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Constraints in guava marketing and suggestions to overcome them: A study of Ahilyanagar district of Maharashtra

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Abstract

This study analyzes the constraints faced by 120 guava growers in Kopergaon and Rahata talukas of Ahilyanagar district, Maharashtra, along with growers' suggestions to overcome these constraints, using an ex post facto research design. Findings show that unavailability of labour (95.00%), fluctuation in market price (91.67%), and unavailability of an organized fruit market (85.00%) were the foremost constraints, while growers overwhelmingly recommended minimum support price fixation (76.67%) and better market infrastructure (70.83%) as remedial measures. The results align with recent literature that also identifies price volatility, weak market infrastructure, and middlemen exploitation as persistent challenges in guava value chains across India.

Keywords: Guava marketing, marketing constraints, Ahilyanagar, Producer Organizations (FPOs)

Introduction

Guava (*Psidium guajava* L.), often called the "poor man's apple," is India's fourth most important fruit crop, valued for its high vitamin C content and adaptability to varied agro-climatic zones. Maharashtra, and Ahilyanagar district in particular, is a major guava-producing region, contributing about 40 per cent of the state's total guava production, yet growers continue to face substantial post-harvest and marketing hurdles that erode their share of the consumer rupee.

Efficient marketing is central to translating farm-level productivity gains into household income, but Indian fruit marketing systems remain fragmented, dominated by long channels, informal price discovery, and weak infrastructure. Recent studies on guava and other fruit crops consistently report that price fluctuation, exploitation by middlemen, delayed payments, inadequate storage and processing facilities, and poor market information access are the dominant marketing constraints nationwide. Understanding these constraints from the grower's perspective, along with locally relevant solutions, is essential for designing extension interventions and policy support such as minimum support price mechanisms and cooperative marketing structures.

Objective

To identify the constraints faced by guava growers in marketing their produce and to elicit suggestions from

growers to overcome these constraints.

Review of Literature

Constraint studies across horticultural crops in India reveal recurring patterns. Dhara *et al.* (2016) ^[2] found that coconut growers ranked absence of a government procurement system (100%), lack of an exclusive market (99%), and absence of cooperative marketing (87%) as top problems. Similarly, Dhurwey *et al.* (2016) ^[3] reported that cabbage growers were constrained by lack of storage facilities (72%) and poor grading/standardization awareness (52%). Gangisetty *et al.* (2016) ^[4] documented high marketing costs, unscientific weighing, and poor market information as leading groundnut marketing problems.

Specific to guava and related fruit crops, Chengappa (2017) ^[1] found non-availability of labour as the top-ranked constraint, followed by irregular power supply and high input costs — a pattern strikingly similar to the present study. Sapte (2018) ^[6], studying pomegranate growers, ranked exploitation by middlemen first, followed by high transportation cost and market price fluctuation. More recent work reinforces these findings: a 2023 study on fruit crop growers found fluctuating price (Rank I), delayed cash payment (Rank II), and exploitation by middlemen (Rank III) to be the principal marketing constraints. A value chain study in Bengaluru similarly identified price fluctuation as the major guava marketing constraint, followed by inadequate

market information and delayed payments. Studies from Haryana and other regions further note the absence of minimum support price mechanisms and poor market organization as chronic problems in guava marketing.

On the suggestion side, growers across studies consistently call for minimum support price fixation, cooperative and collective marketing arrangements, cold storage and processing infrastructure, and better dissemination of market information.

Methodology

An ex post facto research design was used since the marketing behaviour under study had already occurred. Ahilyanagar district was purposively selected as it ranks first in Maharashtra in guava area and production. Two talukas —

Kopergaon and Rahata — were selected, and from each, three villages were chosen based on guava area and production. Twenty guava growers were randomly selected from each of the six villages, yielding a total sample of 120 respondents.

Constraints were studied on a three-point continuum (very much a problem, somewhat a problem, not a problem), scored 2, 1, and 0 respectively. Total scores for each constraint were tabulated, and constraints were ranked in descending order of score. Suggestions to overcome these constraints were elicited separately and expressed as frequencies and percentages.

Results and Discussion

Constraints Faced by Guava Growers

Table 1: Constraints faced by guava growers in marketing (N=120)

Rank	Constraint	Frequency	Percentage
I	Unavailability of labour	114	95.00
II	Fluctuation in market price	110	91.67
III	Unavailability of organized fruit market	102	85.00
IV	High cost of transportation	97	80.83
V	Lack of processing facility	78	65.00
VI	Unavailability of cold storage facility	65	54.17
VII	Irregularity of power supply	55	45.83
VIII	High cost of fertilizers and plant protection chemicals	48	40.00
IX	Delayed payment	32	26.67
X	Lack of access to market information	13	10.33

Unavailability of labour emerged as the most severe constraint (95.00%), reflecting a broader agrarian trend of rural labour scarcity during peak harvest season, which is echoed by similar findings among fruit growers in Pune district and Bengaluru, where labour non-availability and high-wage rates topped production-side constraints. Fluctuation in market price ranked second (91.67%), consistent with numerous recent studies where price volatility is the single most cited marketing constraint for guava and other perishable fruit crops, since growers lack forward contracts or assured pricing mechanisms.

The absence of an organized fruit market (85.00%) and high transportation costs (80.83%) point to weak market infrastructure in the study area, a concern also raised in a Ministry of Food Processing Industries assessment of guava infrastructure gaps, which found inadequate transportation solutions and absence of support agencies as major

managerial issues for guava growers nationally. The relatively lower ranking of "lack of access to market information" (10.33%) in this study contrasts with several other regions where market information deficits rank much higher, likely because guava growers here have high mobile phone and internet penetration (100% and 99.17% respectively, as shown in the marketing behaviour findings), reducing information asymmetry even though structural market problems persist.

The dominance of infrastructural and price-related constraints over informational ones is a nuanced finding: growers in Ahilyanagar are reasonably well-connected digitally but still lack the physical market institutions (storage, processing, organized mandis) needed to convert that information advantage into better returns.

Suggestions to Overcome Marketing Constraints

Table 2: Suggestions offered by guava growers (N=120)

Rank	Suggestion	Frequency	Percentage
1	Fix minimum support price for guava	92	76.67
2	Develop infrastructure for fruit markets	85	70.83
3	Build local cold storage and processing units on cooperative basis	79	65.83
4	Form cooperatives for collective marketing	65	54.17
5	Improve access to market information	23	19.17

The overwhelming preference for minimum support price fixation (76.67%) mirrors demands documented among fruit crop growers elsewhere, where support price and government procurement mechanisms are repeatedly proposed as the primary remedy against price volatility. The call for market infrastructure development (70.83%) and cooperative cold storage/processing units (65.83%) directly targets the

constraints ranked highest in Table 1, indicating that growers view infrastructure investment — rather than information dissemination alone — as the critical lever for improving their marketing position.

The relatively low emphasis on market information access (19.17%) as a suggestion further corroborates the earlier finding that information is not the binding constraint for this

cohort of growers; rather, physical and institutional market access is. This finding has direct policy implications: extension strategies here should prioritize facilitating Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) for collective bargaining, backward linkages to cold chains, and advocacy for guava-specific price support, rather than solely digital-advisory interventions.

Conclusion and Implications

Given the focus on FPOs, these constraint-and-suggestion patterns strongly support a case for promoting guava grower cooperatives/FPOs in Ahilyanagar district as an institutional response — since collective marketing, shared cold storage, and aggregated bargaining power directly address the top four ranked constraints (labour, price fluctuation, market absence, and transport cost) identified by growers themselves.

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