



**A STUDY OF CULTIVATORS' OPINION ON PROBLEMS IN PEPPER MARKETING IN IDUKKI DISTRICT, KERALA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The high altitudes of Kerala are famous for their variety of spices. Pepper is one of the most important spices produced there. Pepper is the "king of spices". It is one of the most exotic and expensive spices; Indian pepper has a history as old as human civilization. South India and Sri Lanka are considered the origin of this spice. Pepper is often called saffron and vanilla as the third most expensive spice in the world. India offers all the favorable conditions of Pepper. The differentiated cultivation methods make Indian Pepper unique in the international market. There are different varieties and varieties of pepper. Pepper is one of the few agricultural products in India with a strong export orientation. This study aims to learn about farmers' problems in the pepper market.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Indian spices include a variety of spices grown across the Indian subcontinent. With different climates in different parts of the country, India produces a variety of spices, many of which are native to the subcontinent, while others were imported from similar climates and have since been cultivated locally for centuries. Among the spices Black Pepper known as "King of Spices" is one of the most important agricultural products trade and commerce in India since prehistoric times. Crop is the main source of income and employment for rural households in the Kerala region, where more than 2.5 lakh farmer families grow pepper. Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are the other major pepper producing countries in the country. Kerala accounts for 80 to 90 per cent of the country's total pepper production

**Review of Literature**

Prakash (2008) examined the agricultural crisis in Idukki District and noted that the labour shortage in pepper prices was decreasing; Cocoa, Coconut and other spices triggered the agricultural crisis. It recommended that the Ministry of Commerce of the Union form a price control unit to regulate the import prices of spices, coffee, tea, coconut and sidewalks.

Sharma (2006) examined the prospects of the pepper trade in India to become famous in the past. He found that India was a major player in the pepper trade, but its position has declined

in recent years and is currently the culmination of pepper production. He analysed the reasons for this and concluded that India could regain its share of the glory of black pepper if all the agencies involved establish a solid front with a combined effort and practical strategies to revive black pepper. As a result, farmers need support from organizations such as the Spice Council, Agricultural Universities and even NGOs.

Srinivasan (2006) examined the reasons for the collapse of multilateral trade negotiations among WTO member countries and the growing popularity of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs). He noted that the aggressive pursuit of preferential trade agreements for wealth would only weaken the multilateral system based on WTO rules and limit growth gains.

**Scope of the Study**

The study relates to the cultivators' problems in marketing of pepper in Idukki District and covers the entire district. In this study the following variables are analysed.

1. The Pepper marketing in Idukki District is presently facing a crisis
2. Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) most adversely affects the Pepper Marketing
3. Problems faced in the Pepper Market
4. Labour Problem
5. Marketing Problem

Interview schedule has been prepared and administered among the farmers who are involved in pepper cultivation and

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marketing. The study has good scope for pepper cultivation and marketing.

**METHODOLOGY**

The main objective of the study is to analyse the cultivators' opinion on problems in Pepper Marketing in Idukki District of Kerala. A sample of 662 respondents from all the four Taluks of Idukki district of Kerala were selected by applying Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling Technique. Data were collected by Interview Schedule, interpreted and presented in the following lines.

**Opinion about the Pepper Marketing In Idukki District Is Presently Facing A Crisis**

The opinion about the Pepper marketing in Idukki District is presently facing a crisis with respect to the demographic variables was analysed and result is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** Opinion about the Pepper marketing in Idukki District is presently facing a crisis

