

TOBACCO CULTIVATION IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture plays a vital role in the Indian economy over 70% of the rural households depend on agriculture as their principal means of livelihood. Agriculture along with fisheries and forestry accounts for one third of the nations GDP and is its single largest contributor. In addition to food Indian farmers have to manage for their other essential needs also by exchanging agricultural produce. It is significant to mention here that agricultural produce has been broadly classified into group's viz food crops and cash crop. Food crop includes those crops which are used for food. Cash crop comprises those crops which bring cash or money to the growers for their other essential needs. Tobacco is a cash crop which fulfills most other needs of Indian farmers of northern as well as southern planes. Tobacco is one of the most significant cash crops of India. But proper attention has not been paid towards its cultivation, production and exchange. It is still grown in traditional way. There are much more problems in production and exchange. There is no regulated market of tobacco, so the farmers have been freely exploited by the traders.

KEYWORDS: *Indian economy, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Cash Crop. Food Crop.*

Introduction

India is a country which is dominated purely by agriculture, where maximum number of people are chiefly dependent on agricultural product. India is called 'The land of farmers'. Most of the people in India have no other source of income except agricultural produce. The number of population working under agriculture is nearly about 70%. In which the rural population is 80%. The agriculture is contributing in India's national income very fastly. The agriculture share in the gross domestic product of India is 20.5%. According to 2011 agricultural census of India an estimated 61.5% of the 1300 million Indian populations is rural and dependent on agriculture. The number of farming households is 159.6 million. Despite the focus on industrialization, agriculture remains a dominant sector of the Indian economy both in terms of contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as well as source of employment to millions across the country.

Though, India is a leading tobacco exporter with exports of leaf tobacco and tobacco products generating foreign exchange earnings of around Rs. 6000 crores annually. The tobacco grower of the country does not get proper incentive to develop and increase the production to save foreign exchange. India produce tobacco of different grades and types for various end user thus providing a one-stop shop for different style, qualities and price range. The diversity of Indian tobacco has enabled the country to export tobacco to over 100 countries across the globe.

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India produces a wide range and types of tobacco in different agro-climatic zones. As a result, the plant characteristics of different types of tobacco, their cultivation practices, harvesting and curing techniques, and leaf chemistry of each type is different. The main non-flue-cured Virginia, or non-FCV types of tobacco grown in India include bidi, natu, cigar, cigarette, cheroot, chewing, snuff, and hookah tobacco besides burley tobacco varieties. FCV tobacco leaves are usually bright, and have orange or lemon yellow colour, and fruity smell, with a sugar-nicotine ratio of around 10. Non-FCV tobacco is usually dark brown, copper brown, or dark green and have a sugar-nicotine ratio of about 1. FCV tobacco is the chief cigarette tobacco grown in India followed by some quantities of non-FCV types of cigarette tobacco such as natu (sun-cured country tobacco), air cured burly and HDBRG variety which is similar to burley tobacco. On an average, bidi tobacco accounts for the highest production among different type of tobacco cultivated in India. Its annual production ranges from 170,000 tons to over 200,000 tons, followed by flue-cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco whose average production ranges from 100,000 to 150,000 tons on annual basis. Natu, chewing, hookah, cigar & cheroot and snuff types of tobacco share in production is comparatively much smaller than bidi and Virginia tobacco. Products such as bidis, chewing, hookah and snuff tobacco are mostly cottage industry based, and cater to different segments of the Indian population which are either rural based or economically backward.

Within each country there is great variation in the consumption patterns. There has also been a complex interplay of socio-cultural factors which influenced not only the acceptance or rejection of tobacco by sections of society but also determined the patterns of use. In traditional Indian joint families smoking at home was initially a taboo. It was restricted to only the dominant male members of the family. The younger members of the family would resist from using it in the presence of the elders and even the master of the house would not use it when an elderly relative especially an aged parent was around. Members of different generations smoking together in a home setting, is rare even today modernity has led to some relaxation of these rules.

Although smoking tobacco was a taboo in traditional families but smokeless forms of tobacco was widely accepted. Inclusion of tobacco as one of the ingredients of paan highlights the importance of this product and wide social acceptability of tobacco chewing in ancient India. The social acceptance and importance of paan increased further during the mughal era and paan chewing became a widely prevalent form of smokeless tobacco use in India. Women ate paan for cosmetic reasons as chewing it produced a bright red juice that colored their mouth and lips. For each type of tobacco use, a wide range of tobacco products may be available. Though tobacco chewing was practiced for many centuries, commercial production and marketing were up-scaled recently with the introduction of gutka. The rate of growth and consumption of gutka has overtaken that of smoking forms of tobacco.

Flue Cured Virginia (FCV) tobacco is the main exportable tobacco produced in India with around 70% of FCV tobacco crop being exported. FCV tobacco exports alone garner foreign exchange earnings of Rs. 3,500 crores annually. India accounts for 5% value share of the US \$ 12 billion global tobacco leaf export trade with a vast variety of tobaccos grown in the country and the improving quality of product there exists a significant opportunity for the tobacco industry in India to extend and consolidate its position in the world tobacco trade. The historical developments relating to the economic aspects of tobacco in India can be studied in two periods: The colonial era before India became independent in 1947 and the Post Independence period of national governance and policy making. Tobacco was initially grown in Deccan Region, during 1605, and later spread to other parts. The Virginia Variety of tobacco was introduced in India in Andhra Pradesh in 1920 by the British officer Sie Forbes Watson. Cultivation and preparation of tobacco in India said to be one of the earliest publications on tobacco.

Conclusion

Although, tobacco was grown in many parts of India during in 1950, the best quality crop was grown in Bihar, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. Till the 1960, the cultivation of FCV tobacco was traditionally confined to the black soils in India. The Indian market for tobacco products however, has a large highly integrated tobacco industry which involves the cultivation of several varieties of tobacco, manufacturer of different tobacco products, including unprocessed and chewing tobacco and an extensive distribution and retail system. Over the years a combination of strong prices, domestic consumption good export demand for tobacco and low prices of other crops helped the growth of tobacco from a cash crop to a manufacturing industry liked with commercial considerations. The tobacco industry in India includes the production, distribution and consumption leaf tobacco, smoking products such as cigarettes and bidies and various chewing tobacco products.

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