

**RESEARCH ARTICLE :**

## Constraints faced by tribal farmers on little millet (Samai) cultivation: An analysis

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**ARTICLE CHRONICLE :**

**Received :**

19.07.2017;

**Accepted :**

03.08.2017

**SUMMARY :** The present research was outlined with constraints encountered by little millet cultivating tribal farmers of Tiruvannamalai district. Among 32 districts of Tamil Nadu, Tiruvannamalai district was purposively selected for this study since it is one among the districts where little millet (samai) production is more especially in Jamunamarathur block. The study was conducted in four villages namely Kovilur, Veerappanur, Eriyur and Palamarathur from Jawadhu hills Panchayat Union of Tiruvannamalai district. The sample size entailed of 120 respondents selected from these villages by proportionate sampling method. The respondents were interviewed personally administering a well-structured and pre-tested interview schedule. The statistical tools viz., frequency and percentage analysis were used to analyze data. The constraints encountered by the little millet cultivating tribal farmers were thoroughly analyzed and discussed.

**KEY WORDS :**

Tribes, Constraints, Little millet

**How to cite this article :** Vasanthapriya, S., Premavathi, R., Jamal, K. Qudsiya and Sureshverma, R. (2017). Constraints faced by tribal farmers on little millet (Samai) cultivation: An analysis. *Agric. Update*, 12(TECHSEAR-7) : 1933-1936; DOI: 10.15740/HAS/AU/12.TECHSEAR(7)2017/1933-1936.

### BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Millets are most important crop in semi-arid tropics of Asia and Africa (especially in India, Nigeria and Niger), with 97.00 per cent of production in developing countries. The crop is favoured due to its productivity and short growing season under dry and high temperature conditions.

Though small millets are grown in almost every state/region, the distribution of millets is not uniform. The kodo, little and foxtail millets are grown widely in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, Madhya

Pradesh and Maharashtra. In Madhya Pradesh, both kodo and little millet are predominant, while foxtail millet is important in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. Barnyard millet and proso millet are grown largely in hills of Uttar Pradesh, North-Eastern region, plains of North Bihar, Western Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.

The capacity of millet farming systems and the area has been shrinking over the last few decades. The period between 1961 and 2009 saw a dramatic decrease in cultivated area under millets, more so in case of small millets (80% for small millets other than finger

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millet, 46% for finger millet). The area under all small millets other than finger millet has declined drastically in all states and the total production of small millets has declined by 76%. The productivity has remained more or less stagnant in the last two decades. The area declined by 83% from first five year plan to 11<sup>th</sup> plan whereas the production also fell by nearly 80%. The productivity of small millets (other than finger millet) remained almost stagnant till 11<sup>th</sup> plan with a slight decline during 3<sup>d</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> plans.

On the contrary the area under other small millets has reduced by more than half with proportionate reduction in total production. The productivity remained low and stagnant around 450 kg/ha.

Jaisridhar (2009) observed that an inadequate storage facility (76.70%) was the major problem in marketing followed by high commission (71.10%), delayed payment of money (70.00%), high transportation cost (68.94%), distant location of market (67.80%) and lack of awareness in price trend (65.60%).

Devika (2012) revealed that majority of the respondents 69.16 per cent had felt that there was more involvement of middle men in marketing who fix low margin for products, followed by 57.15 per cent had expressed delay in payment by the contractors and wholesalers as constraints. Nearly half (48.33%) felt that there are no proper transport facilities.

With this background, the study on “Constraints faced by tribal farmers on Little Millet (Samai) cultivation: An analysis” was taken with the objective *i.e.*, “to enumerate the constraints faced by the little millet (samai) cultivating tribal farmers of Jawadhu hills”.

## RESOURCES AND METHODS

The research design chosen for this study is Ex-post facto. The study enlists constraints on different sub-heads *viz.*, technical, labour, economic and marketing aspects. Tiruvannamalai district in Tamil Nadu was purposively selected because it is one of the districts in Tamil Nadu where the area under little millet cultivation by tribal farmers is high. Jamunamarathur block was selected because it has maximum area under little millet cultivation in Tiruvannamalai district. The villages namely kovilur, Eriyur, Palamarthur and Veerappanur were selected for the study. The lists of little millet (samai) cultivating tribal farmers were obtained from the records of the Village Administrative Officer (VAO).

Proportionate random sampling procedure was employed in selecting 120 respondents from the selected four villages. A sample of 56 members from Kovilur, 46 (23 from each village) members from Palamarathur and Eriyur and remaining 18 members were selected from Veerappanur villages. The data were collected using a pre-tested interview schedule. The collected data were subjected to statistical test such as frequency and percentage analysis to get meaningful interpretation.

## OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

The specific constraints encountered by little millet (samai) cultivating tribal farmers have been explained under five sub heads *viz.*, technical, labour, economic and marketing were studied. The data are presented in the Table 1.

### Technical constraints :

Water scarcity on irrigation at critical stages (100.00%) and yield loss due to inconsistent climatic conditions (74.17%) were considered as the major technical constraints. The reasons might be that most of the respondents’ don’t have well/bore well facilities at their farm may be the reason for water scarcity. Apart from the above constraints lack of good quality seeds (29.17%) and lack of adequate trainings (18.33%) were also perceived as constraints by the respondents. The seeds are not within easy reach; farmers use their own or neighbour’s seeds, which has admixtures and are of poor quality and not available in time resulted to the lack of quality seeds.

### Labour constraints :

The analysis revealed that high cost of labour (100.00%) and non-availability of labour (35.00%) were the major constraints felt by the respondents. Increase in price of daily need groceries and accessories leads to increase in the money requirements of the people. This might be the reason for the high cost of labour.

### Economic constraints :

Non-availability of loans through Government (20.00%), high cost of fertilizer (10.83%) and lack of price policy (2.50%) were the economic constraints felt by the samai cultivating tribal farmers. There is no facility for credit or crop loans, less awareness about the credit institutions and procedure to get loan as the reason for

Table 1 : Constraints faced by little millet (samai) cultivating tribal farmers		(n=120)	
Sr. No.	Constraints	Number	Percentage
<b>Technical constraints</b>			
1.	Lack of availability of good quality seed	35	29.17
2.	Yield loss due to inconsistent climatic condition	89	74.17
3.	Lack of availability of specific plant protection recommendations	-	-
4.	Due to water scarcity – irrigation at critical stages	120	100.00
5.	Lack of adequate trainings	22	18.33
6.	Lack of research in millets	-	-
<b>Labour constraints</b>			
1.	Non-availability of labour	42	35.00
2.	High cost of labour	120	100.00
<b>Economic constraints</b>			
1.	High plant protection chemicals	-	-
2.	High cost of fertilizer	13	10.83
3.	Non-availability of loans	24	20.00
4.	Lack of price policy	3	2.50
<b>Marketing constraints</b>			
1.	Lack of proper marketing channel	28	23.33
2.	Involvement of middle men is more in marketing	117	97.50
3.	Lack of export facility	8	6.67

\*Multiple responses obtained

the economic constraints.

### Marketing constraints :

More involvement of middle man in marketing (97.50%) was a major constraint felt by the respondents. Other than that, lack of proper marketing channel (23.33%) and lack of export facility (6.67%) were considered as constraints by tribal farmers. Because of unique characteristic of tribal farmers, they are very far from market information and they are forced to sell their harvest to wholesalers. The result is in line with the findings of Johnson (2002) and Janani Bagya (2013).

### Conclusion :

Being a tribal farmer, they found to have less number of water storage facilities due to land topography. Uneven climate change resulting in reduction of yield and quality of seeds. Due to their off-seasonal migration, high cost of labour was also observed. They need an initiative of Farmers Producer Company for selling their produce without more interventions of middle men. Majority of the respondents felt that price for little millet (samai) is very low and hence the Government may fix standard procurement price or Minimum Support Price (MSP) for little millet (samai). Most of the respondents

store the produce in their house. Hence, the storage facilities may be provided by government by constructing storage godowns at village/ block level. Most of the respondents transport their produce through two-wheelers and head load. It is because of poor infrastructure (road and transport) facility at hilly area. Hence, the Government may take necessary step to facilitate them with transport facility. Every tribal farmer sell their produce as raw grain because they do not have much facilities for processing. Hence, NGOs / KVK and other government institutions may provide suitable infrastructure facility and training to the tribal women / youths to create awareness about processing of little millet (samai) in order to generate additional income.

### Acknowledgement :

We thank Dr. Ravikumar Theodore, Kumaraguru Institute of Agriculture, Erode for his guidance to take up this research study and constant help throughout the research work, Dr. V. Ravichandran, Dean, Adhiyamaan College of Agriculture and Research, Hosur for laudable counseling and surpassing guidance throughout the study. My deep sense of thanks to Mrs. Shanthi, Assistant Director of Agriculture, West Arni for her timely help, gentle approach and assistance in completing the study.

I am very thankful to Mr. Anbarasu, Assistant Agricultural Officer, Jawadhu hills who given the timely help and provided the details necessary for my research work.

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