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Marketing and technical constraints faced by registered apple fruit growers in adoption of recommended marketing practices: Evidence from Sopore Fruit Mandi, Kashmir

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Abstract

Beyond economic and supply-side bottlenecks, apple growers' adoption of recommended marketing practices is also shaped by structural marketing-system deficiencies and gaps in technical guidance. This study identified and ranked the marketing and technical constraints faced by registered apple fruit growers of Sopore fruit mandi, Baramulla district, Kashmir, using data from a random sample of 150 registered growers collected through a pre-tested interview schedule. Among fifteen identified marketing constraints, the lack of fruit growers' cooperative marketing societies was the most severe (98%, Rank I), followed jointly by the problem of marketing credit and commission-agent monopoly, non-availability of information regarding marketing, and lack of group marketing (each 90%, Rank II), and delay in payment of purchases (88%, Rank III); the least-cited constraint was the problem of proxy grading (40%, Rank XII). Among five technical constraints, irregular visits by Area Marketing Officers/Horticulture Development Officers ranked highest (88%, Rank I), followed by lack of information on the correct method of sprayer application (82%, Rank II), lack of technical advice on storage (74%, Rank III), lack of knowledge of spray schedules (66%, Rank IV) and lack of knowledge of improved apple varieties (34%, Rank V). These findings indicate that the absence of collective marketing institutions and inadequate field-level technical contact are the two most binding structural constraints on improved apple marketing in this mandi.

Keywords: Marketing constraints, technical constraints, cooperative marketing, apple growers, Sopore mandi, Kashmir

1. Introduction

The marketing system for apple in Kashmir is characterised by a long chain of private intermediaries and a documented tendency toward collusion among traders to control prices, a structure that disproportionately disadvantages individual, unorganised growers. In the absence of cooperative or group marketing arrangements, growers negotiate individually with commission agents and are more exposed to delayed payments, informal (non-standard) transaction practices, and limited bargaining power. At the same time, technical guidance on storage, spray scheduling and varietal improvement — typically delivered through Area Marketing Officers and Horticulture Development Officers — may not reach growers with adequate frequency, compounding the marketing-side disadvantages with a technical knowledge gap. This study set out to identify and rank both the marketing constraints and the technical constraints experienced by registered apple fruit growers of Sopore fruit mandi in adopting recommended marketing practices.

2. Review of Literature

The absence of cooperative marketing structures and the prevalence of commission-agent-dominated trade have been widely documented as central constraints in Indian fruit and

vegetable marketing, with Motilal Kar (2000) ^[1] reporting a closely comparable set of marketing constraints among fruit growers in another region. Inadequate technical follow-up by extension functionaries has similarly been identified as a recurring constraint limiting growers' technical competence in post-harvest handling and crop protection, as reported by Padma Rao (1997) ^[2].

3. Materials and Methods

The study was conducted at Sopore fruit mandi, district Baramulla, Kashmir, on a random sample of 150 registered apple fruit growers selected from the Fruit Growers' Association list. Part B of a pre-tested interview schedule elicited grower responses on fifteen pre-identified marketing constraints and five pre-identified technical constraints; data were collected by personal interview during October-November 2015. Frequency and percentage responses were computed for each constraint, which were then ranked in descending order of the percentage of growers reporting them.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Marketing constraints

Table 1 and Figure 1 present the fifteen marketing constraints

identified. Lack of fruit growers' cooperative marketing societies was overwhelmingly the most severe constraint, reported by 98 per cent of growers (Rank I). Three constraints — the problem of marketing credit and commission-agent monopoly, non-availability of information regarding marketing, and lack of group marketing — were jointly ranked second, each affecting 90 per cent of growers, followed by delay in payment of purchases (88%, Rank III) and lack of transport facilities in rural areas (86%, Rank IV). Low price of apple in the local market and lack of labelling/significant trademark were jointly ranked fifth

(84% each), followed by the fake watak-and-hatha system of marketing (82%, Rank VI), lack of organised and regulated markets (80%, Rank VII), lack of cooperatives for produce purchase (76%, Rank VIII), grading problems (66%, Rank IX), non-availability of cold-storage houses nearby (64%, Rank X), exploitation by middlemen (46%, Rank XI) and the problem of proxy grading (40%, Rank XII, the least-cited constraint). These findings mirror Motilal Kar (2000) ^[1] and collectively point to the absence of collective marketing institutions as the single most disabling structural constraint in this mandi's apple trade.

