

# An Assessment of Small Growers' Problem in Betel Nut Production in Assam

Durlove Borah

*Research Scholar, Department of Economics, Dibrugarh University, Assam*

## Abstract

India is an agriculture-based country and betel nut cultivation is one of the main economic activities for small growers in rural areas of Assam. The betel nut growers of the study area have high potentialities for both productions of betel nut and earn income from it. But there are some problems which arise as a constraint in the production of betel nut as well as in its marketing. Therefore, in this paper, an attempt is made to investigate the various problems being experienced by the betel nut growers of the study area. The study was conducted in the Nagaon district of Assam as it has the highest production of betel nuts in the state. The sample was constituted 240 betel nut growers drawn from 12 villages. The respondents were interviewed with the help of a designed schedule where the problems were expressed in terms of the Likert scale. The main problems experienced by the sample growers in betel nut production were 'loss due to animal attack', 'possibility of affected by disease' etc. However, 'not getting the minimum price from middlemen' was the main problem faced by the betel nut growers in its marketing.

**Keywords:** Betel nut growers, marketing, problems, production.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

The betel nut (Areca nut or supari) cultivation is one of the traditional indigenous agricultural practices in India as well as in Assam. According to the reports of the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, around 66.73 thousand hectares is under betel nut cultivation which forms around 14.82 percent of all India total betel nut cultivation. Its contribution to total production is around 73.87 thousand metric tons that form almost 10 percent of all India production in 2014-15. Among the districts of Assam, Nagaon district has the highest betel nut production of 12.84 percent of the total betel nut in production in Assam. The betel nut growers of the study area have high potentialities for both productions of betel nut and earn income from it. It provides direct employment opportunities to a large number of growers as well as indirect employment to many traders who are engaged in its trading activities. But there are some problems which arise as a constraint in the production of betel nut as well as in its marketing. Thus, in this paper, an attempt is made to investigate the various problems being experienced by the

betel nut growers in its production as well as in its marketing.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The main objectives of this paper are as follows-

- I. To investigate the problems being experienced by the betel nut growers in betel nut production.
- II. To investigate the problems faced by the sample growers in the marketing of betel nuts.

## 3. MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY:

Nagaon district of Assam has been purposively selected for the study as the highest betel nut production is found here out of the total betel nut in production in Assam. The entire study is mainly based on primary data. However, secondary data are also used wherever required. The secondary data were collected from the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Assam, District Agriculture Office, Nagaon, etc. Moreover, various books, research journals, research theses, periodicals etc. The primary data are collected through the direct interview method with the help of a

questionnaire from 240 sample growers in the study area. To fulfill the objectives of the study, a Likert-type scale technique was used where five degrees of agreement or disagreement points such as strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree are included. These five points constitute the scale. If there found one extreme of the scale, it implied strong agreement with the given statement and at the other, strong disagreement, and between them lie neither agree nor disagree point.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:

##### 4.1 Problems faced by betel nut growers in its production:

The Likert-type scale technique is one of the more reliable techniques of scaling because here the respondent of the study area answer each problem included in the questionnaire. It also provides more information and data about the problems of the respondent. The Likert-type scale is also less time consuming to construct. For these reasons, the Likert-type scale techniques are used in the present study, which is represented with the help of the following tables -

**Table 1:** Level of Problems in Betel Nut Production

Problems→ Levels↓	Non Availability of Skilled Labour	Lack of Water	Possibility of Affected by Disease	Loss Due to Animal Attack	Lack of Storage Facility
Strongly Agree	0	09 (3.76)	03 (1.25)	172 (71.67)	0
Agree	08 (3.33)	26 (10.83)	96 (40)	26 (10.83)	0
Neither Agree nor Disagree	46 (19.17)	91 (37.91)	42 (17.5)	22 (9.17)	27 (11.25)
Disagree	164(68.33)	112 (46.67)	95 (39.58)	17 (7.08)	206 (85.83)
Strongly Disagree	22 (9.17)	02 (0.83)	04 (1.67)	03 (1.25)	07 (2.92)
Total	240 (100)	240 (100)	240 (100)	240 (100)	240 (100)

Source: Field Survey Data, September 2019

From the above table 1, it is seen that 71.67 percent of the total respondents strongly agreed that they have faced the problem of 'loss due to animal attack' in betel nut cultivation and the squirrels and monkeys played a significant role in it. According to the growers, the squirrels and monkeys caused significant damage to the betel nut trees as well as betel nut leaves during their seedling stage. This is done by girdling of the tree and their branches which can lead to reducing yields of both the betel nut tree and leaf. A report published in the daily newspaper *The Hindu* (March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018) revealed that in Jammu and Kashmir the monkeys have damaged crops on 15,596 hectares of agricultural land. This problem is in line with the present study.