Demographic Variables		Pepper marketing in Idukki District is presently facing a crisis				Total
		Yes		No		
		N	%	N	%	
Taluk	Devikulam	58	72	23	28	81
	Udumbanchola	256	68	120	32	376
	Thodupuzha	111	73	42	27	153
Nature of Cultivators	Peerumade	45	87	7	13	52
	Main Cultivators	419	71	170	29	589
	Marginal Cultivators	51	70	22	30	73
Age in years	Up to 30	72	53	63	47	135
	31 - 40	104	58	74	42	178
	41 - 50	181	83	36	17	217
	Above 50	113	86	19	14	132
	Below SSLC	46	56	36	44	82
Education	SSLC	109	64	62	36	171
	PDC	138	83	29	17	167
	Degree	78	72	31	28	109
Experience in pepper cultivation	Above Degree	99	74	34	26	133
	Below 5 years	97	66	50	34	147
	5 to 10 years	122	66	64	34	186
	10 to 20 years	152	78	44	22	196
	Above 20 years	99	74	34	26	133
Annual family income	Below Rs.250000	95	84	18	16	113
	Rs.250000 to Rs.500000	150	78	43	22	193
	Rs.500000 to Rs.1000000	151	64	86	36	237
	Above Rs.1000000	74	62	45	38	119
Number of earning members in the family	One	114	88	16	12	130
	Two	125	72	49	28	174
	Three	146	67	71	33	217
	4 & above	85	60	56	40	141
Total area under pepper cultivation	1 to 5 acres	127	80	32	20	159
	5 to 10 acres	238	68	111	32	349
	Above 10 acres	105	68	49	32	154

The Table 1 shows that majority 71% of the respondents agreed that the pepper marketing in Idukki District is presently facing a crisis.

In order to find the association between the opinion about the Pepper marketing in Idukki District is presently facing a crisis and the Demographic variables of the respondent chi-square test was used and result of the test is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2** Pepper marketing in Idukki District is presently facing a crisis

Demographic variables	Value	df	p value	Sig.
Taluk	7.84	3	0.049	Significant
Nature of Cultivators	0.05	1	0.821	Not Significant
Age	64.03	3	0.001	Highly Significant
Education	24.98	4	0.001	Highly Significant
Experience in pepper cultivation	9.28	3	0.026	Significant
Annual family income	24.21	3	0.001	Highly Significant
Number of earning members in the family	26.97	3	0.001	Highly Significant
Total area under pepper cultivation	8.01	2	0.018	Significant

It is noted from the Table 2 that the p value is less than 0.05 for Taluk, Age, Education, Experience in pepper cultivation, Annual family income, Number of earning members in the family, Total area under pepper cultivation and hence the results are significant at 5 % level. From the analysis it is concluded that there is significant association was found between the Opinions about the Pepper marketing in Idukki District is presently facing a crisis and these demographic variables of the respondents.

**Opinion about Ftas Most Adversely Affects the Pepper**

The opinion about FTAs most adversely affects the pepper marketing with respect to the demographic variables was analysed and result is shown in Table 3.

The Table 3 shows that 34% of the respondents opinioned that ISLFTA is the most adversely affecting FTA in pepper marketing, 48% is ISLFTA and 18% is SAFTA and Indo-Singapore FTA. Thus, it can be interpreted that the highest percentage of the respondents (48%) opinioned on FTAs most adversely affects the Pepper marketing is ISLFTA.

In order to find the association between the opinion about FTAs most adversely affects the Pepper and the Demographic variables of the respondent chi-square test was used and result of the test is shown in Table.4.It is noted from the Table 4 that the p value is greater than 0.05 for all the Demographic variables and the results are not significant.

From the analysis it is concluded that there is no significant association was found between the opinions about FTAs most adversely affects the Pepper Marketing and these demographic variables of the respondents.

**Opinion about Problems Faced in Marketing the Pepper**

The respondent's Opinion about Problems faced in marketing the pepper is described in this section. The factors considered under the study are "Cultivation problems, Labour problems, Marketing problems, Import of Pepper, Poor productivity, Entry of new competitors". The distribution of ranks for the various factors assigned by the respondents was shown in the Table No. 5.

The Table 5 shows that for the factor "Cultivation problems" 19% of the respondents assigned rank one, 15% of the respondents assigned rank two, 31% of the respondents assigned rank three, 14% of the respondents assigned rank four, 19% of the respondents assigned rank five, 3% of the respondents assigned rank six. For the factor "Labour problems" 18% of the respondents assigned rank one, 26% of