Table 1: Marketing constraints encountered by registered apple fruit growers (N = 150)

S. No.	Marketing Constraint	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1	Lack of fruit growers' cooperative marketing societies	147	98	I
2	Non-availability of information regarding marketing	135	90	II
3	Problem of marketing credit and commission-agent monopoly	135	90	II
4	Lack of group marketing	135	90	II
5	Delay in payments of purchase	132	88	III
6	Lack of transport facilities in rural areas	129	86	IV
7	Low price of apple in local market	126	84	V
8	Lack of labelling and significant trademark	126	84	V
9	Fake watak and hatha system of marketing	123	82	VI
10	Lack of organised and regulated markets	120	80	VII
11	Lack of co-operative societies for purchase of produce	114	76	VIII
12	Grading problem	99	66	IX
13	Non-availability of cold storage houses in nearby areas	96	64	X
14	Exploitation by middlemen	69	46	XI
15	Problem of proxy grading	60	40	XII

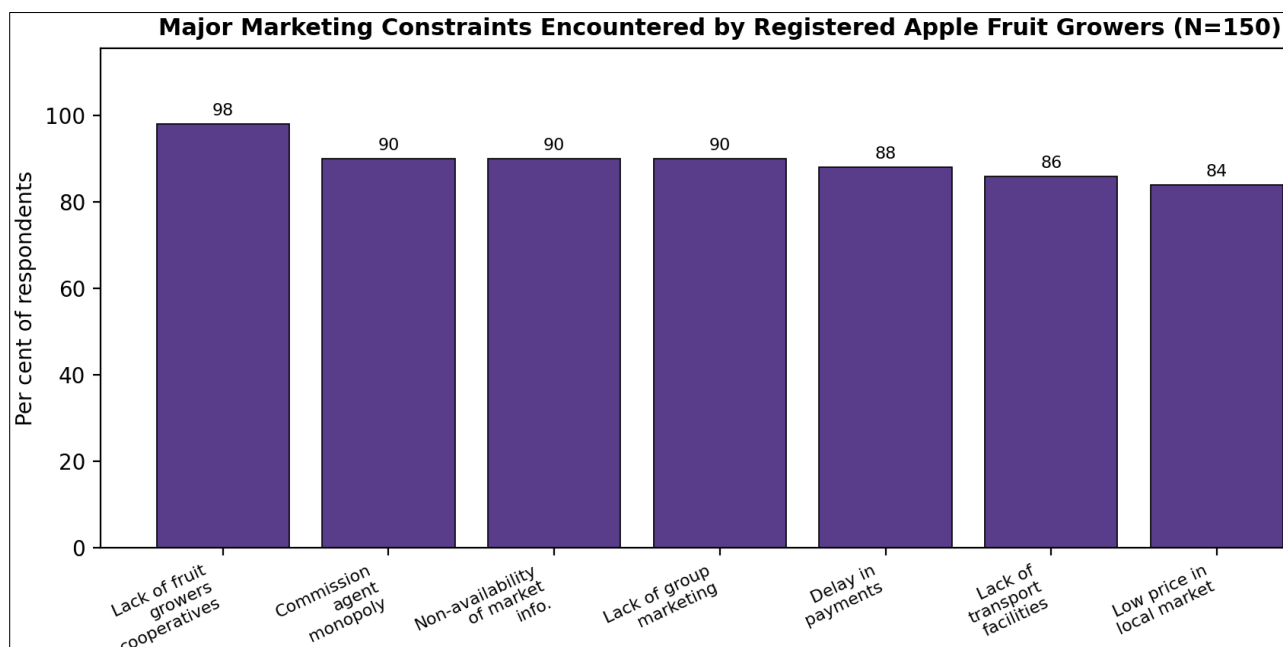


Fig 1: Major marketing constraints encountered by registered apple fruit growers (N = 150)

