



Research Article

STUDY OF SOCIO -ECONOMIC STATUS OF ONION FARMERS IN NASHIK DISTRICT OF MAHARASHTRA

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Abstract: Socio-economic status (SES) is a combined measurement of economic and social position of an entity compared to others in society. Present study tried to investigate SES of onion farmers. For this study, the State of Maharashtra was selected purposively. Out of 36 districts of Maharashtra, Nashik district was selected purposively for the study. From each selected village, 10 percent respondents were selected randomly thus making a sample of 131 respondents for the study. Eight variable viz. education, family size, family type, occupation, age, landholdings, farming experience and annual income were selected to assess the SES. Data was collected through a structured interview schedule by personal interview method. The study showed that majority of the respondents were literate at high school level (29.77 %), medium family size (56.49%), belonged to nuclear family type (61.83 %), agriculture as main occupation (40.46 %), belonged to middle age (57.25%), small landholdings (44.27%), medium farming experience (67.18%) and medium annual income (79.39%).

Keywords: Socio-Economic status; onion farmers; Maharashtra; Nashik

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Introduction

Onion (*Allium cepa*) has an extensive culinary, dietary, therapeutic, trading, income and employment generation value. Onion is commodity of mass consumption and is grown almost all over the country mainly by small and marginal farmers as this is labour intensive crop. India ranks second after China having 1305.64 thousand ha. area and 22427.43 thousand metric tones production (Source: NHRDF, 2016-17). The three main seasons of *kharif* (monsoon), late *kharif* and *rabi* (winter) contribute 15%, 20% and 65%, respectively, to the total onion production (Source: NHB, 2016-17).

Maharashtra ranks first state in onion production with share of 30.03 percent therefore it is called as 'onion basket of India' [1]. In Maharashtra, area, production and productivity of onion in year 20016-17 was 481.05 thousand ha, 6734.74 thousand metric tones and 14 ton/ha. respectively [2]. The district of Nashik in Maharashtra accounts for the largest share in the production of onions in India. Nashik onion is not only consumed in the farthest corners of India, it is also exported to many countries. The present study was undertaken to determine the socio-economic status of onion growers in study area.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Nashik district of Maharashtra State during the year 2016-17. Nashik district was selected purposively as having remarkable onion production in the state. Out of 15 blocks of Nashik district, Niphad and Yeola blocks were selected for the study because leading onion producing blocks. In selected blocks, seven villages were selected from Niphad based on highest area under onion crop; similarly six villages from Yeola were selected. From each village, ten percent farmers were selected randomly. Hence, the study covered 13 villages from 2 blocks of Nashik district to form a sample of 131 respondents. A pre-tested structured interview schedule was used to collect the data from the respondents by personal interview method. The data collected from respondents was tabulated and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

Results and Discussion

The educational level of onion farmers has been presented in [Table-1]. The data indicated that all the farmers including illiterate to graduation and above level were involved in the onion growing. Maximum 29.77 percent of respondents were studied up to high school, followed by 19.85 percent of the respondents have studied up to PUC level, Middle school was received by 15.27 percent and 13.74 percent of them studied up to primary school and least of 12.21 percent of them have studied up to graduation and above. The findings indicated that considerable percentage of onion farmers had good education i.e., 29.77 percent High School level and only few (9.16%) were illiterates. The reason behind it was that farmers believe that getting good education will help prosper in future. This might be due to the fact that farmers have easy access to schools and realization of importance of formal education in the present situation is also very high. These findings are supported by the findings of Shashi, (2004); Chandrashekhar, (2007); Jamanal and Sadaqath, (2017) [3,4,5]. The results presented on the sample percentage of male and female were found 51.41 percent and 48.59 percent respectively. Apart this, it is clear from study that 56.49 percent of the respondents belonging to medium family size category and 36.64 percent of them belonging to small family size category; whereas, 6.87 percent were in the big category of family size. The probable reasons behind these findings could be that young and middle age people would prefer to live in nuclear families and old age people prefer joint family. Further, realization of the advantages of nuclear families in terms of running the family responsibilities and they might have been practicing medium family size. The findings are similar with the findings of Devalatha, (2005); Abdulkadir, (2015) [6,7]. An insight of data revealed that 61.83 percent of the respondents belonging to nuclear family category and 27.48 percent of them belonging to joint family category; whereas, 10.69 percent were in the extended category of family type. The reason could be that the present trend in the society is having a small family size so that they could concentrate much better for the welfare of their family.

Table-1 Distribution of the onion farmers according to their socio-economic status (n =131)

SN	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
1	Education		
	Illiterates	12	9.16
	Primary school	18	13.74
	Middle school	20	15.27
	High school	39	29.77
	PUC	26	19.85
	Graduation and Above	16	12.21
2	Family Size		
	Small(<4)	74	56.49
	Medium(5-6)	48	36.64
	Big(>7)	9	6.87
	Total size of farm families	885	100
	Male	455	51.41
	Female	430	48.59
3	Family Type		
	Nuclear	81	61.83
	Joint	36	27.48
	Extended	14	10.69
4	Occupation		
	Agriculture	53	40.46
	Agriculture and livestock	41	31.3
	Agriculture and service	37	28.24
5	Landholdings		
	Marginal farmer (<1 hectare)	35	26.72
	Small farmer (1-2 hectare)	58	44.27
	Semi-medium farmer (2-4 hectare)	26	19.85
	Medium farmer (4-10 hectare)	10	7.63
	Large farmer (>10 hectare)	2	1.53

