

Problems and Solutions in Jute Cultivation Faced by the Farmers in a Selected Area of Bangladesh

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Abstract: Since jute is the main cash crop of the farmers, they had to sale jute in order to meet family needs. As a result the low market price and low demand of jute have been the major problems of the jute growers. The third and fourth problems were "inadequate knowledge of the farmers in grading jute fibre" with problem index 339 and "no price incentive for quality fibre at primary market" with problem index 320 and rank order 3 and 4 respectively. Farmers do not receive remunerative prices due to high quality fibres in primary market. Because of non-availability of high yielding variety (HYV) jute seeds on the sowing period, farmers are not interested in HYV jute cultivation. "Farmers inability to purchase costly seed" and "lack of adequate knowledge of improved technologies on jute cultivation" had a problem index of 278 and 255 respectively. During the sowing period, price of HYV jute seed becomes high and goes beyond the purchasing capacity of small farmers. Farmers suggested solutions to the problems faced are fixing fair price of jute at farm level that are remunerative to them and adequate arrangement for supply of HYV seeds at sowing period.

Key words: High yielding variety (HYV), jute, kharif crop, problem indices

Introduction

Jute, the long vegetable fibre plays a vital role in the economy of Bangladesh. Its yield however, remained 1.5 to 2.07 tons ha⁻¹ for the last two decades. During this period cultivated area under jute declined from 7% (Anonymous, 1969-70) total cultivable land to 4% (BBS, 1997) and as reported by FAO (2000) the total jute area was 355 thousand hectare with a total production of 630 thousand metric tons. The production of jute in India, China, Thailand and Nepal has also showed gradual decline during the period from 1990 to 2000 (FAO, 1993; 2000).

In Bangladesh, however, demographic pressure warrants more land to food crops. This ever-increasing demand caused shrinkage and shift of jute acreage. Over the years, preference of jute as kharif crop has changed and has accentuated preference to rice, wheat and other high value crops (Talukder *et al.*, 1985). Thus jute has been neglected to marginal lands. Moreover, over the years jute:rice price ratio become unfavorable for jute (Sikder and Nabi, 1988; Azad *et al.*, 2002). In view of the preceding facts, the constraints in jute cultivation at farm level was stupid to assess and evaluate the problems faced by the farmers and attempts were made to elicit solutions expected by the farmers. The specific objective of the study was to identify the existing problems and constraints with jute cultivation with possible suggestions to overcome the situations.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted at Melandah upazila under Jamalpur District during the period from 15 March to 15 April, 2001. The data were coded, compiled, tabulated and analyzed in accordance with objectives of the study. Qualitative data were converted into quantitative data by means of suitable scoring whenever necessary. The data collected through a pretested questionnaire which contained simple direct questions on 12 selected problem of jute farmers namely: low market price and low demand of jute, lack of fair price due to influence of farias (middle man) over public sector purchasers, inadequate grading knowledge of the farmers, no price incentives for quality fibre at primary market, high yielding variety (HYV) seeds are not available at sowing time, farmers inability to purchase costly seed, lack of adequate knowledge of improved technology on jute cultivation, lack of cash resources, unable to allocate cash resources in jute cultivation, planting in line demands higher number of labours, inadequate help from block supervisors and scarcity of retting water impedes appropriate retting practices. The expected solutions of the problem were

elicited through open-ended question to expressing the respondents of their suggestion to mitigate the problem at farm level.

To estimate the magnitude of the problem a five point Likert's scale (1932) was used with a corresponding score of 4,3,2, 1 and 0 for the very high, high, moderate, low and very low problem faced by the individual respondent. The magnitude of the problem was expressed by the problem indices (PI) values with rank order. In other words higher the PI higher the intensity of the problem.