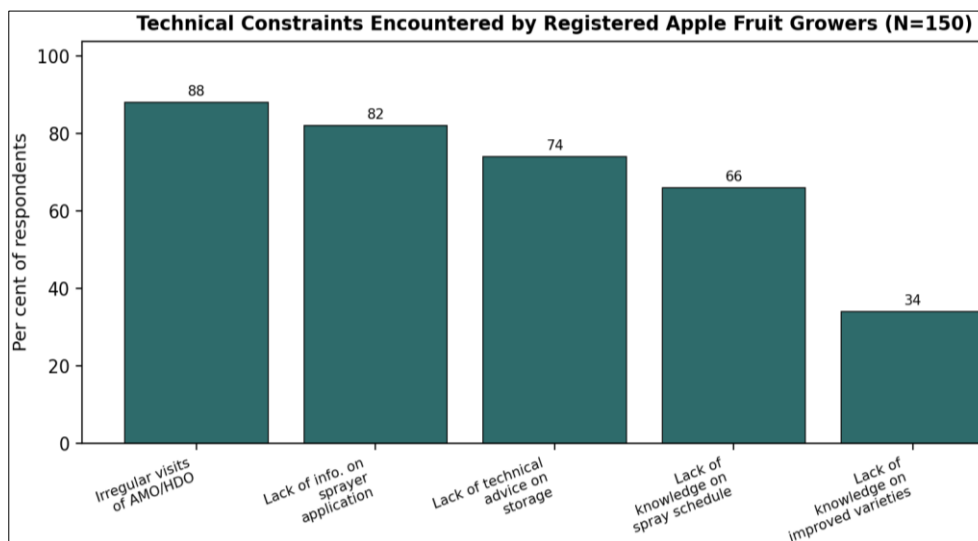
4.2 Technical constraints

Table 2 and Figure 2 present the five technical constraints identified. Irregular visits by Area Marketing Officers and Horticulture Development Officers was the most widely reported technical constraint (88%, Rank I), followed by lack of information about the correct method of sprayer application (82%, Rank II), lack of technical advice on storage of apple produce (74%, Rank III), lack of knowledge

about spray schedules (66%, Rank IV) and lack of knowledge about improved apple varieties (34%, Rank V, the least-cited constraint). These findings are consistent with Padma Rao (1997) ^[2] and indicate that the frequency and quality of field-level extension contact — rather than the growers' basic willingness to adopt — is the primary technical bottleneck limiting improved marketing practice in this mandi.

Table 2: Technical constraints encountered by registered apple fruit growers (N = 150)

S. No.	Technical Constraint	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1	Irregular visits by Area Marketing Officers/Horticulture Development Officers	132	88	I
2	Lack of information about method of application of sprayers	123	82	II
3	Lack of technical knowledge about storage of apple produce	111	74	III
4	Lack of knowledge about spray schedule	99	66	IV
5	Lack of knowledge about improved varieties of apple	51	34	V

**Fig 2:** Technical constraints encountered by registered apple fruit growers (N = 150)

5. Conclusion

The absence of fruit growers' cooperative marketing societies, commission-agent monopoly over credit and pricing, and poor availability of marketing information stand out as the most severe marketing constraints faced by registered apple fruit growers in Sopore fruit mandi, while irregular extension contact and gaps in spray/storage-related technical guidance are the dominant technical constraints. Promoting grower cooperatives and group-marketing arrangements, regulating commission-agent practices, and strengthening the frequency and content of Area Marketing Officer/Horticulture Development Officer field visits would together address the two most binding structural bottlenecks identified in this study, complementing the economic and supply-side interventions needed to fully realise the benefits of recommended apple marketing practices.

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