However, the highest 37.91 percent of the sample growers neither agree nor disagree

with the problem of 'lack of water'; the Highest 85.83 percent of growers disagree with the problem of 'lack of storage facility' and the highest 9.17 percent of growers of Nagaon district strongly disagree with the problem of 'no availability of skilled labour'. This result is consistent with the studies of Badhe *et. al* (2009) who found the possibility of affected by the disease, lack of water, etc. as the major constraints in betel nut cultivation in the Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra.

##### 4.2 Problems faced by betel nut growers in its Marketing:

Every producer has faced the marketing problems for the agricultural products and this is no different in the case of betel nut growers also. The various marketing problems faced by the betel nut growers of

Nagaon district are represented in the Likert scale in the following table 2 -

**Table 2:** Level of Problems in Betel Nut Marketing

Problems→ Levels↓	Low Demand	Low Price	Lack of Regulated Market	Did not get the minimum price from Middlemen	Affected by Smuggled Betel Nuts
Strongly Agree	0	07 (2.92)	0	15 (6.25)	03 (1.25)
Agree	04 (1.67)	80 (33.33)	0	148 (61.67)	09 (3.75)
Neither Agree nor Disagree	09 (3.75)	70 (29.17)	02 (0.83)	46 (19.17)	60 (25)
Disagree	48 (20)	78 (32.5)	152 (63.34)	29 (12.08)	114 (47.5)
Strongly Disagree	179 (74.58)	05 (2.08)	86 (35.83)	02 (0.83)	54 (22.5)
Total	240 (100)	240 (100)	240 (100)	240 (100)	240 (100)

Source: Field Survey Data, September 2019

The above table 2 reveals that the major problem experienced by the betel nut growers of Nagaon district in the marketing of it is the deprivation of getting the minimum price from selling the betel nuts due to the middlemen. Out of the total growers, 61.67 percent of growers agreed that they always get lesser prices relative to the market price. According to them, they did not get all the information regarding the market where they could sell their products and so they sell betel nuts through some traders. In other words, the growers are not aware where the traders used to sell the products and that is why the marketing channel became blurred and they did not get the minimum prices of their products.

Furthermore, getting a low price is also an important problem according to the betel nut growers of Nagaon district. Almost 33.33 percent of the total growers agreed to the fact that they got low prices for what they sell. On the other hand, according to the betel nut growers of Nagaon district, problems like low demand for betel nuts, lack of a regulated market, affected by the smuggled betel nuts from foreign countries, etc are not significant in the marketing of betel nuts.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

From the above study, it is seen that the betel nut growers of Nagaon district have strongly experienced the problem of 'loss due to animal attack' and 'possibility of affected

by disease' problem in its production. Hence, proper steps to be taken by the State Governments to create awareness among the growers about the possibility of affected by the disease of betel nut trees. Moreover, the attacks of the squirrels and monkeys in betel nut trees should be controlled by the grower so that the production of betel nuts increases. The study also showed that major marketing problems experienced by the betel nut growers of Nagaon district are 'did not get the minimum price from middlemen'. The majority of the growers of the study area do not know the proper marketing channel where they could sell their betel nuts and hence they used to sell the products through a middle man, for which they always deprived of getting the optimum profit. This could be stopped by setting cooperative societies with motivation by the state governments.

## REFERENCES:

- Anithakumari, P., Thamban, C. and Arulraj, S. (2003): 'Constraints analysis in coconut cultivation', Indian Coconut J., 9, pp. 6-8
- Bhat, V. R. (2000): "Areca nut crop in India with special reference to Karnataka and Kerala", Indian Journal of Areca nut, Spices And medicinal plants VOL 2 No, 1, pp. 1-5
- Desai, N., Sukanya, T. S., & Mamatha, B. (2016): "Problems experienced by farmers in areca nut cultivation", The Asian Journal of Horticulture, 11(2), pp. 301-305

- Thyagarajan, S. and Sivasubramanian, J. (2004): '*Constraints experienced by the coconut growers in Pondicherry region*', Indian Coconut J., 35(8), pp. 22-24
- Zagade, P.M., Tawade, N.D. and Kokate, K.D. (2003): '*Problems of cashew nut growers in the adoption of recommended crop protection measures*', Maharashtra J. Extn. Education, 22(1), pp. 44-46