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## Problem faced by apple growers in Seraj Valley of Himachal Pradesh

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#### Abstract

One of the most popularly grown fruits worldwide is the apple. Food value must be high in vitamins, organic acids, calcium, phosphorus, and potassium. It is the goal of the agriculture extension system to impart information to orchardists. The current study was carried out in the Seraj Valley in the Himachal Pradesh State due to the greater area and productivity of the apple crop there. Lack of technical labour, lack of required chemical fertilizers and plant protection chemicals, lack of desired financial resources, and irrigation issues were the main production issues faced by apple growers. Lack of cold storage, ignorance of market supply and demand on time, and lack of transportation were issues encountered during the sale of apple fruit. Prior to its cultivation becoming widely accepted on a big scale in the State, the study emphasized the necessity to build the appropriate marketing and processing infrastructure.

**Keywords:** Apple, fruit production, marketing problem, transportation problem

#### Introduction

Apples are grown commercially in India in the Himalayas at elevations ranging from 5000 to over 9000 feet above sea level. Himachal Pradesh is referred to as India's apple belt. Here, the apple orchardists have largely restricted themselves to the 'delicious' category of apple types. Although Himachal is known throughout the world for its high-quality apples, there are numerous issues with inadequate cultivation brought on by various circumstances. Such as Snow are crucial for apple bud break and for ensuring optimal flowering. So the chilling requirements for development of proper crop are not met sometimes. Sometimes, because of the poor soil, orchards situated on slopes experience soil erosion during severe downpours, resulting in nutrient loss from the ground. Similar to northern regions, southern and southwest regions, which are sun-exposed and have less irrigation facilities, also experience severe drought throughout the summer. Not only are there environmental factors, Marketing of apple is as critical as production. Marketing includes all the operations and decisions made by producers and these decisions range from determining the most marketable apple for production to deciding to best deliver quality produce to the consumers at a profit [7]. Lack of markets and improved marketing practices contribute to the intricate nature of the marketing of apple. In the absence of any planned marketing programme, producers often remain deprived of remunerative prices for their produce. The various marketing problems and constraints faced by the apple growers need to be tackled in order to boost up the growth of area under apple crop. The returns from apple depend on several factors like quality of fruit, which otherwise depend upon time of picking. care taken in grading and packaging, time taken in transportation, mode of transport used, time and type of storage, quantity and quality of packing material etc. keeping all these facts in view, opinion of apple, growers with the problems of marketing were sought, and the responses in the study area accordingly.

#### Material and Methods

The primary data on problems faced by the 300 orchardists from Seraj valley of Himachal Pradesh were collected on well designed pre-tested schedule by adopting a personal interview system. The growers were stratified into three categories viz., small, medium and large based on their total holding size of land for the present study. The growers having less than 1.5 acre of land under apple cultivation were classified as small farmers while as the growers having 1.5-3 acres of land were distributed as small grower while having >3 acre of land orders as large orchardists.

## Results and Discussion

For the analysis of data, it was noticed that maximum number of orchardists lie in marginal categories followed by medium and minimum percentage of orchardists lies in large categories of orchardists.

### Production Problems

**Shortage of labour:** Shortage of both unskilled and skilled labour for conducting various intercultural operations, application of farm yard manure and fertilizers and plant protection measures were 43.33 percent in large category of orchardist. More than 40 percent of orchardists in large category reported higher wage rate as one of the hindrances in the proper management of orchards on scientific lines. Non-availability at peak periods and lack of technical know-how were also intimated by more than 39.67 percent surveyed orchardists of the study region.

**Chemical fertilizers/plant protection chemicals:** The sample orchardists also forwarded their opinions regarding the problems pertaining to cost and availability of chemical fertilizers/ plant protection chemical intimated as the main problems by medium orchardists (43.33%) followed by small (31.67%) and large (25.33%) average sampled growers in study area. High cost of chemical was reported 40 percent by small orchardists followed by medium and large (33.87%). Farmer Awareness, training about agronomy practices, irrigation supply, and edaptic factors were considered in assessment of production potential and constraint in mango at Bati, Ethiopia by <sup>[5]</sup>.

**Plant material, farm yard manure and irrigation problems:** Healthy plant material is key to quality production of apple. Maximum non-availability of healthy and genetically improved apple plants was reported 44.67 percent by small category of growers in the study sample. Similarly, use of FYM is vital for health and production of fruit plants. Actual need of FYM is rarely met in the study region. Nearly 39.04 percent large orchardists in the study area reported about the limited availability of this crucial factor. Maximum absence of irrigation facility was the problem reported by medium orchardists i.e. 43.33 percent <sup>[4]</sup>.

