

ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION OF A SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCY IN SPICE FARMING

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Abstract:

Agriculture is considered as the mainstay of the economy and entrepreneurship is considered as vehicle for economic growth and sustainable and regional development. Therefore agriprenurship and agribusiness have more importance in this scenario. Spice farming is an important area of agriculture sector. The present study is intended to understand the role of a social service agency in the promotion of spice farming, to identify the level of satisfaction of members of that agency towards its activities, to deduce the usefulness of interference of that agency in spice related cultivation. The sample size used for the study was Eighty and the techniques used in the study were mean analysis, ranking, t-test, ANOVA test etc. The hypotheses testing show that Social Service Agency help the farming community adapt to sustainable agriculture practices and thereby create a better livelihood and better environment. This clearly shows that social service societies can play a key role in promoting and nurturing farmers.

Keywords: Social Service Agency, Spices, Agriprenurship, Agriprenurs, Fair trade price.

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Introduction:

The agricultural scenario in Kerala is somewhat unique and distinct from many other states in India in terms of land utilization and cropping pattern. Spices conquer the prime position in this sector. A spice is a seed, fruit, root, bark or other plant substance primarily used for flavoring, colouring, or preserving food. Evolutions of successful agripreneurs depend on successful agrarians. Farmers need several advancement and assistance for their further progress.

Spice farming and its export has been turned into a major revenue source. That's why the Government and other allied bodies promote spice farming in a wide manner. Manarcad Social Service Society (MASS) is an agency which tries to empower the farmers through their fair-trade practices and other schemes. The study was conducted among eighty members of MASS. The present study aims to identify the role and contribution of this Social Service agency in Spice farming. In this study the researchers focuses on how the contributions of the agency empowers the agrarians in spice farming.

Observation from literature:

The works of different authors are reviewed and evaluated and it was found that most of the studies are about the growth prospect and scope of agripreneurship and its allied activities. Agriculture is considered as the mainstay of the economy and entrepreneurship is considered as vehicle for economic growth, sustainable and regional development. Agri-business development benefits an economy in various forms viz., it generates immediate large-scale employment, utilizes the idle human and natural resources, promotes capital formation by mobilizing the idle savings of the public etc. (Bairwa,2014; Pachorkar, 2016; Vinoth, 2016). Spices constitute the major composition in agribusiness. Exporting and marketing of spices are higher as compared to other products. Many researchers tried to identify the scope and growth of spice market. The major difficulties faced by spice marketers are low productivity in the spice sector, poor product quality at farm level, hindering reasonable price realization by the producers etc. (Babu, 2017; Bhatt, 2016; Mohan, 2013; Yogesh, 2013). Hence, in order to reduce the impact of such problems there should be a rational tax structure, particularly for the innovators and emerging agripreneurs. Cooperatives or Government organizations should implement various provisions of financial assistance to these sectors, and also promote self-reliant markets through NGOs.

Agricultural export can be promoted through financial assistance, fiscal incentives, electronic payment systems, branchless banking, portable smart technology etc. (Kumar, 2013; Morrissery, 2010; Paulose, 2016; Tripathi, 2015)

Research Gap:

The purpose of this study is to identify the role of social service agencies in promoting spice farming, to identify the level of satisfaction of members of that agency towards its activities and to deduce the usefulness of interference of that agency in spice related cultivation. The review of the literature talks mainly about studies which examines the importance of agripreneurship and spice farming. This study thus aims to fill the gap in the literature and hence the study is quite relevant and appropriate.

Hypotheses of the study:

1. There is no significant difference between respondents and satisfaction level on the services provided by the agency.
2. There is no significant difference between respondents and satisfaction level of the respondents on the activities done by the agency.
3. There is no significant difference between the respondents and the satisfaction obtained from the functional factors of the agency.

Materials and Methods:

The data was collected from male and female respondents using non probability sampling method. The sample size was eighty. The collected data are analyzed by using various mathematical techniques and statistical tools like percentages, mean analysis, ranking, t-test, ANOVA test etc.

