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An analytical study on training needs of coconut growers in Coimbatore district

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Abstract

Coconut also known with the special name “Kalpavriksha” is a tree of heaven which supports 60% of farmers in Coimbatore district. Coimbatore tops in district wise production of coconuts in Tamil Nadu. Though, productivity had been increased it also had brought numerous challenges to the coconut growers. Farmers are in need of solutions for problems such as “nutrient management”, pest and disease incidence like “rugose spiralling whitefly, Eriophyid mites, Tanjore Wilt” etc.. Price of Copra had fallen drastically, and farmers are facing hurdles in marketing and selling their produce. Farmers are seeking new ways to diversify their products through value addition now a days. Thus, training the farmers helps to gain desired knowledge, skill, attitude and ideas, reinforcement in coconut cultivation. If trainings are offered for farmers regarding these problems they would acquire ample skills, gain adequate knowledge, there would be increase in overall production and income level status.

Keywords: Coconuts, Coimbatore, nutrient management, rugose spiralling whitefly, marketing, value addition, training, skills, knowledge

Introduction

India ranks at 3rd position, behind Philippines and Indonesia in Coconut production. India dedicates approximately 21,73,280 hectares of its land for coconut plantation, with production of 20,308.70 million nuts/year, having a productivity of 9,345 nuts/ha/year (Source: Horticulture Division, Dept. of Agriculture & Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Govt. of India). The Area, Production, Productivity of Coconut shows an increasing trend over the years. Coconut cultivation is highly concentrated in the southern parts of the nation. The major Coconut growing states are Kerala (7,70,790 ha), Karnataka (5,13,850 ha), Tamil Nadu (4,61,060 ha), Andhra Pradesh (1,15,210 ha) (Indhumathi, 2019) [6].

Even though productivity and production of coconut products is high in India, economic condition of the growers are not favourable. It is because of grower’s weak bargaining power and poor economic condition, Marketing intermediaries are harassing and cheating them in different ways (Deepak M, *et al.*, 2006). Profitability of any agricultural products is not only based on that productivity of the products but also production and marketing cost involved directly and indirectly. Production cost can be reduced by proper implementation of production technology and proper utilization of resources, which is used for production. Marketing cost can be reduced by selecting appropriate marketing channels, but due to lack of awareness and information in marketing knowledge, value addition, post-harvest technologies now a days, young growers are facing hardships in selling their produce and also forced to sell at low cost as they are dependent on middlemen and wholesalers.

Need for the study

Coimbatore tops in district wise production of coconuts in Tamil Nadu. Coconut cultivation is one of the major livelihoods supporting 60% farmers in Coimbatore district. Coconut farming gives more employment opportunities to the people particularly in rural areas. The increase in trend of coconut production has brought some of the challenges to coconut growers. In Tamil Nadu, Coimbatore district ranks first in productivity of coconut followed by Thanjavur, Dindigul and so on. In recent years, improvement in coconut cultivation was seen in large. Coconut farmers are still lacking awareness and having low level of knowledge in many aspects in “pest and disease control, nutrient management, value addition, post-harvest technologies, marketing and usage of new technologies and implements, schemes etc. In the previous years the district was affected by “Eriophyid Mites”, presently by “Rugose Spiralling

whitefly”, Tanjore root wilt etc. Increasing trend of coconut production has brought new challenges in terms of finding market for the surplus. Coconut farmers mainly depend on middlemen and wholesalers in selling their produce. Farmers are not much aware about “post- harvest technologies, value addition and processing, available marketing facilities and marketing channels. Payal (1999) reported that coconut growers mostly needed training in fertilizer management, insect pest management, disease management, selection of seedlings and water management.

Apart from this high cost in nutrient management, labour problem, lack of adequate finance, and lack of quality saplings, lack of cold storage facilities, irrigation management, knowledge about Price forecasting etc. are also faced by the farmers. The skills required by a coconut cultivator need to be supplemented with additional skills to increase the yield of nuts (Patil, 2011). Training helps in enhancement of knowledge, improvement of skill, interaction with experts and build confidence (Hashemi, 2012).

Thus, training the farmers helps to gain desired knowledge, skill, attitude and ideas, reinforcement in coconut cultivation. If trainings are offered for farmers regarding these problems they would acquire ample skills, gain adequate knowledge, there would be increase in overall production and income level status.

Research Methodology

Coimbatore has 12 blocks. Among which “Sulthanpet block”, “Pollachi (North), Pollachi (South) block” has been chosen as the areas of research. From each block 4 villages were

selected purposefully. The villages selected for the study are “Senjerimalai, Pachagoundampalyam, J. Krishnapuram, Malapalayam” from Sultanpet block. “A. Nagoor, Avalappampatti, Ayyampalayam, Puliampatti” from Pollachi (North) block. “Gomangalam, Ambarampalayam, Kanjampatti, Naickenpalayam” from Pollachi (South) block. It’s been selected since the area has high production of coconuts, hub for “coir and copra industries”, elaborate availability of respondents, diversified coconut growers in age, landholdings, educational status, farming experience etc., familiarity about the place by the researcher.