**Table 3** Opinion about FTAs most adversely affects the Pepper Marketing

Demographic variables		Opinion on FTAs most adversely affects the Pepper						Total
		India Sri Lanka FTA		India Sri Lanka FTA		South Asian FTA and Indo-Singapore FTA		
		N	%	N	%	N	%	
Taluk	Devikulam	30	37	36	44	15	19	81
	Udumbanchola	123	33	186	49	67	18	376
	Thodupuzha	52	34	74	48	27	18	153
	Peerumade	20	38	23	44	9	17	52
Nature of Cultivators	Main Cultivators	199	34	287	49	103	17	589
	Marginal Cultivators	26	36	32	44	15	21	73
Age in years	Up to 30	46	34	67	50	22	16	135
	31 - 40	60	34	87	49	31	17	178
	41 - 50	73	34	101	47	43	20	217
	Above 50	46	35	64	48	22	17	132
Education	Below SSLC	31	38	40	49	11	13	82
	SSLC	50	29	81	47	40	23	171
	PDC	62	37	75	45	30	18	167
	Degree	36	33	55	50	18	17	109
Experience in pepper cultivation	Above Degree	46	35	68	51	19	14	133
	Below 5 years	52	35	76	52	19	13	147
	5 to 10 years	65	35	83	45	38	20	186
	10 to 20 years	70	36	92	47	34	17	196
Annual family income	Above 20 years	38	29	68	51	27	20	133
	Below Rs.250000	36	32	62	55	15	13	113
	Rs.250000 to Rs.500000	66	34	91	47	36	19	193
	Rs.500000 to Rs.1000,000	81	34	112	47	44	19	237
Number of earning members in the family	Above Rs.10,00,000	42	35	54	45	23	19	119
	One	46	35	68	52	16	12	130
	Two	61	35	87	50	26	15	174
	Three	73	34	99	46	45	21	217
Total area under pepper cultivation	4 & above	45	32	65	46	31	22	141
	1 to 5 acres	56	35	78	49	25	16	159
	5 to 10 acres	123	35	162	46	64	18	349
	Above 10 acres	46	30	79	51	29	19	154
<b>Total</b>		<b>225</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>662</b>

Source: Computed data N: No. of Respondents

**Table 4** Opinion on FTAs most adversely affects the Pepper - Chi square Test

Demographic variables	Value	df	p value	Sig.
Taluk	1.27	6	0.973	Not Significant
Nature of Cultivators	0.73	2	0.695	Not Significant
Age	1.02	6	0.985	Not Significant
Education	7.68	8	0.465	Not Significant
Experience in pepper cultivation	5.79	6	0.447	Not Significant
Annual family income	3.15	6	0.789	Not Significant
Number of earning members in the family	6.75	6	0.344	Not Significant
Total area under pepper cultivation	2.10	4	0.718	Not Significant

**Table 5** Problems faced in marketing the pepper

	Ranks												Total
	1		2		3		4		5		6		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Cultivation problems	124	19	98	15	204	31	91	14	123	19	22	3	662
Labour problems	118	18	171	26	118	18	112	17	81	12	62	9	662
Marketing problems	111	17	132	20	98	15	157	24	69	10	95	14	662
Import of Pepper	169	26	61	9	140	21	90	14	117	18	85	13	662
Poor productivity	63	10	159	24	53	8	81	12	191	29	115	17	662
Entry of new competitors	77	12	41	6	49	7	131	20	81	12	283	43	662

Source: Computed data N: No. of Respondents

the respondents assigned rank two, 18% of the respondents assigned rank three, 17% of the respondents assigned rank four, 12% of the respondents assigned rank five, 9% of the respondents assigned rank six. For the factor **“Marketing problems”** 17% of the respondents assigned rank one, 20% of the respondents assigned rank two, 15% of the respondents assigned rank three, 24% of the respondents assigned rank four, 10% of the respondents assigned rank five, 14% of the respondents assigned rank six.

For the factor **“Import of Pepper”** 26% of the respondents assigned rank one, 9% of the respondents assigned rank two, 21% of the respondents assigned rank three, 14% of the respondents assigned rank four, 18% of the respondents assigned rank five, 13% of the respondents assigned rank six. For the factor **“Poor productivity”** 10% of the respondents assigned rank one, 24% of the respondents assigned rank two, 8% of the respondents assigned rank three, 12% of the respondents assigned rank four, 29% of the respondents assigned rank five, 17% of the respondents assigned rank six. For the factor **“Entry of new competitors”** 12% of the respondents assigned rank one, 6% of the respondents assigned rank two, 7% of the respondents assigned rank three, 20% of the respondents assigned rank four, 12% of the respondents assigned rank five, 43 % of the respondents assigned rank six.