**Table 1:** Problems faced by the orchardists in production of apple

Particulars	Small	Medium	Large
<b>Labour problems</b>			
Shortage of Labour	25.00	31.67	43.33
Higher wages	23.33	36.67	40.00
Non Availability	28.33	32.00	39.67
<b>Chemical fertilizers/plant protection chemicals</b>			
High cost	31.67	43.33	25.33
Fertilizers not available in time	40.00	30.00	30.00
<b>Other problems</b>			
Non availability of healthy plant Material	44.67	30.33	25.00
Limited availability of FYM	32.43	28.53	39.04
Irrigation facility not available	25.00	43.33	31.67

**Note:** Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to respective

### Marketing problem faced by Apple orchardists

**Shortage of grading and packaging labour:** Maximum shortage of skilled labour during grading and packing were reported by large category (46.20 %) of orchardists and also higher wage rate as one of the hindrances in the post harvest management. Non-availability of labour in required amount was reported to be a serious problem as intimated by more than 38percent large category of orchardists of the study region. Apple being fragile in nature needs good packaging which may ensure least damage to fruits during transportation. The indecent quality of fruits may result into non-remunerative prices. Nearly 14.71 percent marginal category growers complained high prices of packing material as a problem. Similar findings are in tune with the findings of <sup>[6]</sup>.

**Storage problems:** Apple produce being perishable, require immediate disposal. Due to lack of cool chain system, huge losses are borne by the participants of marketing process. Orchardists in both regions do not have enough scientific storage facilities for Apple. Storage is normally carried out in some improvised or ill-ventilated homes sheds at home. The inappropriate storage facility normally, increases the quantitative and qualitative losses. No storage and inadequate storage facilities were more severe problems in sampled area of study area. Nearly 43 percent large category of grower in study area reported non-availability of storage facility and inadequate storage as the main problem.

**Table 2:** Problems faced by the orchardists in marketing of Apple

Particulars	Small	Medium	Large
<b>1. Grading and packing Labour</b>			
a) Shortage of Skilled Labour	26.07	27.72	46.20
b) Higher wages	20.00	32.00	48.00
c) Non Availability	28.33	33.33	38.33
<b>2. Packing Material</b>			
a) Shortage of other package material	29.33	28.00	42.67
b) High Prices	20.00	32.00	48.00
<b>3. Storage facility</b>			
a) No storage facility	26.67	30.33	43.00
b) Inadequate storage facility	25.67	31.00	43.33
<b>4. Transportation</b>			
a) Vehicles not available in time	40.00	30.00	30.00
b) Villages are not linked with metal road	43.33	29.67	27.00
c) High transportation charges	40.33	31.33	28.33
<b>5. Market Intelligence</b>			
a) Late information	43.33	30.00	26.67
b) Inadequate information	60.00	24.33	15.67
<b>6. Market intervention Scheme</b>			
a) Price are not paid in time	60.00	25.00	15.00
b) Prices are low	51.67	36.67	11.67

**Note:** Figures in parentheses indicate percentage to respective total

**Transportation problems:** Transportation is one of the important marketing functions required in apple marketing because consumers are situated at longer distances from producing areas. Transportation involves bringing produce from orchards to road head and then road head to consumers. Often family and hired labour is used for carrying the produce from orchards to assembling points. After doing packing at the assembling point, the produce is carried to road-head. From the road-head, after doing appropriate marketing motorized transport is hired for taking the produce to local or terminal markets. An analysis of grower problems revealed that major concern is high transport cost. Nearly 40percent small orchardists reported that their villages are not linked with proper metal roads and voiced a high transport charge. During the peak season of horticultural operations, there is a tendency to ask for higher wages performing the marketing operations. Similar finds are in tune with the findings of <sup>[1, 2, 3]</sup>.

**Market intelligence:** Market intelligence plays a momentous role in the marketing of perishables. Less majority of the growers show up that, they remain unaware of exact information in respect of prices and supply available in different markets. The information regarding the market demand, arrival and prices prevailing in the market are very important as the same can affect the income of the growers. Market intelligence problems here relates to late information, limited information, misleading information or information available for limited markets. 60 percent small orchardists revealed that they were getting inadequate information to plan their marketing strategy. Findings are in agreement with the <sup>[8]</sup> who reported that lack of advance technologies as major constraint in vegetable production faced by tribal vegetable growers.

**Market intervention scheme:** Price not paid in time was a problem for nearly 60 percent small category of orchardists. More than 50 percent small category of orchardist felt that the prices were low.

### Suggestions

The Grading and Quality should be improved, which calls for the creation of grade specifications and the use of the best mechanical tools to enforce grading. Mechanical grading devices must be created in order to replace the current grading method. Fruit exports from the state must be subject to state grade and quality certification in order to guarantee that the fruit is appropriately graded and of high quality for the export markets. All varieties of farmers in the state should have easy access to a cost-effective packing technology for apples. The government could assist in providing farmers with hygienic packing materials.

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