

Original Research Article

Study on assessing the Socio-Economic characters of Banana Cultivating Farmers in Coimbatore and Erode Districts of Tamil Nadu

ABSTRACT

Banana is a staple fruit in almost every Indian meal and also an important commercial crop that adds a considerable amount of dollar in country's export revenues column. But in recent years the share is in decreasing trend due to some inevitable reasons. So understanding factors influencing banana exporting farmer's especially among small and marginal farmers is a necessary one. This study tries to understand the socio-economic characteristics of banana farmers in Coimbatore and Erode district. 120 samples were selected randomly and well-structured interview schedule is used to collect data. The results show that most of the farmers were in the age group of 41 – 50 (32.50 %) and are illiterate (28.33 %) with farm experience of about 26-35 years (35 %). Sample farmers largely live as a nuclear family (69.17 %) and follow agriculture as a sole occupation (36.67 %). Most of the sample farmers were marginal farmers (40.8 %) with the annual income range of about 1 lakh to 3 lakh (35.83 %). As many of them are small and marginal farmers and are illiterate, it is suggested to conduct number of training programs, tour visit and exhibition to increase the awareness about the export of banana.

Keywords: *Small and Marginal Farmers, Export, Attitude and socio-economic characters*

INTRODUCTION

Banana (*Musa sp.*) has its origin in the tropical region in South East Asia. Banana is a nutritious gold mine, rich in Vitamin B6, potassium and also is a great source of fiber. In 2007-08, the area under banana was 533 ('000 ha) and produced 17647('000 Mt) with the productivity of 33.1 (Mt/ha). And it has been raised by 847 ('000 ha) with the production of 29285 ('000 Mt) and productivity about 34.5 (Mt/ha). (Source: India Stat). India ranks first in production of banana and it is also an important commercial fruit crop fetching considerable export returns. India's exports amounted to USD 48 million in 2017, which declined from 60 million USD in 2016. (Source: Export Genius). So understanding the factors that influence the export among banana farmers is important. In this vein, this study tries to understand the socio-economic characteristics of farmers that in roundabout explains the export influencing factors.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

The primary data was collected from banana growers in two districts of Erode and Coimbatore in Western zone of Tamil Nadu. These districts were selected purposively as they hold a higher share in total area covered under banana farming. The respondent farmers were selected randomly from villages

(three villages from each selected blocks) wherein banana farming was in operation. A sample of total 120 banana growing farmers was drawn randomly with 10 farmers from each village. The data were collected from these farmers by personal interview method using well-structured questionnaire during January to March 2018.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of the profile farmers

Factors	Category	No. of respondents	Percentage
Age (years)	Less than 30	19	15.83
	31-40	32	26.67
	41-50	39	32.50
	Above 50	30	25.00
	Total	120	100.00
Education	Illiterate	34	28.33
	Primary	23	19.17
	Secondary	31	25.83
	Higher Secondary	21	17.50
	Graduate	11	9.17
	Total	120	100.00
Experience (In years)	Less than 15	27	22.50
	16-25	38	31.67
	26-35	42	35.00
	Above 35	13	10.83
	Total	120	100.00
Family Type	Nuclear	83	69.17
	Joint	37	30.83
	Total	120	100.00

Occupation	Agriculture alone	44	36.67
	Agriculture + Own business	20	16.67
	Agriculture + Allied Activities	31	25.83
	Agriculture + Government employee	25	20.83
	Total	120	100.00
Annual Income	Less than 50,000	11	9.17
	50,000 – 1,00,000	26	21.67
	1,00,000 – 3,00,000	43	35.83
	3,00,000 – 5,00,000	31	25.83
	Above 5,00,000	09	7.50
	Total	120	100.00
Size of Land Holdings (In ac)	Small (>2)	29	24.17
	Medium (2-5)	49	40.83
	Large (<5)	42	35.00
	Total	120	100.00

The result furnished in the Table above showed that majority of the sample farmers 32.50 % belonged to the age group of 41-50 years, followed by 26.61 % and 25.00 % of the sample farmers were in the category group of 31-40 years and more than 50 years respectively. A meager of 15.83 % was found in the age group of fewer than 30 years. Hence, it could be concluded that majority of the sample farmers in the study area were a middle-aged group. Since most of the respondents are middle-aged persons, there is a wide scope to encourage the younger farmers in banana export business. Similar results were in line with Ramesh *et al.*, (2015) in their study of farmer's attitude towards grape cultivation.

Analysis on the educational status above Table 1 showed that majority of the sample respondents (28.33 %) were illiterates, followed by 25.83 % of the respondents had secondary education, 19.17 % of them had primary education and 17.50 % of them had higher secondary. Only 9.17 % of the respondents had completed graduation. Similar results were observed from Mahalakshmi *et al.*, (2015) on analysis of banana cultivation in Theni district. As the majority of the respondents were illiterates; so the respondents should be given necessary training to educate farmers.

Exploring the experience level of farmers on banana cultivation showed that 35.00 % of the sample farmers had 16-25 years of farming experience followed by 31.67 % and 22.50 % of them had 26-35 years and less than 15 years of farming experience respectively. It could be concluded that the sample farmers would have enough experience on the various aspects of banana cultivation.

Studying on family type reveals that 69.16 % of the sample respondents were lived as a nuclear family, and only 30.83 percent belonged to joint family type in farming households across different districts.

The occupational status study showed that 36.67 % of the farmers were doing agriculture alone as their major occupation, followed by 25.83 % of them in agriculture and allied activities and 20.83 % of them in agriculture and as government servants. Though, agriculture being commercialized due to problems such as shortage of water, diversification of labour, agriculture has been practiced as lone occupation by farmers. Similar findings were also found in the studies of Persis (2007) and Sathiyakala (2008).

Annual income results depicted in the Table 1 showed that 35.83 % the sample respondent's annual income ranged from 1,00,000-3,00,000, followed by 25.83 % of them within the range of 3,00,000-5,00,000, 21.67 % of the respondent's in 50,000-1,00,000 range and only 9.17 % of the respondent's with income less than 50,000. Only 7.50 % of the respondent's income was above 5,00,000. It could be inferred that the majority of the sample farmers were under medium income group followed by high and low-income group respectively. Respondents whom involved in animal husbandry and its allied activities helps them in earning medium to higher income. This might be the reason to get medium and higher income. Elakkia (2007) and Sathiyachitradevi (2006) concluded the similar results.

It could be seen from the Table 1 that 40.83 % of the sample respondents size had a medium size of land holdings (2.5 to 5.0 ac), followed by 35.00 % of the respondents possessed more than 5 ac of land and 24.17 % of them had 1.0 to 2.5 ac of land. Since a major share of the farmers were medium size landholding farmers, there is a wide chance to encourage cooperative farming among the respondents which will encourage them to share their knowledge and experience. The results are in conformity with Balasubramani (2005) who also reported that the majority of banana farmers belonged to medium and large size categories.

CONCLUSION

Thus, from the study, it is understandable that many of the banana growing farmers are of medium aged, illiterate and more importantly had small or marginal level of land holdings. Since many of them are illiterate hands-on exercise on steps involving in export, tour and training session can be conducted to increase the awareness on export among banana growing farmers. As many of them practicing

agriculture as their sole occupation promoting export among them will help in increasing their income level to a considerable level.

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