

PROBLEMS HINDERING THE DEVELOPMENT OF FLORICULTURE INFORMATION SYSTEM IN WEST BENGAL: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT - Floriculture is a very fast emerging and highly competitive industry in West Bengal. Enormous genetic diversity, varied agro-climatic condition etc. offer West Bengal a unique scope in this field. Traditionally West Bengal is an agrarian economy where floriculture industry improving the earning capacity of this state. Socio-economic profile getting change gradually based on this sector. In West Bengal the main flower producing districts are viz. PurbaMedinipur[5], Nadia, Howrah, Darjeeling, North 24 PGS. Along with tremendous opportunities in floriculture the State not able to explore the business due to lots of challenges. For having different weaknesses like poor marketing system, poor transport system, lack of knowledge, lack of infrastructure, lack of research and development in this area the floriculture industries in West Bengal are not getting proper support but other states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Maharastra are capturing a high share of the national market due to high productivity and lower cost production. The related literature is also reveal the same picture of the Floriculture Information System of this state as well as this country. Poor marketing efficiency, Exploiting role of intermediaries and Mahajans, lack of new technologies etc. are the big problems for this industry. To cope with this situation a well developed Floriculture Information System is needed which can serve as a platform for information and knowledge repository for the floriculture industry.

Keywords: Floriculture, Floriculture Information System, Floriculture Industry, Marketing, West Bengal

1. INTRODUCTION

Floriculture can be defined as a discipline of horticulture which deals not only with the cultivation of flowers, foliage, climbers, trees, shrubs, cacti, succulents, etc., but also with their marketing and production of value-added products from them. The persons associated with this field are called Floriculture Community.

Today's flourishing industry in West Bengal is Floriculture[1]. Because flower is related to every sphere of human life including social, cultural, religious and even day to day events. It has very high commercial value capable of attracting to substantial amount of foreign exchange to the state. In spite of such tremendous economic potentiality, it

remains neglected. It is not fully explored by the floriculture community because of lacking of proper information system in this field.

Different problems are there which hindered the development of floriculture Information System in West Bengal[10]. This article states the problems that hampered the development of Floriculture Industry as well as floriculture information System in this state.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

An overview of related literatures pertaining to the present study made in the following statements.

Sarkar, Rahim and Misra (1997) have explained the use of floriculture in the Indian society in his book captioned "Floriculture in West Bengal; Problems and Prospects". They analysed the possibilities of floriculture as one of the most profitable crop from the Indian perspective.

Randhawa and Mukhopadhaya (2010) have thoroughly investigated the production of flowers in the country. The authors critically assess the problems faced by the producers in the country in their book entitled 'Floriculture in India'.

Kaur & Saleem (2011) have discussed trading and marketing pattern of cut flowers with foreign states in their article 'The Growth of Cut flowers in India and its trade Japan, United Arab Emirates, Italy, Canada and Australia'. In the same spirit, S. Prasad (2005) and Sudhagar (2013) have tried to give an idea on marketing of commercial flowers and cut flowers in India in their articles 'Commercial Floriculture' and 'Production and Marketing of Cut flower (Rose and Gerbera) in Hosur Taluk' respectively.

Ramkumar & Ajith (2003) In their article "Dry flower production and export" authors discuss importance, economics and marketing of dry flower.

Sengupta (2009) has detected the problems faced by the Indian flower producers in marketing of flowers in his book 'Floriculture Marketing in India'. He has also suggested some

remedial measures that could be adopted to tackle such problems.

Sarker&Chakravorty (2005) have focussed on the efficiency and sustainability of flower market in West Bengal. They have discussed marketing efficiency decreases with the increase in number of market intermediaries in a marketing channel in their article 'Flower Farming and Flower marketing in West Bengal : A study of Efficiency and Sustainability'.

3. OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the weaknesses and challenges of present Floriculture Information System in West Bengal for boosting the floriculture industry's strength.
2. To analyse the existing information system in the context of present IT based Industrial Management Information System in the field of Floriculture.
3. To support for the development of a Model Information system to reserves its weaknesses and overcome the challenges.
4. Identify the core competencies of this field which can help in setting of new objectives for strategic planning of Floriculture Information System

4. FLORICULTURE IN WEST BENGAL

Floriculture or Flower cultivation is a discipline of Horticulture, and is the study of growing and marketing of flowers and foliage plants.

Going beyond invaluable beauty, flowers have commercial value. Flower is a part of life in our country and its commercial and economic use is increasing day by day. Floriculture is a blooming industry in West Bengal. Because it is blessed with varied and dynamic agro-climatic condition, good quality soil and water made suitable for floriculture. Main flower producing districts in West Bengal are – PurbaMedinipur, Nadia[4], Howrah, Darjeeling, North 24 PGS. Floriculture is comprises both traditional and modern flower crops. West Bengal is endowed with varied agro climatic conditions suitable for growing a number of flowers but the traditional floriculture is predominant in this state.

