

Assessment of success and failures in cultivation, processing and marketing of Medicinal Plants in Malwa Region / Central India

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During the last decade in India, particularly the Madhya Pradesh state has observed a major boom in cultivating medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs), which were on high demand in the international as well as national market. The government, semi government, non- government organisations, private industries and even individuals were largely attracted due to high prices of raw material of selected species. The state and central governments also launched massive campaign to promote large-scale cultivation of the selected species of medicinal and aromatic plants by giving subsidy, loans to the farmers. Recently, due to lack of market demand, low prices, high planting material and production cost, increasing labour costs, less consumption at local as well as Industrial level, more production etc., the market of these commercially cultivated medicinal plants have crashed. As a result, the small-scale farmers fail to sell their produce (wet) in the local market. The cost of raw or wet product has reduced considerably and there were no buyers. Hence, some farmers left the cultivation or sold out their produce at a throwaway prices in the local market. The report extensively examines various causes of success and failures in cultivation of Ashwagandha, Safed musli, Asaria, Coleus and Stevia plant in Malwa region.

The project had following objectives:

- To assess the problems faced in cultivation of MAPs by the growers;
- To assess the causes of success and failure of cultivated medicinal plants;
- To suggest training and capacity build[ng of stakeholders about cultivation, processing and value addition of selected medicinal plants and their marketing;
- To suggest mitigation measures of the problems to facilitate the cultivation of medicinal plants.

The districts of Indore, Ujjain, and Neemuch of Malwa region were selected for the present study. Two categories of farmers/cultivators were found in the study area viz. <2 acre area under medicinal plant cultivation, >2 acre area under medicinal plant cultivation. Stratified

random sampling was used to select the respondents and semi- structured and structured questionnaires were prepared, field-tested and then used to collect data. Results showed that cultivation of selected species was not remunerative to the small land holding farmers (less than 2 acres). The main reason behind was the lack of market demand, procurement of costly planting material (seed, tuber, cutting etc) from the large farmers, reluctant about value addition and processing, increasing labor cost low price of the produce and failure to understand the future demand and supply position. During the survey it was also observed that owing to high initial cost involved in the cultivation, farmers were not getting fair prices of their raw produce as compared to agricultural or cash crops.

The project recommends for small-scale growers (<2 Acre) of the selected medicinal plants that they should assess potential of local and national market of the species to be cultivated; adopt methods to reduce the cultivation cost; organized sale of the produce (Growers Association, Farmers Co-operatives etc); avoid purchase of costly planting material from suppliers; value addition at farm level and training for simple processing, grading, cleaning and sun/shade drying; develop linkages with local traders or ayurvedic manufacturing units; contract farming and agreement from both farmers as well as industry side to ensure timely utilisation of the produce and return of fair price etc. There is a prospect for all selected species only after processing and value addition. The encouragement from govt. side in the form of minimum support price, establishment of medicinal plant *mandi* and more advertisement to increase local, industrial as well as end user market demand is extremely desirable.