRACT

Kerala is a state with invariant demand for vegetables for home consumption. But the production of vegetables in the state is very low when compared to other states, which makes it a consumer state for vegetables. To meet this production insufficiency, Govt. of Kerala launched Vegetable Development Programme (VDP) in the year 2012. The present study entitled "Constraints faced by officials and farmers in implementing Vegetable Development Programme" was carried out in the Malappuram district of Kerala. Untimely sanction of the subsidy, reluctance of youngsters to participate in VDP, and lack of supporting staff were reported as the significant constraints faced by agri officials while implementing the program. Whereas the significant constraints faced by the farmers were stated as high labor costs followed by price fluctuations of the products and problems in marketing the product the farmer.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ① Vegetable farmers face a lot of constraints not only in the production phase but also in their marketing.
- ① However the major constraint among them was the rising labour cost.
- ① The major constraints experienced by the implementing officials were untimely sanctioning of subsidy and staff shortage.
- ① Schemes and subsidies should be implemented based on their needs and suitability in different localities\
- ① Co-ordination between extension officials and farmers must be strengthened for proper technology transfer to uplift vegetable cultivation.

Keywords: Vegetable production, VDP, constraints, Garrett's ranking, officials, farmers, Kerala

Vegetables constitute an indispensable part of the daily diet and are the best source for overcoming micronutrient deficiencies. Kerala is a state where there is a constant demand for vegetables for home consumption. But the production of vegetables in the state is deficient when compared to other states, with self-sufficiency of only 22 percent (Varma, 2016). The state demand for vegetables was nearly 20 lakh tonnes per year. But the domestic production insufficiency has obliged us to depend on other states to meet this demand (Ravi, 2021). To meet

this production insufficiency, Govt. of Kerala launched Vegetable Development Programme (VDP) in the year 2012. The efficiency in the implementation of a program depends on the performance and efficiency of the officials related to the program and the approach of the farmers towards the program. A proper documentation

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of the problems experienced by the officials and farmers is possible only through a constraint analysis. Mohan (2000) pointed out that lack of transportation facilities, political interference in the day-to-day activities, lack of adoption of new technology by the farmer, lack of support from seniors, work pressure, and unavailability of inputs in time were the main constraints faced by AAOs in Northern districts of Karnataka. Mishra (2005) found that the main constraints faced by the extension officers of the Karnataka State Department of Agriculture were transportation problems, lack of availability of inputs on time, frequent taluk meetings, redundant political involvement, vacant posts, and less workforce in the department creating overburden on existing staffs, high work pressure, technical ineffectiveness, and lack of recognition from the superiors. Victor and Anilkumar (2019) reported that the major constraints faced by the Agricultural Officers of Kerala State Department of Agriculture were excessive workload, lack of promotional opportunities, lack of proper training for the officer, lack of need-based schemes and implementation in different localities, political interference in day to day activity

METHODOLOGY

The study was based on primary data obtained by interviewing 60 beneficiaries and 60 non-beneficiaries of the program and 10 officials related to the program. The constraints faced by farmers and officials in implementing VDP were examined using Garrett's ranking technique, as described by Garrett and Woodworth (1969). The respondents were asked to rank the reasons cited for the constraints they experienced while implementing VDP. Garrett's formula for converting ranks into a percent is given by:

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

where,

R_{ij} = rank given for i^{th} factor by j^{th} individual

N_j = several factors ranked by the j^{th} individual.

Using Garrett's table, the estimated percent position was converted to scores. The score of individual respondents was added together for each constraint and was then divided by the total number of respondents for whom the scores were added. Thus the ranking of the constraints was done based on the mean score in descending order.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Three constraints faced by the Agricultural Officers and eleven constraints faced by the farmers were identified. Table 1 shows the constraints faced by the officials.

Table 1: Constraints faced by officials in implementation of VDP

Sl. No.	Constraints	Garrett's Score	Rank
1	Untimely sanction of the subsidy	65.2	I
2	Reluctance of youngsters to participate in VDP	46.2	II
3	Less office staff for inspection/ lack of supporting staff	38.6	III

The major constraints faced by the officials were the untimely sanctioning of the subsidy. In most cases, the subsidy for the farmers was sanctioned late and they were not able to utilize the amount for the next season's cultivation. As a result, their inclusion in VDP program was reduced. Another constraint was the reluctance of the younger generation to participate in VDP. Through VDP, a substantial amount is t annually to encourage a youngster in vegetable farming. But as reported by agriculture officials, most of the youngsters in the study area were not interested in farming and preferred to choose other options instead of vegetable cultivation. Less supporting staff for completing the targets of VDP was also stated as one of the constraints while implementing the program. This was due to the fact that VDP had many components which should be personally confirmed by the Agriculture Officer.

Constraints faced by farmers in carrying out vegetable cultivation and program implementation were identified and ranked in Table 2.

Table 2: Constraints faced by vegetable farmers

Sl. No.	Constraints	Garrett's Score	Rank
1	High labor cost	80.8	I
2	Price fluctuations in produce	63.1	II
3	Problems in the marketing of the produce by farmer	59.4	III
4	Noncoverage of -post-harvest loss in VDP	56.1	IV
5	Preference for other jobs by youngsters	52.9	V
6	Farmers unsatisfied with the subsidy amount	50.6	VI
7	Delay in sanctioning of subsidy amount	50.0	VII
8	Lack of promotional activities by the government	46.6	VIII
9	High cost of inputs	42.5	IX
10	Lack of awareness about the benefits of the program	29.7	X
11	Heavy rains and flood	17.7	XI

The most important constraints expressed by the farmers were high labor costs followed by price fluctuations of the products and problems in marketing the product by the farmer. Kiran and Shivakumar (2017) claimed the major production and marketing constraints faced by farmers were high wage rates, high marketing costs, and price fluctuations.

Suggestions for Overcoming the Constraints

A number of suggestions can be put forward to reduce the difficulty in the implantation of VDP based on this study conducted and the constraints identified. They were—

- ❖ More support should be given to group farming initiatives like cluster development so that they can pool family labor for vegetable cultivation and thereby reducing the cost of hired labor.
- ❖ In order to attract more youngsters to vegetable farming, more programs like training programs, awareness about new techniques, marketing, etc., should be encouraged
- ❖ Schemes should be implemented based on their needs and suitability in different localities.
- ❖ Co-ordination between extension officials and

farmers must be strengthened for proper technology transfer to uplift vegetable cultivation

- ❖ A clerical post should be made in the Krishi Bhavan to reduce the workload.
- ❖ Data banks and different schemes should be digitalized to reduce the paperwork.
- ❖ Government must take proper steps for the timely sanctioning of the subsidies.

CONCLUSION

From this study, it can be concluded that the significant constraints faced by the officials were untimely sanction of the subsidy, reluctance of youngsters to participate in VDP, and lack of supporting staff. As reported by the farmers, the major primary constraints were high labour costs followed by price fluctuations of the produce products and problems in marketing the product by the farmer. The constraints faced by the respondents need attention from the policymakers and government to improve the performance of the VDP.

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