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Farming Situations in *Issapur* Village of Dwarka District in West Delhi During COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Situation of Indian agriculture has changed a lot due to pandemic which had a huge impact not only on agriculture but various other allied activities related to it. In this context, this paper aims to study the impact of COVID 19 on various aspects of farming system. The village selected for the study was Issapur which is located in the outskirt of Delhi NCR. The sampling method adopted in this village was snowball sampling or chain referral sampling. Exactly 30 farmers were interviewed. The data were arranged in a systematic manner, analyzed and expressed on percentage basis. In this study, most of the farmers belonged to the age group 35-55 yr, involved in farming alongside being wage earners, educated up to 12th, associated with joint family system, had no trading experience, belonged to small farmer category. Majority of farmers were not affected by COVID 19 and not ready to take vaccination. The study revealed that at the time of lockdown most of the crops were at harvesting and post harvesting stages. Most of the farmers did not face any issues regarding input availability for their next crop and didn't have any problem regarding labour availability for their farming operations. They suggested strategies like frequent monitoring on input shops and regularization of prices and provision of facilities of storage to prevent them to go for distress sale due to pandemic.

Key Words: Farming situations, Agricultural sector, Pandemic, Covid-19, lockdown.

INTRODUCTION

The present scenario of Indian agriculture though stable cannot be said as improved from previous years. Uncertainty imposed by the crisis, restrictions on inter-state movements and absence of transportation disrupted the food supply chains and spiked food prices (Kalsi *et al*, 2020) and affected farm operations. Situation in India has worsened and affected a huge chunk of population. India has already become a hotspot for the virus, next to the USA, infecting 9.6 million (14.6% of global infection) as of December 6th, 2020 which has resulted in a decline of 23.9% gross domestic product in quarter 1, FY 2020–21. COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the Indian agricultural system extensively. Nevertheless, the recent quarterly GDP estimates post-COVID scenario showcase robustness and resilience in Indian agriculture, the only sector to register a positive growth of 3.4% during the financial year 2020–21 (Quarter 1: April 2020 to June 2020). At the same time, the immediate past quarter growth was estimated at 5.9% witnessing a decline by 2.5% point. Though the impact on agriculture is not that huge compared to other sectors which has seen a huge downfall during this time.

The pandemic disrupts demand and supply of food impacting the global supply chain, while droughts tend to be localized affecting only the associated sector or stakeholders (Mishra *et al,* 2021). In this context, this paper aims to study the situation of farming during COVID 19 covering

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Table 1. Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents.

Sr. No	Socio-Economic Character	Frequency	Percentage
A	**Age**		
1	Young (below 35 yr)	0	0.00
2	Middle (between 35-55 yr)	16	53.33
3	Old (above 55 years)	14	46.67
B	**Occupation**		
1	Farming alone	12	40.00
2	Farming + Wage earner	14	46.67
3	Farming + Business	4	13.33
C	**Educational Status**		
1	Ill-literate	0	0
2	Literate	0	0
3	Primary School	8	26.67
4	Secondary School	8	26.67
5	Higher School	12	40
6	College	2	6.67
D	**Family Type**		
1	Nuclear	10	33.33
2	Joint	20	66.67
E	**Trading Experience**		
1	Low experienced (Below 2 yr)	12	40
2	Medium Experienced (Between 2 to10 years)	4	13.33
3	High Experienced (Between10 to 20 years)	10	33.33
4	Very High Experienced (Above 20 years)	4	13.33
F	**Farm Size**		
1	Marginal (up to 1ha)	4	13.33
2	Small (1to 2 ha)	16	53.33
3	Medium (2 to 4ha)	6	20
4	Large (Above 4 ha)	4	13.33

various aspects of farming system and also in the life of farmers and their surroundings. The main aim of this survey was to analyze the change in farming situations due to COVID 19 at a micro level and drawing appropriate conclusion from it.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The design adopted for the study was Ex-post facto design. The research area selected was a village named Issapur, in the outskirt of Delhi NCR. It is a small village in Dwarka District in West Delhi and shares its boundaries with Haryana state. The village was purposively selected for the

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents based on their Covid-19 pandemic effect.