The analysis shows that majority of the respondents assigned rank three for **“Cultivation problems”**. Towards **“Labour problems”** majority of the respondents assigned rank Two, towards **“Marketing problems”** majority of the respondents assigned rank Four, towards **“Import of Pepper”** majority of the respondents assigned rank One, towards **“Poor**

productivity” majority of the respondents assigned rank Five, towards “Entry of new competitors” assigned rank Six.

Further in order to identify the factor which is influencing more **Garret Rank Analysis** was used and the results were given in Table 6.

**Table 6** Garret Ranking – Problems faced in marketing the pepper

	Mean	SD	Garret Score	Garret Rank
Cultivation problems	3.09	1.44	54.35	I
Labour problems	3.08	1.57	54.09	II
Marketing problems	3.34	1.64	51.53	IV
Import of Pepper	3.27	1.74	52.63	III
Poor productivity	3.79	1.69	47.08	V
Entry of new competitors	4.43	1.74	40.32	VI

It could be noted from the above Table that among the 6 problems “Cultivation problems” was ranked first. It is followed by the “Labour problems” and “Import of Pepper”.

**Opinion about Labour Problems**

The Table No.7 describes the Opinion about Labour Problems it was observed over the factors of “Scarcity of agricultural labour, Low labour productivity, Lack of interest among labour, Low wage rates, Migration of workers to other occupations”.

**Table 7** Opinion about Labour problem

Factors	SDA		DA		N		A		SA		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Scarcity of agricultural labour	71	11	68	10	118	18	189	29	216	33	662
Low labour productivity	58	9	53	8	202	31	276	42	73	11	662
Lack of interest among labour	7	1	86	13	172	26	153	23	244	37	662
Low wage rates	8	1	85	13	175	26	156	24	238	36	662
Migration of workers to other occupations	44	7	45	7	267	40	198	30	108	16	662

Source: Computed data

It is clear from the Table 7 that For the factor ‘Scarcity of agricultural labour’ 11% of the respondents are strongly disagreed, 10% of the respondents are disagreed, 18 % of the respondents are neutral, 29% of the respondents are agreed and 33% of the respondents are strongly agreed. For the factor ‘Low labour productivity’ 9% of the respondents are strongly disagreed, 8% of the respondents are disagreed, 31% of the respondents are neutral, 42% of the respondents are agreed and 11% of the respondents are strongly agreed. For the factor of ‘Lack of interest among labour’ 1% of the respondents are strongly disagreed, 13% of the respondents are disagreed, 26% of the respondents are neutral, 23% of the respondents are agreed and 37% of the respondents are strongly agreed. For the factor of ‘Low wage rates’ 1% of the respondents are strongly disagreed, 13% of the respondents are disagreed, 26% of the respondents are neutral, 24% of the respondents are agreed and 36% of the respondents are strongly agreed. For the factor of ‘Migration of workers to other occupations’ 7 % of the respondents are strongly disagreed, 7% of the respondents are disagreed, 40% of the respondents are neutral, 30% of the respondents are agreed and 16% of the respondents are strongly agreed.

Hence it is concluded that majority of the respondents are Neutral with the factor of “Migration of workers to other

occupations”, Agreed with the factor of “Low labour productivity”, Strongly agreed with the factor of “Scarcity of agricultural labour, Lack of interest among labour, Low wage rates”.

In order to identify the factor which is influencing more the Friedman’s Rank Test was used and the results were given in Table 8.

**Table 8** Friedman Test- Labour problem

Factors	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	Reliability
Scarcity of agricultural labour	3.62	1.32	2.92	0.733
Low labour productivity	3.38	1.07	2.82	
Lack of interest among labour	3.82	1.10	3.24	
Low wage rates	3.80	1.10	3.22	
Migration of workers to other occupations	3.42	1.05	2.81	

It could be noted from the above Table that among the 5 factors “Lack of interest among labour” was ranked first. It is followed by the “Low wage rates” and “Scarcity of agricultural labour”.