Sample profile:

The study was mainly conducted among a sample size of eighty and where the males were 66.3 per cent and females 33.7 per cent. Most of the respondents were of the age group 51-55 that is; 35 per cent. The age groups were 36-40, 41-45, 46-50, 51-55, 56-60. Among the respondents 20 per cent had a period of membership of six years and other respondents had a period of

2,3,4,5,7,8 and 9 years of membership. Respondents were selected through non probability sampling method and the largest group of respondents were from Nedumkandam subcommittee (22.5%), other respondents were from Thopramkudi, Santhigiri, Murickasseri, Chempakapara and Thankamani subcommittees, various villages belonging to Iduki district of Kerala. Most of the respondents were dealing in nutmeg as their prime product with the agency. The other products dealt by the respondents with the agency were pepper, cardamom, cloves, ginger, coffee, cocoa, rubber and turmeric. Most of the respondents became aware about this society from their friends (60%) and others through newspapers and directly from the society. Majority of the respondents were found highly satisfied about the services provided by the agency and fair trade price system was rated as the prime one, they were also satisfied about other services like (a) seminars and classes, (b) seeds and fertilizers, (c) soil testing and biological lab facilities, (d) bonus and scholarships, (e) pump set and motor facilities etc.

Inferential Analysis:

The functioning of agency is divided into activities, services and functional factors, and among them activities done by the agency is rated by the customers as follows:

Table No: 1 Ratings of the activities done by the agency – Mean and SD

Acronyms	Activities done by the agency	Mean	S. D
A ₁	Conduct agro seminars regularly	3.8	0.701
A ₂	Class and seminars are beneficial	3.63	0.848
A ₃	Information about export operation	2.06	0.769
A ₄	Free medical camps are beneficial	3.63	0.644
A ₅	Conduct proper election procedure	3.55	0.634
A ₆	Annual meetings are regular	3.59	0.63
A ₇	Helpful in eliminating hindrance in selling of goods	3.65	0.677

Source: Primary data

Analysis criteria for mean values:

Table No: 2- *Analysis criteria for mean values*

4.0-4.5	Very Good
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3.5-4.0	Good
3.0-3.5	Neutral
2.5-3.0	Poor
2.0-2.5	Very Poor

Source: Author's own

From the examination of Table 1, it is clear that, respondents are highly satisfied about A₁ with mean and standard deviation of 3.8±0.701. The respondents are then satisfied about A₂ and A₄ with mean and standard deviation of 3.63±0.848 and 3.63±0.644. The respondents are less satisfied with A₃ with mean and standard deviation of 2.06±0.769.

Table No: 3 – Rating of the Services provided by the Agency

Acronym	Services provided by the agency	Mean	S.D
S ₁	Fair trade price system is effective	4.04	0.561
S ₂	System of collecting goods	4.05	0.634
S ₃	Scheme of providing agricultural inputs	4.00	0.574
S ₄	Providing agricultural equipments	3.84	0.645
S ₅	Scheme of providing bonus	3.80	0.719
S ₆	Guidance and support like soil testing etc	3.83	0.671

Source: Primary data

From Table 3 it is clear that, respondents are highly satisfied regarding S₂, S₁ and S₃. The respondents rated all the services provided by the agency as 'very good'.

Table No: 4 – Rating of the functional factors of the Agency

Acronym	Functional factors of the agency	Mean	S.D
F ₁	The seniority based selection of members	3.64	0.716
F ₂	Election procedure of the agency	3.50	0.712
F ₃	Membership fees charged by the agency	3.76	0.799
F ₄	Publishing of accounts by the agency	3.59	0.741
F ₅	Dealings of the officials of agency	3.76	0.680
F ₆	Behavior of the staffs of agency	4.26	0.725

Source: Primary data

A study of Table 4 clearly shows that, respondents are highly satisfied about F_6 and they rated other factors as 'very good' and 'good'.

Hypotheses testing:

In this part the responses are tested with various statistical tools like t-test and One-Way ANOVA tests. The satisfaction level of respondents on the services, activities and functional factors of the agency are tested with the demographic factors like gender, age and period of membership.

H_0 : There is no significant difference between the gender of the respondents and satisfaction level on the services provided by MASS.

Table No: 5 – Results of 't' test regarding gender and satisfaction level on 'Services'

Services	Gender	Mean	S .D	T	Sig value
S ₁	Male	4.08	0.583	0.923	0.340
	Female	3.96	0.518		
S ₂	Male	4.00	0.620	1.335	0.252
	Female	4.15	0.662		
S ₃	Male	4.00	0.588	0.150	0.700
	Female	4.00	0.555		
S ₄	Male	3.83	0.612	0.210	0.648
	Female	3.85	0.718		
S ₅	Male	3.77	0.697	0.489	0.487
	Female	3.85	0.770		
S ₆	Male	3.89	0.670	0.457	0.501
	Female	3.70	0.669		

Source: Primary data

As the significance value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore there is no significant difference between genders regarding satisfaction level on the services provided by the agency in all the cases.