Sr. No.	Attribute	Frequency	Percentage
A	**Affected by Corona**		
1	Not Affected	28	**93.33**
2	Mildly Affected	2	6.67
3	Severely Affected	0	0
B	**Vaccination**		
1	Vaccinated with 1st doze	3	20.00
2	Vaccinated with 2nd doze	4	26.67
3	Not vaccinated	8	53.33

study as the Experimental station of ICAR-National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources is located in this village and its proximity of 45 Km from the headquarter near Delhi-Haryana (Dhansa) border and its familiarity to the researcher. Being on the outskirts of Delhi, this village has greater extent of agricultural land. Majority of the farmers cultivate crops like Wheat, Barley and Mustard. They use groundwater and borewell besides canal irrigation to supply water for their crops in a regular manner.

A sample size of 30 farmers were selected. The researcher could not travel during the corona period and limited his sample size to 30. Data were collected with the help of a well-structured interview schedule in personal interview mode. The collected data were arranged in a systematic manner in SPSS and descriptive statistics was carried out and inferred with frequency and percentage analysis. Based on the average data of the table and interaction with the farmers an overall view of the farmers about farming situation in pandemic period was presented below.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economic Characteristics

From the Table 1, it could be found that most of the farmers were middle aged belonging to the age group 35-55 yr (53.33%) and old age above 55 yr (46.67%) age group. There were no young respondents below 35 yr of age because most of the farmers were not willing to put their younger generation on the field of farming and moving towards white collar jobs. Majority of the respondents (46.00 %) in this village were involved in farming alongside being wage earners followed by 40.0 per cent of respondents were doing farming alone. Meagre percentage (13.30%) of farmers were doing farming along with some kind of small business. Older generation was inclined more towards farming and wage earning compared to business. Few of them were doing business related to fruits and vegetable trade and were earning a good profit. Most of the farmers were educated up to 12th, also there was a fair share of farmers who have completed primary and secondary education. 6.67 per cent of farmers have obtained degree from college, this shows progress over generation. None of the farmers who were interviewed were illiterate. Education dummies defined as 5 yr of schooling or more and 10 yr of schooling or more revealed highly significant impact of education on agricultural productivity (Paltasingh and Goyari, 2018).

Further, most of the farmers were associated with joint family system which constitutes around 67 per cent whereas 33 per cent farmers belonged to nuclear family (Table 1). Based on the farm acreage maximum farmers (53.3%) belonged to small category followed by 20% farmers with medium category and equal percentage of farmers (13.33) with more than 10 ha.

Effect of Covid-19 pandemic on Farmers

From the data (Table 2) it was clear that a lion's share of the respondents (93.33%) was not affected by Covid-19 Pandemic. They quoted that neither they nor their family members were affected by Covid-19. The possible reason might be the interiority of their village and its less exposure to outsiders infected with Covid. They also said that they followed strict measures like wearing a face mask, frequent washing of hands, maintaining social distance and usage of sanitizers. So, the respondents were not affected by the pandemic. Nearly half of the respondents (53.3%) were not vaccinated with vaccine as they hesitate to take vaccine fearing for some side-effects.

Farming situation during COVID 19

Crop stage at the time of lock down

It was noticed that at the time of lockdown most of the farmers were harvesting wheat at that time (March) and ready to sow mustard crop. Around 53 per cent of farmers were at post-harvest operation stages and rest 46 per cent at the stage of harvest, so lockdown did not have much effect on management operations of crop. In India, the lockdown was imposed from 24 March to 31 May 2020. That was the period of harvesting of Rabi (winter) season crop and sowing of Zaid (summer) season crop (Saxena *et al* , 2021).

Input Availability during lockdown

Most of the farmers (60%) said that they did not face any issues regarding input availability for their next crop but 40 per cent farmers mentioned that they faced issues regarding availability of urea and DAP. Some farmers even complained that fertilizers sold at a very high price especially urea and DAP by the shopkeepers to them. Likewise, some shopkeepers hoarded supplies of fertilizers and waiting for lockdown to sell them at a higher price to obtain better margin.

