IRA-International Journal of Management & Social Sciences
ISSN 2455-2267; Vol.04, Issue 02 (2016)
Pg. no. 432-438
Institute of Research Advances
http://research-advances.org/index.php/RAJMSS

Profile and Training Exposure of Medicinal Plant Growers

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Type of Review: Peer Reviewed.
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21013/jmss.v4.n2.p12

How to cite this paper:
Sain, K., Yadav, B., & Goel, R. (2016). Profile and Training Exposure of Medicinal Plant Growers. *IRA-International Journal of Management & Social Sciences* (ISSN 2455-2267), 4(2), 432-438. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.21013/jmss.v4.n2.p12

ABSTRACT

An attempt was made to find out the preference of the subsidiary and off-seasonal occupations of horticultural farmers. The study was conducted on 30 medicinal plant growers of Bhiwani , Hisar and Mohindergarh districts of South West Zone of Haryana state. Maximum number of medicinal plant growers were in the age group of 40-56 years (53.3%), hailed from upper caste (60.0%), had nuclear families (86.6%) with slightly more than half of them (56.6%) having family size of 5-7 members, maximum of them had education upto senior secondary level (36.6%) with land holding upto five acres (40.0%). No formal training was attended by any of the growers before starting cultivation of medicinal plants. They had positive attitude towards majority of the aspects related to medicinal plants.

Keywords: Caste, Education , Entrepreneurial motivation, Medicinal plant growers, Training

Introduction

Healing with medicinal plants is as old as human civilization. The connection between man and his search for drugs in nature dates from the far past, of which there is ample evidence from various sources. The search for eternal health and longevity and for remedies to relieve pain and discomfort drove early man to explore his immediate natural surroundings and led to the use of many plants, animal products, minerals etc. and the development of a variety of therapeutic agents (Nair and Chanda, 2007). Contemporary science has also acknowledged their active action of plants and it has included in modern pharmacotherapy a range of drugs of plant origin households are now combing farm and off farm activities seasonally. Recently there has been a shift in universal trend from synthetic to herbal medicine, which can be said, Return to Nature. The importance of medicinal plants and traditional health systems in solving the health care problems of the world is gaining increasing attention. The ongoing growing recognition of medicinal plants is due to several reasons, including escalating faith in herbal medicine. Allopathic medicine may cure a wide range of diseases; however, its high prices and side-effects are causing many people to return to herbal medicines which have fewer side effects (Kala, 2005). As a medical system, it is affordable, accessible, and culturally acceptable. The volume of sales of medicinal plants has increased over years and this has caused increased demand which led to harvesting important medicinal plants (Endashaw, 2007). One way to conserve threatened species of medicinal plants is their sustainable cultivation on a large scale. Though some farmers are successfully growing medicinal plants in Haryana, however, not even a single study could be traced on what are the personal traits, economic drivers and technical exposure of these growers. In the above context, an attempt was made to study profile variables and training exposure of medicinal plant growers.

Materials and Methods: For selection of medicinal plant growers, the lists of farmers who were involved in cultivation of medicinal plant on commercial basis from ten districts of South West Zone of Haryana State were obtained from the concerned District Horticulture Officers as well and Medicinal, Aromatic and potential crop Section, Department of Genetics and Plant Breeding, Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University (CCSHAU), Hisar. On the basis of obtained list, the personal visits were made for data collection. As the medicinal plants growers were scattered in the various villages of the selected districts; first come first basis selection approach was employed for their selection. However it was ensured that the selected grower was cultivating medicinal plant/plants as an occupation not as a hobby. In order to select 30 medicinal plant growers, total 39 medicinal plants growers had to be contacted as 7 growers had discontinued the cultivation and 2 were cultivating medicinal plants as a hobby. A well-structured interview schedule was prepared for the collection of required information from the growers. Profile of growers was assessed in terms of personal, social, and economical aspects. For measuring entrepreneurial motivation scale developed by Vijaya and Kamalanabhan (1998) was used**.** The personally collected data were processed, classified and tabulated for statistical analysis.

Results:

Personal profile of the growers: The frequency and percentage data in Table 1 reveal that the age of the growers ranged between 23-73 years. It was found that slightly more than half of them (53.3%) were in the age group of 40-56 years followed by the age group of 23-39 years (36.6%) and 57-73 years (10.0%).

All growers except one were male. Majority of them (60.0%) hailed from upper caste followed by middle (26.6%) and lower caste (13.3%). High majority of the growers were from nuclear families (86.6%) and remaining of them were from joint families (13.3%) and were married (96.6%).

As far as family size of the growers is concerned, it was observed that slightly more than half of them (56.6%) had family size of 5-7 members followed by those with family size of more than seven members (23.3%) and one fifth of them i.e. 20.0% had ideal family size of four members.