Table-2 Distribution of onion farmers according to their age

SN	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Mean SD
1	Young age (<32 years)	25	19.08	45.61
2	Middle age (32-58 years)	75	57.25	13.34
3	Old age (>58 years)	31	23.67	
	Total	131	100	

Table-3 Distribution of onion farmers according to their farming experience

SN	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Mean SD
1	Low (<8 years)	19	14.50	18.35
2	Medium (8-28 years)	88	67.18	10.24
3	High (>28 years)	25	19.08	
	Total	131	100	

Table-4 Distribution of onion farmers according to their annual Income

SN	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Mean SD
1	Lower income group (<Rs.302593/-)	11	8.40	8.61
2	Middle income group (Rs.302593-1420354/-)	104	79.39	5.57
3	Higher income group (>Rs.1420354/-)	16	12.21	
	Total	131	100	

This could be the possible reason for majority of the respondents having nuclear family. This finding was supported by Shalini and Chandra, (2014) [8]. The occupational description of onion farmers has been presented in [Table-1]. Agriculture was the primary occupation of the sample farmers. Thus, the economy of the study area was found to be predominantly agriculture-based. The data revealed that agriculture was highest (40.46 percent) followed by agriculture and livestock (31.30 percent) and lowest in case of agriculture and service (28.24 percent) respectively. It could be inferred that majority of the respondents involved in livestock and service sector. It was due to the reason that most of farmers being in middle age group and with small farm size and medium income group. Their incomes were not enough for their household expenses so they did other occupations for better livelihood. The same result was generated by Neethi and

Sailaja (2014); Samarpitha, *et al.*, (2016) [9,10]. The landholdings of onion farmers have been presented in [Table-1]. The data presented in the table indicates that all the farmers including marginal farmers to large farmers were involved in the onion growing. However, 44.27 percent of the farmers were small farmer and 26.75 percent of onion growers were marginal farmer. Further, 19.85 percent, 7.63 percent, 1.53 percent of onion growers were semi-medium farmer, medium farmer, and large farmer, respectively. Majority of farmers had small holdings followed by marginal farm size. This was due to the fact that the fragmentation of land holding from generation to generation which led most of large holding farmers turning to small and medium holding farmers. These findings were in line with the findings of Jamanal and Sadaqath, (2017) and Archana, (2012) [5,11]. It could be inferred from the [Table-2] that 57.25 percent of the respondents were middle aged (32-58 years) and 23.67 percent of them were old aged (>58 years). Only 19.08 percent of the onion growers were young aged (<32 years). The probable reason for majority of the respondents being under middle age category might be due to the fact that most of the young people are not interested in farming and are looking for better livelihood options in urban area. Another reason may be middle aged are enthusiastic and have more work efficiency than the older or younger ones. Individual may not be ready to accept the responsibility in the young age itself. The age of the farmer is expected to affect his labor productivity and output. This finding is supported by Jamanal and Sadaqath (2017) and Abdulkadir, (2015) and [5,7]. It was found that more than half of farmers (67.18 %) had medium onion growing experience (8-28 years), followed by more and less onion growing experience *i.e.*, 19.08 percent (>28 years) and 14.50 percent (<8 years), respectively [Table-3]. As majority of respondents were of middle age so was their farm experience also. Definitely the farming experience is an important factor which influences the farmers to accept, evaluate and experiment the innovative technologies in their farm. To enable them to effectively utilise their farm experience, the scientists and extension agencies have to conduct extension activities like trainings, result demonstrations, method demonstrations, meetings, exposure visits and group discussions so as to provide wide exposure to farmers and facilitate them to act further. This is in conformity with the results of Yishak, (2017) [12]. The data revealed that considerable percent (79.39%) of the onion farmers were in the range of middle annual income group (Rs. 302593-1420354/-) followed by 12.21 percent in the high income category (>Rs.1420354/-) and 8.40 percent in the low income category (<Rs. 302593/-). As majority respondents had medium annual income. It was due to small farm size, medium innovativeness, medium economic orientation, medium market orientation, medium change proneness medium achievement motivation and medium information seeking behaviour as indicated in the study. The same result was generated by Neethi and Sailaja, (2014) and Kamalakanth, (2008) [9, 13].

Conclusion

Onion production is an important business to various farmers and this is highly demanding crop at national and international level which helps to increase the socio-economic condition of the farmers. Most of the onion farmers in the study area acquired education up to high school level, belonged to medium family size and nuclear family type. It was found that considerable onion farmers had agriculture as main occupation. Maximum of them belonged to middle age, having medium size of land holding, medium farming experience and medium annual income. Therefore, there is an urgent need to create awareness generation campaign to educate the onion farmers to improve their livelihood. To initiate steps to foster the growth of participatory approach of farmers in credit cooperatives, marketing cooperatives and farmer's producer organizations in agriculture sectors. Apart this, efforts should be undertaken by the Government, Agricultural Universities and other extension agencies in providing updated information on improved technologies of production and efficient marketing of onion so that they could bring about upliftment of their socioeconomic status.

Application of research: main aim of the research area is knowing of data of the farmers those who are growing the onions in Nashik district of Maharashtra state

Research Category: Agriculture economics

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