H_0 : There is no significant difference between the age of the respondents and satisfaction level of the respondents on the activities done by the agency.

Table No: 6 – One way ANOVA test results regarding the age of the respondents and satisfaction level regarding ‘activities’

Activities	Age in total	Mean	S.D	F	Sig Value
A ₁	From 36-60 years	3.80	0.647	0.635	0.639
A ₂	From 36-60 years	3.63	0.848	1.228	0.306
A ₃	From 36-60 years	2.06	0.769	0.538	0.708
A ₄	From 36-60 years	3.63	0.644	0.747	0.563
A ₅	From 36-60 years	3.55	0.634	0.147	0.964
A ₆	From 36-60 years	3.59	0.630	1.245	0.299
A ₇	From 36-60 years	3.65	0.677	1.245	0.299

Source: Primary data

From Table 6, it is apparent that the significance value is greater than 0.05 and therefore the null hypothesis is to be accepted and alternate hypothesis rejected, i.e. there is no difference between the age of the respondents and the satisfaction obtained from the activities done by the agency in the above cases.

H₀: There is no significant difference between the period of membership of the respondents and the satisfaction obtained from the functional factors of the agency

Table No: 7 – Period of membership and satisfaction regarding functional factors

Functional factors	Period	No:of respondents	Mean	S.D	Measures	Mean square	F	Sig .value
F ₁	2-9	80	3.64	0.716	B/w groups	0.818	1.695	0.124
					Within groups	0.483		
F ₂	2-9	80	3.50	0.712	B/w groups	0.630	1.274	0.275
					Within groups	0.494		
F ₃	2-9	80	3.76	0.799	B/w groups	0.932	1.527	0.172
					Within groups	0.611		
F ₄	2-9	80	3.59	0.741	B/w groups	1.049	2.095	0.045
					Within groups	0.501		
F ₅	2-9	80	4.33	0.577	B/w groups	0.658	1.486	0.186
					Within groups	0.443		
F ₆	2-9	80	4.26	0.725	B/w groups	0.588	1.133	0.352
					Within groups	0.519		

Source: Primary data

From Table 7, it is understood that the significance value is greater than 0.05 and therefore we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternate hypothesis. i.e; there is no significant difference between period of membership and satisfaction obtained from the functional factors of the agency in the following cases viz., ‘Seniority based selection and election procedures are satisfactory’, ‘membership fee is reasonable’, ‘dealings of officials are excellent’, ‘behavior of staffs is good’.

The significance value is less than 0.05 and therefore we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. It means that there is significant difference between period of membership and satisfaction obtained from the functional factors of the agency regarding ‘Publish its accounts periodically’.

Managerial implications:

The study mainly focuses on the role and contribution of a social service agency in spice farming. Hypothesis testing was used and the demographic factors were included in the study. ANOVA test and t test was mainly used for testing the hypothesis. The study revealed that the members of the agency are reasonably satisfied about its activities. Based on this positive experience, the agency could prepare plans for expansion of its activities to other areas. The members should be encouraged to provide opinion on activities and services from the agency and the members should feel free to give enough suggestions to help the effective management of the agency. Two third of the respondents were males. This is because of the fact that majority of our cultivatable land is held by male community. So the approach of the society should be changed in such a way that more women are encouraged to own land and use it for productive purposes.

Limitations and scope for future research:

This study is conducted among the respondents from the six subcommittees of the agency and the respondents were eighty. In future research all the subcommittees of the agency could be considered and the number of respondents could be increased. This is a study about a agency which provides its assistance in spice farming and in future research different agencies can be considered to make it more relevant.

Concluding remarks:

Agripreneurship is an emerging area in entrepreneurship and agriculture. This study was conducted to understand about the role and contribution of a social service agency in spice farming. Manarcad Social Service Society is one of the co-operative societies which promotes and motivates the farmers in spice farming. The overall results prove that the respondents are satisfied with the agency. This agency helps the farming community to adapt to sustainable agriculture practices and thereby it results in the creation of better livelihood and environment. From the overall results it can be concluded that this type of social service agencies have a specific role in fostering spice farming.

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