



ISSN (E): 2277-7695
ISSN (P): 2349-8242
NAAS Rating: 5.23
TPI 2022; SP-11(7): 673-676
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www.thepharmajournal.com
Received: 12-05-2022
Accepted: 15-06-2022

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Challenges faced by farmers due to COVID-19 pandemic and how these challenges impacted on their lives in the context of corona pandemic

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Abstract

In this paper, we examined the extent of challenges faces by sampled farmers in Raipur district of Chhattisgarh during COVID-19 pandemic. We used garret ranking to identify major challenges faced by farmers. The result indicates that 70% sampled farmers identified labour as the key issue faced during last harvesting whereas, 66% and 56% have faced difficulties due to COVID-19 related restrictions and transportation issues respectively. Almost 59.45% have stressed about Availability of fair price for produce at local level for next season and 54.08% have confirmed financial stress however, 49.29% and 48.14% have acknowledged unavailability of sufficient farm labours and high price of agricultural input as upcoming challenges. We found about 50% respondents sometimes faced shortage of food items they bought. Almost 61.7% households received government support during COVID-19 crisis and 38.3% of the households did not received any support or assistance from government. We found in the survey that none of the households received any kind of support or assistance from NGO'S. We used the FIES as instrument and the result indicates that only 24.33% of the households are food secure, with 75.67% were either moderately food insecure or severely food insecure.

Keywords: COVID-19, coronavirus, farmers, challenges, food insecurity

Introduction

In December 2019, a new infectious respiratory sickness emerged in Wuhan, Hubei province, China and used to be named by means of the World Health Organization as COVID-19 (Chakraborty *et al.*, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic is the biggest international humanitarian task the world has confronted in view that World War II. Agriculture is one of the most necessary sectors in human improvement and is associated to food security (Abdelhedi and Zouari, 2018; Lopez- Ridaura *et al.*, 2019). Agriculture and allied sectors proceed to be pivotal to the sustainable boom and improvement of the Indian economy. It substantially contributes in pleasurable the meals and dietary necessities of 1.3 billion Indians accompanied with the aid of production, employment and demand era thru a range of backward and ahead linkages (GoI, 2016). Household profits in India is notably impacted due to the COVID-19 lockdown as of April 12, 2020. There is a tremendous reduce in the level of income with households reporting a fall in earnings from about 9 percentage in late February to a whopping 45.7 percentage in mid-April (The Statistica, 2020). According to the Indian government's data, round 263 million human beings are concerned in the agriculture sector and more than half of them are section of agricultural labour that do not have personal farmland however work on other for wages. This prone area of shumans had the hardest hit at some point of this pandemic of COVID-19. The worst section of the imposing social restrict used to be that it coincided with the country's peak harvesting time of a range of crops of the season. Vegetables and fruits had been ripened, paddy, tiwda (lakhdi) crops were ready to harvest that could also hit adversely the farmer's income. Even though agriculture sector has performed well and there has been no shortfall in production or availability, food security at household level may be negatively impacted by reduced incomes, temporary unavailability of food items due to supply chain issues, and increased food prices (Gundersen *et al.* 2020; Ahn and Norwood 2020; Ziliak 2020; Hirvonen *et al.* 2021; Unglesbee *et al.* 2020) ^[11].

Materials and Methods

This study is planned to see the challenges faced by sampled farmers during COVID-19 pandemic, in Raipur district of Chhattisgarh.

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This research was based on primary and secondary data. Raipur district was selected purposively being one of the most important agricultural districts of Chhattisgarh. It is also the most COVID-19 affected district of the state. Raipur district is divided into 4 blocks out of which 2 blocks namely Abhanpur and Arang block was selected purposively for the study as a large proportion of population is dependent on agriculture in these blocks. A suitable number of villages totaling 10-15 based on their numbers in the blocks of Arang and Abhanpur had randomly selected. Further, a total of 300 farmers had randomly selected for the purpose of primary data collection. Garrett ranking table is used to find out the challenges faced by farmers, agricultural labours and migrant labours in the study area. The respondents identified and ranked the challenges they faced during covid-19 and expected challenges for upcoming season according to their preferences. We have used the FAO's FIES, which has a set of eight standard questions relating to different aspects of experiential food security. We recoded the answers as binaries by assigning a value of 1 to "Yes" answers and 0 to "No" responses production capacity and accessibility to farm inputs which may lead various implications like increase in price and making these resources inaccessible to them.

