

International Journal of Agriculture Extension and Social Development

Volume 9; Issue 6; June 2026; Page No. 706-708

Received: 22-03-2026
Accepted: 24-04-2026

Indexed Journal
Peer Reviewed Journal

Problems and Prospects of Contract Farming in Papaya Cultivation: Farmers' Perspectives

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DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26180723.2026.v9.i6i.3762>

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Abstract

Agriculture remains a major source of livelihood in India, and contract farming has emerged as an important institutional mechanism for linking farmers with markets and agribusiness firms. Papaya cultivation, due to its commercial value and market demand, has increasingly adopted contract farming practices in Gujarat. The present study entitled “*Problems and Prospects of Contract Farming in Papaya Cultivation: Farmers' Perspectives*” was undertaken to identify the constraints faced by papaya growers and collect their suggestions for improving contract farming practices. The study was conducted during 2023–24 in Kapadvanj taluka of Kheda district, Gujarat, using an ex-post-facto research design. A total of 150 papaya growers were selected through proportionate sampling from nine villages and data were collected through personal interviews. The findings revealed that the major constraints experienced by growers were lack of legal contracts between companies and farmers (86.67%), high input costs (80.00%), inadequate guidance and supervision (64.67%), lack of credit facilities (64.00%), delayed payments (62.67%), and insufficient training (60.00%). Major suggestions included legalization of contracts (83.33%), rationalization of input costs (78.00%), improved supervision and guidance (66.67%), provision of credit facilities (60.00%), timely payments (51.33%), and training support for papaya cultivation. The study highlights the need for policy and institutional interventions to strengthen sustainable and farmer-friendly contract farming systems.

Keywords: Contract farming, Papaya cultivation, Farmers' perspectives, Agricultural marketing, Constraints, Prospects, Gujarat, Ex-post-facto research

Introduction

Agriculture plays a vital role in the Indian economy, providing livelihood support to a majority of the rural population. However, increasing fragmentation of landholdings, market uncertainties, price fluctuations, and rising production costs have posed significant challenges to the farming community, particularly small and marginal farmers. In this context, contract farming has emerged as an alternative institutional arrangement that integrates farmers with markets and agribusiness firms through pre-agreed production and marketing contracts.

Contract farming offers several potential benefits to farmers, including assured markets, predetermined prices, access to quality inputs, technical guidance, and reduced marketing risks. Recognizing its importance, the Government of India has introduced various policy measures and legislative frameworks to promote contract farming as a means of enhancing farmers' income and strengthening agricultural marketing systems.

Papaya (*Carica papaya* L.) is an important commercial fruit crop in India, and Gujarat is one of the leading papaya-producing states. Owing to its high market demand, export potential, and short production cycle, papaya cultivation is considered highly suitable for contract farming arrangements. In middle Gujarat, many papaya growers

have adopted contract farming to overcome problems related to marketing, transportation, price fluctuations, and income uncertainty.

Despite its promising prospects, contract farming is not free from challenges. Farmers often face problems related to contract implementation, price determination, quality standards, technical support, and market dependency. At the same time, contract farming provides opportunities for improving farm profitability, reducing risks, and establishing long-term relationships between farmers and contracting agencies. Therefore, understanding both the problems and prospects of contract farming from the farmers' perspective is essential for improving its effectiveness and sustainability. Keeping this in view, the present study entitled “*Problems and Prospects of Contract Farming in Papaya Cultivation: Farmers' Perspectives*” was undertaken.

Methodology:

The study was conducted with 150 papaya growers in certain villages to gather data for the study through personal interviews. The respondents were approached informally and personally at their place of employment or housing. The investigator gave the respondents a rundown of the study's goals and objectives prior to the interview in order to get

accurate and sincere responses from them.

Every attempt was made to keep the atmosphere cordial in order to obtain respondents' unbiased responses. One by one, the interview schedule's questions were asked, and each candidate's response was immediately recorded. The investigator obtained support from the village level worker, the sarpanch of the village panchayat, occasionally progressive farmers in the community, and an educated family member to persuade the interviewees to provide answers without hesitation or fear.

Ex-post-facto study design is worthy of use when the independent variables have already taken effect, according to Kerlinger (1976). The study's aims were taken into consideration when applying the *Ex-post-facto* research design.

In the current study, district was selected purposively according to highest area of papaya cultivation under contract farming according to data received from Deputy Director of Horticulture, Kheda, Government of Gujarat. Kapadvanj taluka was selected on the basis of maximum area under papaya cultivation. Proportionate sampling was used to select a sample size of papaya growers from the selected villages from the list of papaya growers. Thus, a total of 150 papaya growers were chosen from villages in the Kapadvanj taluka: Shihora, Bhojana Muvada, Lal Mandva, Lalpur, Suki, Mal Itadi, Danadara, Dudhathad, Nirmali. The study was conducted during the year 2023-24.