The growers were well distributed under various educational level categories. It was interesting to observe that 40.0% of the growers had education upto senior secondary level. The number of growers who were educated up to high school level were just half of those who had senior secondary level education i.e. 20.0%; and 16.6% were graduate. One fifth of the growers (20.0%) were educated upto high school level. Illiterate, middle level educated and post graduate growers were equal in number (6.6% each). Only 3.3% had vocational education.

Table 1: Personal profile of the growers **(n=30)**

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	23-39 years	11	36.6
	40-56 years	16	53.3
	57-73 years	3	10.0
Sex	Male	29	96.6
	Female	1	3.3
Caste	Lower	4	13.3
	Middle	8	26.6
	Upper	18	60.0
Marital status	Married	29	96.6
	Unmarried	1	3.3
Family type	Nuclear	26	86.6
	Joint	4	13.3
Family size	Upto 4 members	17	20.0
	5 - 7 members	6	56.6
	Above 7 members	7	23.3
Education of the respondents	Illiterate	2	6.6
	Primary	0	0.0
	Middle	2	6.6
	High School	6	20.0
	Senior secondary	12	40.0
	Graduate	5	16.6
	Post graduate	2	6.6
	Vocational education	1	3.3

Economic profile of the growers: The land holding pattern of the growers indicated the diversified or scattered trend (Table 2). It was revealed that maximum growers had land holding upto five acres (40.0%) followed by those equal number of having either no land or between 10-15 acres of land (20.0% each). The growers having land between 5-10 acres and more than 15 acres of land were 13.3% and 20.0%, respectively. Six growers i.e 20.0% had no agricultural land. Two of them had grown the medicinal plants on leased land and rest four had utilized the extra land in their backyard or in the plot for this purpose. In terms of self occupational structure, it was obvious that all of the growers had farming as one of the occupation, however 83.3% had farming as the only occupation and rest of them had either farming + business (6.6%) or farming + government job (10.0%) as their occupation. The maximum number of the growers reported their total annual income upto Rs.1,50,000 (56.6%) followed by those with income between Rs.1,50,001 to Rs. 3,00,000 (33.3%) and above Rs.3,00,000 (10.0%).

Table 2. Economic profile of the growers (n=30)

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Land Holding	No land	2	6.6
	Upto 5 Acres	12	40.0
	5-10 Acres	4	13.3
	10 -15 Acres	6	20.0
	More than 15 acres	6	20.0
Self Occupation	Farming	25	83.3
	Farming + Business	2	6.6
	Farming + Govt. service	3	10.0
Family Income	Upto Rs.1,50,000	17	56.6
	Rs.1,51,001- Rs 3,00,000	10	33.3
	Above Rs. 3,00,000	3	10.0

Social participation of the growers: It can be found after probing the data in Table 3 that majority of the growers (60.0%) had social participation of one or other type as only 40.0% of them reported no social participation. Among those socially active growers, maximum were members of one organization (33.3%) followed by those who were associated with more than one organization (20.0%) and rest of them were active public leaders (6.6%). It was noted that the growers were members of *Kisan Clubs*, District Horticulture Mission, NGOs, Village *Panchayats* etc.

Table 3: Social participation of the growers (n=30)

Sr. no.	Social participation	Frequency	Percentage
1	No social participation	12	40.0
2	Member of one organization	10	33.3
3	Member of more than one organization	6	20.0
4	Public leader	2	6.6

Entrepreneurial motivation of the growers: Entrepreneurial motivation of the growers was studied under five cores i.e. entrepreneurial core, work core, social core, individual core and economic core. It can be observed from Table 4 that the majority of them exhibited medium extent of motivation in terms of entrepreneurial (60.0%), social (63.3%) and economic core (63.3%).

Table 4: Entrepreneurial motivation of the growers (n=30)

Sr. No.	Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
A	Entrepreneurial core	Low (upto 5)	-	-
		Medium (6-10)	18	60.0
		High (11-15)	12	40.0
B	Work core	Low (upto 5)	-	-
		Medium (6-10)	15	50.0
		High (11-15)	15	50.0
C	Social core	Low (upto 5)	6	20.0
		Medium (6-10)	19	63.3
		High (11-15)	5	16.6
D	Individual core	Low (upto 5)	2	6.6
		Medium (6-10)	17	56.6
		High (11-15)	11	36.6
E	Economic core	Low (upto 5)	4	13.3
		Medium (6-10)	19	63.3
		High (11-15)	7	23.3

Work core of exactly half of the growers (50.0%) and individual core of slightly more than half of them (56.6%) was also of medium extent. It was further indicated that not even a single grower was observed to have low level of entrepreneurial and work core motivation. The percentages of the growers who exhibited low level of entrepreneurial motivation in terms of social, individual and economic core were comparatively low (20.0%, 6.6% and 13.3%, respectively).