Labour Availability during lockdown

It was evident that 80 per cent of farmers didn't have any problem regarding labor availability for their farming operations whereas 20 per cent did face some issues. One of the primary reasons for not having problem regarding labor availability was that most of their work is mechanized and secondly, they said that labors who were working in cities came back to their village as unemployed manpower who were ready to work in their field in order to sustain their livelihood.

Expected Price for their crop

It was found that nearly 60 per cent of farmers were very happy by the way of how mandis operate, they said that they got the price of their harvest immediately after it was weighed and they got higher prices than before. However, some of them (40%) complained that they did not get expected price for their harvest. The mustard crop was sold at very less price and the very next year they saw an increase in mustard oil prices. This indicates that middle men sold mustard at a much higher price to the processing companies than the price given to farmers. Therefore, the farmers could not get their fair share from mustard sale. The line quoted by Frontline magazine "Although agricultural output has increased this year, greater operational costs and poor prices for produce have deprived the Indian peasantry of any gain." Seems to contradict farmer's situation in Issapur area as most of them accepted the fact that they got good price for their harvest.

Transportation Related Issues

It was found that most of the farmers (80%) didn't have any issues for transportation of their harvest, because big farmers of the village helped others to transport their items through tractors to mandis or any nearby market at a reasonable price. They noticed the absence of middlemen during the pandemic. Though they faced some problems because of restriction of timings to go out and their inability to sell their produce whenever they wanted. The findings were in-line with Neetha and Prema (2020) who examined the market access to paddy farmers and attempts to quantify the losses to them due to lockdown in the Kerala state during

Sr. No	Suggested Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
1	Frequent monitoring of fertilizer shops	22	73.33
2	Regulating prices of inputs	16	53.33
3	Improved transportation	13	43.33
4	Increased storage facilties	11	36.66

the pandemic period and revealed that 89 per cent of the paddy farmers accessed public procurement system and involvement of private traders were totally absent during the pandemic period.

Awareness on Government Schemes

Two major schemes were provided by government during lockdown. Farmers were given benefit on the basis of old schemes like the government said it has transferred over Rs 19,000 crore to bank accounts of 9.65 crore farmers under the PM-KISAN (also known as Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi). The government of India announced the COVID-19 social assistance package of INR 1.7 lac crore (or 25 billion US$) under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PM-GKY) to provide immediate relief to the vulnerable population. The PM-GKY package uses existing schemes to provide additional benefits to farmers and rural households. These schemes include Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN), Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PM-UY), Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PM-JDY), and Pradhan Mantri Ann Vitran Yojana (PMAVY). Together, these four programs represent about 70 per cent of the total budget of the PM-GKY package. Most of the farmers (80%) were aware of some type of government schemes either some kind of pension scheme or NREGA scheme but they had very little knowledge about benefits given to them during lockdown. Nearly 20 per cent farmers complained that they were not aware of any kind of assistance from Government either during pandemic or before it.

Suggestions expressed by the respondents

The following suggestions were expressed by the farmers that could help them during the pandemic times. Majority of the respondents (73.33%) reported that there should be frequent monitoring on fertilizer shops followed by 53.33 per cent to regulate prices on inputs in order to save farmers from increased prices

CONCLUSION

The main concerning issue that shook the world's economy was Covid-19 pandemic. It had its powerful impact among all the sectors around the world. India also suffered a lot of hard times during the pandemic. Agricultural sector too faced a lot of challenges. An attempt was made with this study to analyse the farming situations in Issapur village during the pandemic. It can be said that most of the farmers did not face major issues during first lockdown as they were on the verge of harvesting their crop. Few of them were doing post-harvest operations for their yield. Surprisingly some farmers of Delhi NCR opined that they were actually benefited because of lockdown due to easy availability of labor which is extremely important during final stages of crop. Finally, Government should provide more schemes to lend a helping hand to farmers to get their inputs and market their produce at appropriate prices in an efficient manner to tackle hard times of lockdown due to COVID 19.

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