

Agro processing opportunities from production catchments in villages near Bhopal

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SUMMARY : Based on discussions with the State Govt. officials and field survey around Bhopal city, it was found that presently no state-sponsored scheme exists for setting of agro processing centre at village level. Only Ministry of Food Processing Industry, GOI is providing financial support to the entrepreneur. Nine villages near Bhopal city were surveyed and the total processing capacity from the defined catchments was assessed. It was revealed that around 90 per cent and 80 per cent of the total area was engaged in soybean and wheat cultivation in *Kharif* and *Rabi* seasons, respectively, besides some other crops such as chickpea and lentil in *Rabi* and groundnut, maize and pigeonpea in *Kharif*. Not a single farmer was running any agro-processing activities except milling of cereals on custom hire basis. The wheat available for processing in the surveyed villages ranged from 233 to 367.9 tonnes, indicating that if a flourmill of more than 100 kg/h capacity were to be established, the raw material would be available for processing round the year. Likewise, soybean available for processing ranged from 264.9 to 419.1 tonnes. Hence, soy-based flour, paneer, milk, biscuit and nut manufacturing units could also be established. For processing chickpea, pigeonpea and lentil, dal mill and burr mill could be established.

KEY WORDS : Agro-processing, Production catchments, Economical analysis

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India's economy is primarily based on agriculture. Over 65 per cent of the presently unemployed or under-employed youth in the rural areas may have to find jobs in activities other than direct cultivation (Shukla, 1998). Therefore, rural development is associated with the development of agricultural based enterprises. Rural people can be involved in the development by setting up agro-processing units at village level, benefiting them immensely by eliminating avoidable losses, improving the quality of the agro produce (Alam, and Singh, 2003), besides generating gainful employment with income distribution among the poorer strata of the society (Kulkarni, 2001). Keeping these in view, a survey of 9 villages namely Mugalia-Hat, Parvalia sadak, Jharkheda, Lambakheda, Eet-Khedi,

Dham Kheda, Sewania Onkara, Semaria Bajapt and Khamkheda near Bhopal city was undertaken to ascertain the current status and to assess the processing capacity of the defined catchments.

Some promising agro-industries, which can be established in rural areas, are: primary processing industries involve operations like cleaning, grading, shorting, drying, packaging, storing, etc., pulse milling, flour milling, spice processing, oil seed milling and soy based products making.

EXPERIMENTAL METHODS

Meeting with state government officials :

It included meeting with M.P. State Government officials of Extension Department, Dept. of Agriculture, Directorate of Agricultural Engineering, State Agro Industries Development Corporation Limited, etc., for collecting information on potential area for setting of agro processing unit at villages near Bhopal city, the processing schemes prevailing and related issues.

Selection of the village :

The area within the periphery of 25 km of Bhopal city was

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