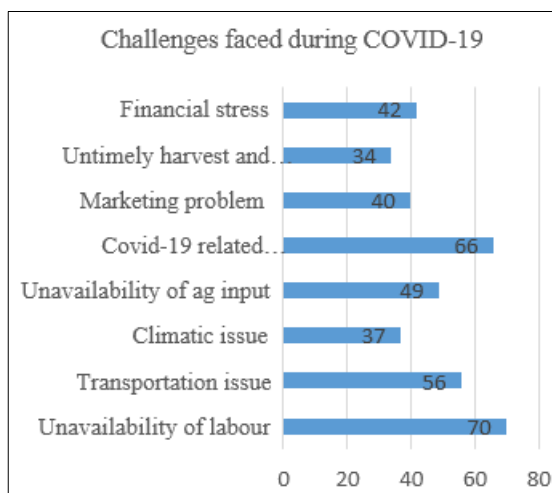


Fig 1: Challenges and issues faced by farmers during COVID-19 pandemic

It shows that, out of the total respondents, 70% have identified labour as one of the key issues faced during last harvesting whereas, 66% and 56% have faced difficulties due to COVID-19 related restrictions and transportation issues respectively. Almost 59.45% have stressed about Availability of fair price for produce at local level for next season and 54.08% have confirmed financial stress however, 49.29% and 48.14% have acknowledged unavailability of sufficient farm labours and high price of agricultural input as upcoming challenges.

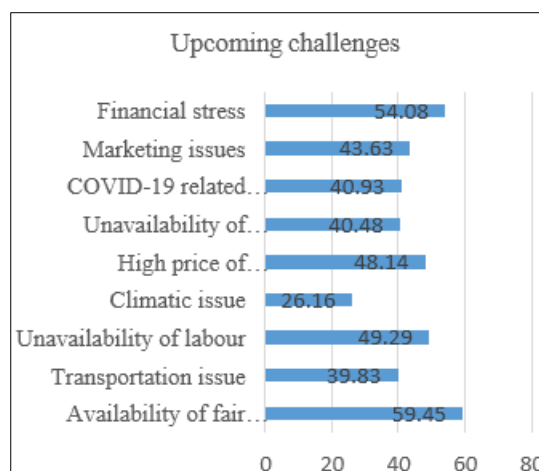


Fig 2: Expected challenges for upcoming season

Result and discussion

The study revealed that due to the transport restrictions and quarantine measures hampered the smallholder access to local as well as agriculture markets, limiting their productive capacities and hindering them from selling their produces. Shortages of labour is also identified as one of the major issues in disrupting timely harvesting and other essential supports.

Another issue was the availability and access to farm inputs like seeds, fertilizers and other planting materials for the next season. Due to insecurity and fear, smallholders, may face the disruptions in their production capacity and accessibility to farm inputs which may lead various implications like increase in price and making these resources inaccessible to them.

Table 1: Ability to buy food / medicines

Ability to buy food / medicine in Covid-19 crisis	Often	Sometimes	Never
Worried their food would run out before they got money to buy more	23 (7.70)	165 (55.00)	112 (37.30)
The food that they bought just did not last, and they did not had money to get more	24 (8.00)	150 (50.00)	126 (42.00)
Worried their required medicines would run out before they get money to buy more	0 (0.00)	105 (35.00)	195 (65.00)
The required medicines that they bought did not last, and they did not had money to get more	0 (0.00)	105 (35.00)	195 (65.00)

respondents were sometimes worried about their food would run out, 37.30% did not worried and about 7.70% responded often worried about their food would run out before they got money to get more. Respectively 50% respondents sometimes faced shortage of food items they bought, 42% did not faced

shortage of food items they bought and 8 % respondents often faced shortage of food items they bought and they did not had money to get more. 35% respondents sometimes worried their required medicines would run out before the get money to buy more 65% respondent did not worried about their medicines.