Area, Production and Productivity status of coconuts in Coimbatore district

Area	87749.20 ha
Production	14882 lakh nuts
Productivity	16960 nuts/ha

Source: www.coconutboard.gov.in (2019-2020)

Selection of respondents

An “Ex Post Facto” research design was used in this study. District was selected purposively since Coimbatore has the maximum area and production under Coconut cultivation. Block was selected based on Purposive sampling based on area under coconut production. Villages was selected based on Purposive sampling based on area under coconut production. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Training needs of coconut growers on major subject matter areas in coconut cultivation

S. No.	Major subject area	Mean score	Rank
1.	Selection of Varieties	4.08	XI
2.	Selection of Planting Materials	4.20	IX
3.	Planting and after care	4.3	VIII
4.	Nutrient Management	10.23	III
5.	Pest Management	6.66	IV
6.	Disease Management	6.36	V
7.	Weeding	2.55	XII
8.	Agronomic Practices	4.12	X
9.	Irrigation	4.53	VI
10.	Harvesting	4.5	VII
11.	Marketing	11.99	I

Regarding the Training needs of coconut growers on major subject matter areas in coconut cultivation, it could be inferred that Marketing was ranked (MS 11.99), Value addition (MS 11.42), Nutrient Management (MS 10.23), Pest Management (MS 6.66), Disease Management (MS 6.36), Irrigation (MS 4.53), Harvesting (MS 4.5), Planting and After Care (MS 4.3), Selection of Planting Materials (MS 4.20), Agronomic Practices (MS 4.12), Selection of Varieties (MS 4.08), Weeding (MS 2.55) were perceived in the descending order of importance. It could be inferred that Marketing (MS 11.99) was the most needed area of training by the farmers because the farmers faced hardships in fetching remunerative prices for their produce and also needed ways to eliminate the middleman for direct sales of their produce. Value addition (MS 11.42) was given next importance by the farmers as they were willing for product diversification of coconuts and also in fetching better prices. Nutrient Management (MS 10.23) was ranked third by the farmers because they were interested to know about the quantity, methods to apply micronutrients,

biofertilizers, green leaf manures and TNAU Coconut tonic. Pest Management (MS 6.66) was ranked fourth because farmers were facing difficulties in controlling new invasive pests like “Rugose Spiralling whitefly “ etc, Disease management (MS 6.36) was ranked fifth by the farmers because they were finding hardships in identifying and managing the diseases like “Tanjore wilt, Crown Top, Bud Rot” etc.. Weeding (MS 2.55) was given the least preference by the farmers as they were familiar with the practice and the implements used

Table 2: Type of training

Aspect	Number	Percentage
Institutional training	24	20.00
Peripatetic training	96	80.00

Regarding the type of training most of the respondents preferred Peripatetic training (96%) since they were willing to interact with other progressive farmers in the farmers field, followed by Institutional training (24%).

Table 3: Season of training

(n=120)

Season	Number	Percentage
Before cropping season	47	39.16
During cropping season	67	55.83
After cropping season	6	5.00

Regarding the season of training it could be inferred that more than half of the respondents preferred during cropping season (67%) because they could apply the acquired knowledge and skill in their field, followed by before cropping season (47%) because they could plan and implement the acquired skills and knowledge in their field when needed in future and after cropping season (6%) since few farmers were carrying business and other activities they preferred after cropping season as they could have ample time to undergo Training.

Table 4: Venue of Training

(n=120)

Venue	Number	Percentage
Village	70	58.33
Progressive farmers field	32	26.66
Research station	7	5.83
Farmers training center	0	0
Schools	11	9.16
KVK	0	0

Regarding the venue of training more than half of the farmers preferred village (70%) as it would be convenient for them to attend, followed by Progressive farmers field (32%) since they could undertake the trainings more effectively through method demonstrations and also can have interactions with other farmers, followed by schools (11%) since many teaching materials would be there and research station (7%) was given least importance as they need to travel quite a long distance and would be a hindrance to their routine activities.

Table 5: Frequency of training

(n=120)

Frequency	Number	Percentage
1 month	0	0
2 month	5	4.16
6 month	48	40
1 year	67	55.83

It could be inferred from the table that most of the farmers preferred a frequency interval of training 1 year once (55.83%) as they had a routine schedule in carrying out their activities on field, followed by 6 month once (40%) as they were seeking solutions to their problems identified by training and 2 months (4.16%) was least preferred.

Table 6: Duration of training

(n=120)

Duration	Number	Percentage
1 day	18	15
2 day	74	61.66
3 day	0	0
4 day	0	0
1 week	28	23.33

Regarding the duration of training more than half of the respondents preferred 2 days training as it was convenient to attend training and carry out their normal activities (61.66%), followed by 1 week training (23.33%) since few were interested in many subject matter and areas of training and 1 day training (15%) was preferred by wage earners and farmers who carry on business.

Conclusion

Regarding the subject matter of training needs most of the farmers gave importance to “marketing” of their produce to fetch better prices, and to avoid exploitation by the middleman in seeking new marketing channels. It was followed by “value addition as they were seeking to fetch additional income through product diversification. Nutrient management was ranked third by the farmers as they were interested to adopt cost effective measures as the fertilizer cost had increased drastically. Pest and disease management was ranked fourth and fifth since they needed effective control measures as they incurred heavy losses due to their incidence. Farmers mostly preferred Peripatetic training. They preferred training during cropping season mostly. The venue which was convenient for them was their own village. They preferred training mostly on yearly basis. Farmers mostly preferred 2 days duration of training. Thus, by enabling better training facilities to the farmers it increases ample skill, knowledge and thereby improve the standard of living of coconut farmers.

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