Results and Discussion

Among the selected statement of the problems faced by the jute farmers in respect of statement problem number one "low market price and low demand of jute" was the most serious problem with problem index of 350 and rank order first. Since, jute is the cash crop of the farmers, they had to sale jute in order to meet family need. As a result the low market price and low demand of jute have been the major problems of the jute growers for ages. The statement of problem, "lack of fair price due to influence of farias" over public sector purchases was the second problem with problem index 346 and rank order 2. Because farias are to purchase jute from the farm gate and there is no government purchasers, as a result farmers are had no option but to sell Jute to the farias and more often are deprived of fair price. The third and fourth problems were "inadequate knowledge of the farmers in grading jute fibre and "no price incentive for quality fibre at primary market" with problem index 339 and 320, respectively and rank order 3 and 4 respectively. Acquaintance with the fibre grading is accordance quality of fibre is an important factor but most of the farmers have no idea about jute grading. Farmers do not receive remunerative prices due to high quality fibres in primary market. HYV jute seed are not available at sowing period having a problem score of 287 ranked 5th in respect of problem faced by the jute growers. Because of non-availability of HYV jute seeds on the sowing period, farmers are not interested in HYV jute cultivation.

"Farmers inability to purchase costly seed" and "lack of adequate knowledge of improved technologies on jute cultivation" had a problem index of 278 and 255 respectively (Table 1). During the sowing period, price of HYV jute seed becomes high and goes beyond the purchasing capacity of small farmers. So small farmers normally switch over to the other cereal crops. The ranks from 8 to 10 suggested that resource constraints were the major factors that put the farmers in trouble in jute cultivation. The problem that

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Table 1: Rank order of the problems in jute cultivation as faced by farmers at farm level

Selected statement of the problems	Extent of problem (%)					PI*	Rank order
	Very high	High	Mode-rate	Low	Very low		
Low market price and low demand of jute	56	41	-	3	-	350	1
Lack of fair price due to influence of farias over public sector purchasers	56	39	-	5	-	346	2
Inadequate grading knowledge of the farmers	49	46	-	5	-	339	3
No price incentives for quality fibre at primary market	34	59	-	7	-	320	4
HYV seeds are not available at sowing time	14	70	-	3	4	287	5
Farmers inability to purchase costly seed	11	76	-	13	-	255	6
Lack of adequate knowledge of improved technology on jute cultivation	7	77	3	13	-	278	7
Lack of cash resources	4	79	4	13	-	274	8
Unable to allocate cash resources in jute cultivation	16	50	3	27	4	247	9
Planting in line demands higher number of labours	2	69	3	15	11	236	10
Inadequate help from block supervisors	4	12	-	68	16	207	11
Scarcity of retting water impedes appropriate retting practices	-	45	-	50	5	148	12

PI = Problem indices, Marking as : Very high = 4, High = 3, Moderate = 2, Low = 1, Very low = 0

Table 2: Farmers suggested solutions to the problems faced

Probable solutions	Jute growers		Rank order
	(No.)	%	
Remunerative price for the produce	71	68.26	1
Public sector intervention in primary market	69	66.35	2
To supply improved seed at sowing time	57	54.80	3
Reduction of production cost of jute	43	41.35	4
Agricultural input should be supplied in time and its cost should be reduced	41	39.42	5
Needed training for jute cultivation	38	36.54	6
Availability of agricultural loan	35	33.65	7
Strengthening of jute growers association	31	29.80	8

ranked 12th was scarcity of retting water having a PI of 185. It indicated farmers concern about the scarcity of retting water. Farmers suggested solutions to the problems they face are presented in Table 2. It indicated that farmers were concerned to get remunerative price for their produce.

About 68% of the farmers (rank 1) reported that they should get remunerative price for their produce. One of important steps to encourage farmers in producing jute might be that the public sector should fix a minimum price for jute (fibre) prior to the harvest of the crop and the fixed price should be ensured at farm gate and as well as in primary market level. About 66% farmers expect public sector intervention in primary market to negate the influence of farias to have a congenial atmosphere in primary market. It may be ensured by the supervision of the Govt. agencies through the Ministry of Jute or Ministry of Agriculture. Adequate supply of improved seed at sowing period was suggested by about 55% of respondents. The farmers identified that problems in jute cultivation in order to create favourable attitude towards jute cultivation should be address by the Govt. policy as early as possible. This would be a welcome move towards favourable attitude in jute cultivation on a sustainable basis.

In conclusion it may be said that in order to solve the existing problems in jute cultivation, the farmers suggested solutions should be given due consideration. Unless a remunerative price and public sector intervention in primary market of jute can be ensured a positive and constructive response from the farmers in jute cultivation is really difficult to obtain. It is necessary to formulate principles and procedures for increasing the extension

contract of jute farmers so that the resultant good effect creates favourable attitude towards jute cultivation and enhance adoption of improved practices among the farmers.

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