4.1 Traditional Floriculture

Traditionally, flowers have been grown in India as well as West Bengal in the open fields, where they have been exposed to both biotic and abiotic stresses. Traditional flowers are offered in religious and social ceremonies, used as an adornment by women and offered for worships at home as well as in temples.

Eg.Jasmine, Rose, Marigold, Tuberose, Hibiscus, Crossandra etc.

4.2 Modern Floriculture

Modern flowers are grown under protected conditions (greenhouse conditions). In the era of globalisation, the product has to be of International quality and globally competitive, as there is lot of demand for different floricultural products in the export market. They are referred to as cut flowers. Generally harvested along with long stem or stalk[11]. Eg. Dutch rose, Gerbera, Carnation, Crysanthemum, Gladiolus, Orchids etc.

5. FLORICULTURE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Floriculture Information System is a part of Agro-Industrial Information System, where agricultural information[6] is generated, transformed, consolidated, received and delivered to the target groups. It is a platform for floriculture information and knowledge sharing and exchange for Floriculture based research & development for target groups and stake holders.

The different stake holders are- Govt. Of India sponsored Floriculture Sector Organization, State Govt. Sponsored Floriculture Sector Organization, Floriculture Research Centre, Non-Govt. Organizations (NGOs), Flower growers or Farmers, People related to flower marketing, Producers of seeds, manure, pesticides which are used in floriculture.

The Floriculture information System serves as an information and knowledge repository and a gateway to the knowledge system for Floriculture research and development at a country level aiming for strengthen, coordinating and increase agricultural production and improving performance of floriculture community and industries.

Different web based services in Agricultural Information System as well as Floriculture Information System in India as well as in West Bengal are as follows:

5.1 Government Initiatives

- Kisan Call Centre
- Agriculture Technology Information Center (A T I C)
- National Portal of India
- Agmarket
- FARMER'S PORTAL
- Seed net India
- National Agriculture Bio-computing Portal

5.2 Non-government Initiatives

- E-choupal
- India : m-krishi
- India-IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Limited
- India: Nano Ganesh

5. WEAKNESSES THAT HINDERED THE DEVELOPMENT OF FLORICULTURE INDUSTRY IN WEST BENGAL

1. Very little Government support reduces the confidence of the flower producers.
2. Most of the growers are financially weak. So, they are, very often, sceptical to invest further.
3. Exploiting role of intermediaries and Mahajans reduces the share of profit. The productivity of flower crops still remains lower as compared to other states.
4. Lack of specific information on area and production of different flowers which, is a handicap in planning production for domestic and export market[9].
5. Lack of information on new varieties which, continuously keep changing in the International markets[8].
6. Lack of information on advanced cultivation practices like high density planting, fertilizer and irrigation management, plant protection, packing and grading, etc.,
7. Lack of infrastructure facilities like green house and poly house as well as cold chain[12].
8. There are no organized marketing co-operatives of other bodies which can take care of floriculture trade in West Bengal.
9. Lack of research and development in floriculture. Especially on new varieties, postharvest techniques, advanced cultivation method, flower marketing etc.
10. Lack of quality control mechanism and poor co-ordination between government and private agencies involved in import and export of floriculture products.
11. Lack of appropriate planting materials and production technologies for export.
12. Lack of knowledge about importing and exporting countries.

13. Lack of quality consciousness of the floriculture products. This affects the floriculture industry as a whole.
14. Lack of sale promotion activities in West Bengal. Lack of market intelligence regarding leading varieties, selling price, etc

6. CONCLUSION

West Bengal has a blooming future as far as floriculture is concerned. Varied agro-climatic, ample sunshine, proximity to the markets offer great opportunities to harness potential in floriculture. But many challenges are hampering the bright future of this industry[7]. Due to lack of infrastructural facilities the floriculture industry is affected as a whole. Different weaknesses like poor marketing system, poor transport system, lack of knowledge, lack of infrastructure, lack of research and development in floriculture the floriculture industries in West Bengal are not getting proper support but other states like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Maharastra are capturing a high share of the national market due to high productivity and lower cost production[3]. To cope with this situation a well developed Floriculture Information System is needed which can serve as a platform for information and knowledge repository for the floriculture community. It can serves as a gateway to the national knowledge system for floriculture research and development. It can also strengthen, coordinate and add value to the initiatives taken by the nation which will improve the performance of the floriculture industry.

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