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Research Paper

Production and marketing problems of maize in Punjab

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ABSTRACT

The wide adoption gaps of recommended technology of maize at the farm level are due to its poor dissemination to the farmers. Besides, low price, lack of proper marketing, availability of seed at much higher prices and technical know-how were reported as the serious constraints in attaining the net returns from maize equivalent to its main competing crop paddy. Other problems were inadequate availability of quality seed, lack of early maturing varieties (needed for drought management), weeds and unbalanced fertilizer use. The agricultural research institutions may initiate seed multiplication programme to sell it at reasonable prices, and hence pass on the benefits of research to farmers confronted with poverty and water scarcity. This will help in saving the farmers from the exploitation of private seed companies. The innovative technology disseminations method should also be implemented. Due to the lack of storage facilities the farmers have no option besides selling the produce immediately after harvesting at lower prices due to higher moisture content in the grains because they cannot dry their produce in the market yard as there is not enough space for it. The storage facilities may help to encourage maize cultivation in the state. In addition, developing innovative institutional arrangements to strengthen production-marketing-processing linkages to benefit producers and consumers is the need of the hour because market access also poses a major obstacle in realizing higher profit margins from maize crop.

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INTRODUCTION

Maize occupies a place of pride amongst the coarse cereal crops in India and it is emerging as third most important crop after rice and wheat. It has been estimated that this crop has contributed Rs. 6000 crores annually to India's GDP and generates 4500 lakh man days of employment (Puri, 2001). Maize is gradually spreading to non-traditional maize growing areas (to meet increasing household and feed industry demands), and its uses are also changing. Though the majority of the rural population is still using maize as a staple food, the higher-income stratum prefers it for soup and vegetable purposes. It has been estimated that the demand for maize in the developing countries will overtake the demand for wheat and rice by 2020 A.D. Asian maize demand will rise from 138 million tonnes in 1993 to 243 million tonnes, accounting for 60 per cent of the global increase in maize consumption by 2020 A.D. (Kumar and Singh, 2003).

Non-adoption of HYVs, lack of varieties resistant to insect pests, diseases, drought, water logging, etc., lack of suitable cultivars for late sowing, non-availability of quality seeds, non-adoption of plant protection measures, lack of price stability and procurement by government agencies, poor storage facilities and lack of crop insurance facility are the major constraints that affect maize production. To stabilize the prices, there should be diversification of maize utilization in food, beverages, starch, cattle and poultry feed industries. Concerted efforts are needed for seed production to meet the requirements with facilities for insurance and bank loan. The procurement of the produce should be regulated with support price by the government, so that the maize produced is not put to distress sale (Akhtar *et al.,* 2000).

Technical constraints, attack of insect/pests, diseases, inadequate and untimely supply of inputs, unaffordable prices of inputs, risk in production and price, poor rural infrastructure, non-availability of high quality seeds at an affordable price and selling of sub standard seeds at a high price were identified as production constraints that cause significant production losses. Apart from these, poor marketing facilities, inefficient procurement system coupled with predominance of local traders, reduces the profitability of the farmers. The poor storage and transport facilities