Training exposure of the growers: No formal training was attended by any of the growers before starting cultivation of medicinal plants and slightly more than half of them i.e.53.3% had such exposure after they had actually grown the medicinal plants. The venue of trainings reported by the growers were indicative of the fact that were progressive and broader in their outlook and did not have any inhibition if acquiring information about their crop is concerned. Out of 16 medicinal plant growers, just more than half of them i.e. 9 attended training at CCSHAU Hisar; followed by 3 growers who attended training at HTI Karnal; 2 had such exposure at Anand (Gujarat). One grower each attended training at Haridwar (Uttrakhand); Durgapur and Jaipur (Rajasthan); Mandasur (Madhya Pradesh); Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh) and Lucknow (Utter Pradesh). Here it needs to be explained that the total 20 trainings were attended by 16 growers. This indicated that some of them had attended more than one training. In present study, 13 growers had attended only one training; 2 of them had exposure of two trainings and one grower reported to attend three training on various aspects of medicinal plants.

Table 5: Training exposure of the growers (n=30)

Number of growers having training exposure	**Frequency (%)**
Growers with prior training exposure on medicinal plants	0 (0.0)
Growers with current training exposure on medicinal plants	16 (53.3%)
Venue of the trainings attended	
Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Section, CCSHAU, Hisar, Haryana	9
Horticulture Training Institute, Karnal , Haryana	3
Directorate of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Research , Anand, Gujarat	2
Shanti Kunj Training Institute for Medicinal Plants, Haridwar, Uttrakhand	1
Rajasthan Agricultural Research Institute , Durgapur, Jaipur., Rajasthan	1
State Institute of Agriculture Management. Jaipur., Rajasthan	1
Centre for Entrepreneurship Development , Mandsaur ,MP	1
Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, Hyderabad, AP	1
Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants, Lucknow, UP	1

Discussion:

Profile of growers indicated that their age of medicinal plant growers was from 23-73 years. This suggests that irrespective of the age group, they had inclination in entering this emerging area of crop diversification and they were aware of potentials of medicinal plants and its bright future in Indian Economy. The interaction with the growers affirmed the fact they had undertaken medicinal plant cultivation due to uncertainty of cash crops, low input requirements and low chances of pest attacks and diseases.

The caste of the majority of the growers was high which a natural phenomenon is as majority of them had farming occupation which is dominated by high caste in Haryana State. The education level of growers was quite better in comparison to the general rural respondents as 40.0% were educated upto senior secondary level. Some of them were graduate also and only 10% of them were illiterate. Education opens the horizons of a person and inspires him/her to perform better. Education of growers might be the one reason to motivate them to undertake this new venture in the forms of medicinal plants. Majority of them had adopted medicinal plant cultivation having farming, as the main occupation while 5 of them in government job or business had undertaken medicinal plant cultivation as an additional source of income. It was revealed that maximum growers had land holding upto five acres (40.0%) followed by either no land or between 10-15 acres of land (20.0% each). The growers having land between 5-10 acres and more than 15 acres of land were 13.3% and 20.0%, respectively. Six growers i.e 20.0% had no agricultural land. Two of them had grown the medicinal plants on leased land and rest four had utilized the extra land in their backyard or in the plot for this purpose. This again highlighted that they were medium and small landholders. Kaur (1990), Pandita (1991) and Kaur (1999) also reported that majority of the farmers in Punjab are small and marginal farmers. The education level of growers was quite better in comparison to the general rural scenario as only 10.0% of them were illiterate. Education opens the horizons of a person and inspires him/her to perform better. Education of growers might be the one reason to motivate them to undertake this new venture in the forms of medicinal plants. Majority of them had gone for medicinal plant cultivation having farming as the main occupation.

These growers were highly calculated and one grower who was gazetted officer in Haryana government had leased in land for growing aloevera. This reflects that potentials of medicinal plants in terms of crop diversification and income generation were perceived higher by grower. This was reflected in their entrepreneurial motivation also as none of them had low entrepreneurial motivation reaffirming the fact that the growers were enterprising in their outlook.

It was disheartening to observe that none of the growers had prior technical exposure regarding cultivation of medicinal plants through trainings, lectures, seminars etc. More than half growers felt the need for such technical exposure after they started the cultivation medicinal plants. Total 20 training were attended by the 16 out of 30 medicinal plant growers. Two growers had attended 3 and 2 training each. The efforts of these growers for updating their techno know how are praiseworthy as they not only attended trainings within the Haryana State but in other states like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttrakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Though they started without any technical exposure, however more than half of them made sincere efforts to make themselves acquainted with techno knowhow on medicinal plants afterward.

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