**Opinion about Marketing Problems**

The Table No.9 describes the Opinion about Marketing Problems. It was observed over the factors of “Poor selling prices and low margin, Volatility in prices, Seasonal supply, Heavy imports, Severe competition from abroad”.

**Table 9** Opinion about Marketing problem

Factors	SDA		DA		N		A		SA		Total
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Poor selling prices and low margin	50	8	48	7	205	31	289	44	70	11	662
Volatility in prices	71	11	68	10	118	18	189	29	216	33	662
Seasonal supply	58	9	53	8	202	31	276	42	73	11	662
Heavy imports	7	1	86	13	172	26	153	23	244	37	662
Severe competition from abroad	74	11	68	10	124	19	183	28	213	32	662

Source: Computed data

It is clear from the Table 9 that for the factor ‘Poor selling prices and low margin’ 8% of the respondents are strongly disagreed, 7% of the respondents are disagreed, 31% of the respondents are neutral, 44% of the respondents are agreed and 11% of the respondents are strongly agreed. For the factor ‘Volatility in prices’ 11% of the respondents are strongly disagreed, 10% of the respondents are disagreed, 18% of the respondents are neutral, 29% of the respondents are agreed and 33% of the respondents are strongly agreed. For the factor of ‘Seasonal supply’ 9% of the respondents are strongly disagreed, 8% of the respondents are disagreed, 31% of the respondents are neutral, 42% of the respondents are agreed and 11% of the respondents are strongly agreed. For the factor of ‘Heavy imports’ 1% of the respondents are strongly disagreed, 13 % of the respondents are disagreed, 26% of the respondents are neutral, 23% of the respondents are agreed and 37% of the respondents are strongly agreed. For the factor of ‘Severe competition from abroad’ 11% of the respondents are strongly disagreed, 10% of the respondents are disagreed, 19% of the respondents are neutral, 28% of the respondents are agreed and 32% of the respondents are strongly agreed.

Hence majority of the respondents are Agreed with the factor of “Poor selling prices and low margin, Seasonal supply”, strongly agreed with the factor of “Volatility in prices, Heavy imports, Severe competition from abroad”.

In order to identify the factor which is influencing more the Friedman's Rank Test was used and the results were given in Table 10.

**Table 10** Friedman Test- Marketing problem

Factors	Mean	SD	Mean Rank	Reliability
Poor selling prices and low margin	3.42	1.03	2.82	0.717
Volatility in prices	3.62	1.32	<b>3.07</b>	
Seasonal supply	3.38	1.07	2.76	
Heavy imports	3.82	1.10	<b>3.30</b>	
Severe competition from abroad	3.59	1.33	<b>3.04</b>	

It could be noted from the above Table that among the 5 factors "Heavy imports" was ranked first. It is followed by the "Volatility in prices" and "Severe competition from abroad".

**Findings**

From the analysis it is concluded that majority of the respondents Agree that the Pepper marketing in Idukki District of Kerala is presently facing a crisis, FTAs most adversely affects the Pepper marketing and FTAs is the causes for the present crisis in the Pepper marketing in Idukki District of Kerala. It is found that majority of the respondents Think that the surging import of many Pepper to Kerala is the main reason for the fall in their domestic prices. It could also be noted that among the 5 labour problems, "Lack of interest among labour" was ranked first. This is followed by the "Low wage rates". "Scarcity of agricultural labour" was ranked third. It could also be noted table that among the 5 marketing problems "Heavy imports" was ranked first. It is followed by the "Volatility in prices". "Severe competition from abroad" was ranked third.

**Suggestions**

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are made for overcoming the problems. It is observed that there is a growing demand for organic pepper in developed countries. Therefore, Spices Board and the government should promote organic farming of pepper. To minimize the occurrences of labour unrest and indiscipline joint standing orders for pepper plantation industry and a code of conduct for workers and management should be evolved. A Grievance Redressal Forum also should be set up to settle the labour management grievances in addition to conducting awareness programmes for pepper cultivators.

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