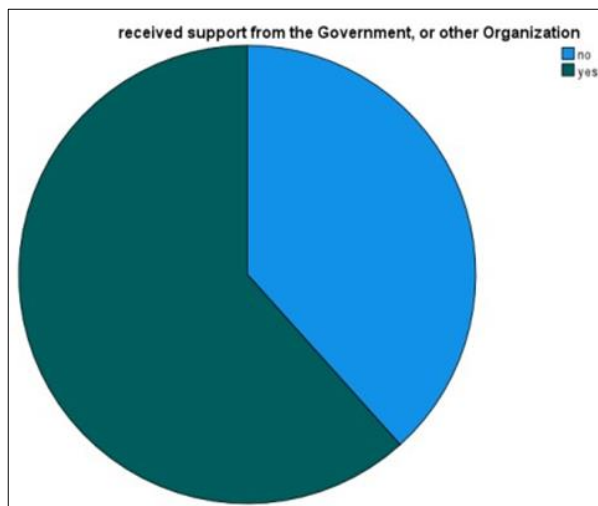


Fig 3: Received support from government

From fig.3 we can see 61.7% respondents received support from government during COVID-19 crisis and 38.3% respondents did not received any kind of support from

government.

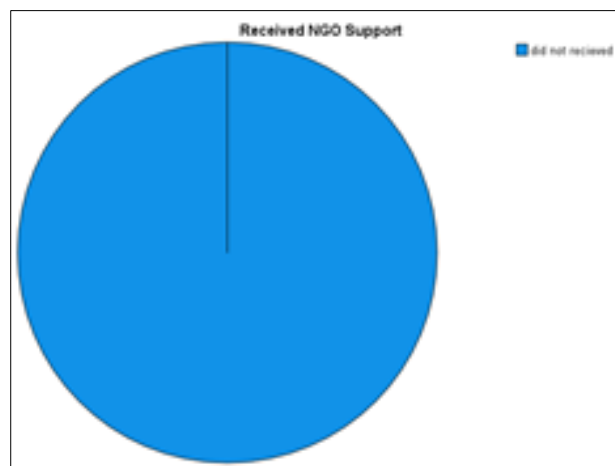


Fig 4: Support from NGO's

From the data we found that none of the respondent received any kind of support from the NGO's.

Table 2: Food insecurity during COVID-19

Food insecurity during COVID-19 :	Yes	No
Were worried they would not have enough food to eat.	137(45.66)	163(54.33)
Were unable to eat healthy and nutritious food.	(55.66)	133(44.33)
Ate only a few kinds of foods.	192 (64.00)	108 (36.00)
Had to skip a meal.	54 (18.00)	246 (82.00)
Ate less than they thought they should	(25.66)	233(74.33)
Their household ran out of food.	(18.00)	246(82.00)
Were hungry but did not eat.	99(33.00)	201(67.00)
Went without eating for a whole day.	122 (40.66)	178 (59.33)

From Table.2 we found that about 45.66% respondents were reported that they were worried that they would not have enough food to eat. 55.66% respondents were unable to eat healthy and nutritious food. About 64% respondents ate only few kinds of foods. 18% respondents had to skip a meal, 25.66% ate less than they thought they should, 18 % respondents ran out of food, 33% were hungry but did not eat and 40.66% went without eating for a whole day during the lockdown. Households were further classified as food secure, moderately food insecure, and severely food insecure based on the total number of “Yes” responses to the eight questions. A household which had not answered “Yes” to any of the eight questions was considered food secure; if the number of Yes responses ranged between one and three, it was designated moderately food insecure; households which had more than four Yes responses were categorized as severely food insecure. Table 3 presents the status of food insecurity based on the above categorizations. Strikingly, just 24.33% of sampled households were food secure, about 43% were severely food insecure, and the remaining 32% was moderately food insecure (Table.3).

Table 3: Food insecurity situation based on three categorization

Food Insecurity Experiential Scale	Frequency	Percent
Food secure	73	24.33
Moderately food insecure	98	32.66
Severely food insecure	129	43.00
Total	300	100

Conclusion

In this paper, we examined the extent of challenges faces by sampled farmers in Raipur district of Chhattisgarh during COVID-19 pandemic. We used garret ranking to identify major challenges faced by farmers. The result indicates that 70% sampled farmers identified labour as the key issue faced during last harvesting whereas, 66% and 56% have faced difficulties due to COVID-19 related restrictions and transportation issues respectively. Almost 59.45% have stressed about Availability of fair price for produce at local level for next season and 54.08% have confirmed financial stress however, 49.29% and 48.14% have acknowledged unavailability of sufficient farm labours and high price of agricultural input as upcoming challenges. We found about 50% respondents sometimes faced shortage of food items they bought. Almost 61.7% households received government support during COVID-19 crisis and 38.3% of the households did not received any support or assistance from government. We found in the survey that none of the households received any kind of support or assistance from NGO'S. We used the FIES as instrument and the result indicates that only 24.33% of the households are food secure, with 75.67% were either moderately food insecure or severely food insecure.

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