Table 1: Number of respondents from the selected villages

Sr. no	Villages	Total papaya growers	Selected papaya growers
1	Shihora	100	66
2	Bhojana Muvada	25	16
3	Lal Mandava	25	16
4	Lalpur	15	10
5	Suki	10	07
6	Mal Itadi	10	07
7	Danadara	10	07
8	Dudhathad	08	05
9	Nirmali	25	16
Total		228	150

[Data collected from District Horticulture Office, Nadiad, Kheda]

Result and Discussion

Data was collected from papaya growers, keeping the research goals in focus. Subsequently, the information was organized, compiled, and analysed in accordance with the study's objectives, and then systematically presented under the following headings.

Constraints faced by papaya growers in contract farming of papaya and suggestions offered by them to overcome the constraints

Constraints faced by papaya growers in contract farming

Constraints in the attitude towards contract farming or any other farming model will always exist, though they can be reduced. Papaya growers were asked to share the constraints they faced in their attitude towards contract farming. They rated these constraints on a three-point scale: most important, important and not important, which was assigned 2, 1 and 0 scores, respectively.

To collect data on the constraints faced by papaya growers, close-ended questions were employed. The responses were

compiled and converted into percentages for each identified constraint. Each constraint was then ranked accordingly. The categorized data, including the constraints, their agreement percentages and ranks, are detailed in Table 25. This information offers a thorough understanding of the challenges faced by Papaya growers, facilitating further analysis and comprehension of their operational difficulties. The data in this regard presented in Table 2 clearly indicated that the lack of legal contract between the company and farmers (86.67%) as their main constraint and ranked first followed by high cost of inputs provided by the company (80.00%), the company is not providing any guidance and supervision (64.67%), credit facilities not given by the company (64.00%), payments are not made on time (62.67%), lack of training regarding papaya farming (60.00%) which ranked second to six, respectively.

Table 2: Constraints faced by papaya growers in contract farming (n=150)

Sr. No.	Constraints	Frequency	Per cent	Rank
1.	Credit facilities not given by the company	96	64.00	IV
2.	The company is not providing any guidance and supervision	97	64.67	III
3.	Lack of legal contract between the company and farmers	130	86.67	I
4.	High cost of inputs provided by the company	120	80.00	II
5.	Payments are not made on time	94	62.67	V
6.	Lack of training regarding papaya farming	90	60.00	VI

Suggestions offered by papaya growers to overcome the constraints

Suggestions are opinions or recommendations given to solve or mitigate problems. To create an effective extension strategy, it's important to gather insights from papaya growers engaged in contract farming. The challenges they encounter, whether real or perceived, may arise from coordination issues at different levels. Hence, in this study, all papaya growers were invited to offer their valuable suggestions to address these problems.

Table 3: Suggestions offered by papaya growers to overcome the constraints (n = 150)

Sr. No.	Suggestions	Frequency	Per cent	Rank
1.	Company should offer credit facilities to the farmers	90	60.00	IV
2.	Proper supervision and guidance should be provided by the company	100	66.67	III
3.	The contract should be the legalized	125	83.33	I
4.	The company should have rationalized input costs	117	78.00	II
5.	Timely payment should be given by the company to the farmers	77	51.33	V
6.	Farmers should provide training regarding papaya farming	70	46.67	VI

Papaya growers were requested to offer suggestions for overcoming the challenges they face. The frequency of each suggestion was calculated, converted into percentages and ranked accordingly. Suggestions with higher percentages were considered more important, while those with lower percentages were seen as less significant. The data for these

suggestions are detailed in Table 26, providing a thorough overview. These insights are valuable for addressing the challenges and enhancing the overall effectiveness of contract farming for papaya growers.

The data in this regard presented in Table 25 clearly indicated that the contract should be the legalized (83.33%) as their main constraint and ranked first followed by the company should to have rationalized input costs (78.00%), proper supervision and guidance should be provided by the company (66.67%), company should to offer credit facilities to the farmers (60.00%), timely payment should be given by the company to the farmers (51.33%), farmers should provide training regarding papaya farming (46.67%) which ranked second to six, respectively.

Conclusion

Major constraints faced by majority of papaya growers in contract farming were lack of legal contract between the company and farmers, high cost of inputs provided by the company, the company is not providing any guidance and supervision, credit facilities not given by the company, payments are not made on time and lack of training regarding papaya farming and major suggestions given by the majority of papaya growers to overcome the problems faced by them in contract farming where the contract should be the legalized, the company should to have rationalized input costs, proper supervision and guidance should be provided by the company, company should to offer credit facilities to the farmers, timely payment should be given by the company to the farmers and farmers should provide training regarding papaya farming.

Major suggestions given by the majority of Papaya growers to overcome the problems faced by them in contract farming the contract should be the legalized, the company should to have rationalized input costs, proper supervision and guidance should be provided by the company, company should to offer credit facilities to the farmers, timely payment should be given by the company to the farmers and farmers should provide training regarding papaya farming.

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