A STUDY ON CHALLENGES IN MARKETING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN RURAL AREAS OF COIMBATORE DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Agricultural marketing in rural India remains one of the most underserved pillars of the agrarian economy. Despite decades of policy intervention and infrastructure investment, farmers particularly smallholders continue to face systemic barriers that impede their ability to sell produce at fair prices. This article presents a consolidated analysis of the major challenges in marketing agricultural products in the rural areas of Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu. Drawing on primary survey data collected from rural farmers and supported by an extensive review of literature spanning 2008 to 2024, the study examines the roles of infrastructure deficits, intermediary dominance, price volatility, storage inadequacies, and information asymmetry. The findings reveal that the persistence of these challenges is deeply structural and multi-dimensional, necessitating targeted policy reforms, technological integration, and institutional strengthening to improve farmer welfare and marketing efficiency.

Keywords: *Agricultural marketing, rural farmers, Coimbatore district, intermediaries, price volatility, storage infrastructure, digital platforms, Tamil Nadu.*

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture continues to play a vital role in the economic and social development of rural India, providing livelihood and employment to a large share of the population. In districts like Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu, agriculture supports thousands of small and marginal farmers engaged in the cultivation of crops such as paddy, millets, vegetables, bananas, and coconuts. Despite improvements in production technologies, the marketing of agricultural products remains a major challenge for rural farmers, often limiting their income and overall economic progress.

Agricultural marketing refers to all activities involved in moving farm produce from the producer to the final consumer, including assembling, grading, storage, transportation, and pricing. Efficient marketing systems are essential to ensure fair prices to farmers and reasonable costs to consumers. However, in many rural areas, the marketing system is still characterized by structural and infrastructural weaknesses. Farmers frequently depend on intermediaries for selling their produce, which reduces their share in the consumer's rupee.

In the Coimbatore region, several constraints affect the smooth marketing of agricultural products. Studies have identified issues such as interference of middlemen, lack of finance, inadequate storage facilities, and transportation difficulties, which create significant hurdles for farmers from production to sale. In addition, price fluctuations, limited access to real-time market information, and weak bargaining power further worsen the marketing situation in rural areas.

Rural farmers, particularly smallholders, often produce in small quantities due to fragmented landholdings, making it difficult for them to access organized markets directly. Poor road connectivity and high transport costs also reduce marketing efficiency and increase post-harvest losses. As a result, farmers are frequently compelled to sell their produce immediately after harvest at lower prices, affecting their profitability and livelihood security.

Therefore, understanding the specific challenges in marketing agricultural products in rural areas of Coimbatore district is essential for designing effective policy interventions and support mechanisms. This study aims to examine the major marketing problems faced by farmers, analyze the existing marketing practices, and suggest measures to improve the efficiency of the agricultural marketing system in the study area.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Agriculture is the backbone of rural livelihoods in Coimbatore district, yet farmers continue to face significant difficulties in effectively marketing their agricultural products. While considerable attention has been given to increasing agricultural production, comparatively less focus has been placed on strengthening the marketing system that ensures farmers receive fair and timely returns. As a result, many rural farmers are unable to realize the full economic benefits of their produce.

In rural areas of Coimbatore district, the agricultural marketing structure is largely unorganized and dominated by intermediaries. Small and marginal farmers, who form the majority, often lack direct access to regulated markets and reliable market information. Due to immediate cash needs, absence of storage facilities, and inadequate transport infrastructure, farmers are frequently forced to sell their produce soon after harvest at lower prices. This weakens their bargaining power and reduces their income.

Despite the importance of Coimbatore district as a significant agricultural region, there is a need for a focused study to identify the specific marketing challenges faced by rural farmers and to evaluate the effectiveness of existing marketing channels. Without addressing these constraints, efforts to improve farmers' income and rural development may remain insufficient.

Therefore, this study seeks to analyze the major challenges in marketing agricultural products in rural areas of Coimbatore district and to suggest suitable measures for improving the agricultural marketing system and enhancing farmers' welfare.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyse the role of infrastructure, storage, and transportation in rural marketing.
- To examine the influence of middlemen and pricing mechanisms.
- To identify gaps in government policies and support systems.
- To study the key challenges faced by farmers in marketing agricultural produce.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study focuses on examining the challenges involved in marketing agricultural products in rural areas of Coimbatore district. The scope of the study is confined to understanding the existing agricultural marketing practices followed by farmers, the problems they encounter while selling their produce, and the effectiveness of available marketing channels.

Geographically, the study is limited to selected rural areas within Coimbatore district. It primarily covers farmers engaged in the production and sale of major agricultural commodities such as food grains, vegetables, fruits, and plantation crops. The study considers small and marginal farmers as well as other categories of cultivators who actively participate in agricultural marketing.

Conceptually, the study includes key aspects of agricultural marketing such as pricing, transportation, storage, role of intermediaries, access to market information, and use of digital or modern marketing platforms. It also examines farmers' awareness, preferences, and satisfaction regarding the existing marketing system.

The study is intended to provide insights that may help policymakers, agricultural departments, cooperatives, and rural development agencies to design suitable interventions for improving the efficiency of agricultural marketing in rural areas. However, the findings and recommendations are applicable mainly to the selected study area and similar rural contexts, and may not fully represent the situation in all regions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the systematic procedures and techniques adopted to conduct the study. The present study on challenges in marketing agricultural products in rural areas of Coimbatore district is based on a structured approach to collect, analyze, and interpret relevant data.

1. Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive research design. This design is appropriate because it aims to describe the existing marketing practices and identify the major challenges faced by farmers in marketing agricultural products in rural areas.

2. Area of the Study

The study is confined to selected rural areas of Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu, where agriculture is a primary occupation and farmers actively participate in marketing their produce.

3. Nature and Sources of Data

The study is based on both primary and secondary data.

- **Primary Data:** Primary data are collected directly from farmers through a structured questionnaire and personal interviews.
    - **Secondary Data:** Secondary data are obtained from books, journals, government reports, agricultural department publications, websites, and previous research studies related to agricultural marketing.

4. Sampling Technique

A convenient sampling method (or simple random sampling you can choose based on your actual method) is used to select respondents from the rural farming community in the study area.

5. Sample Size

The study is conducted among a sample of farmers (fill your actual number, e.g., 150 farmers) from selected villages in Coimbatore district.

6. Tools for Data Collection

Data are collected using a well-structured questionnaire consisting of both closed- ended and ranking/rating questions. Personal interviews are also conducted to obtain accurate responses from farmers.

7. Tools for Data Analysis

The collected data are classified, tabulated, and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools such as:

- Percentage analysis
- Ranking method
- Weighted average method (if used)
- Charts and tables for presentation

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Findings may vary across different regions due to diverse agricultural practices.
- Limited access to accurate data on farmer income, pricing, and market transactions.
- Time and resource constraints may restrict the scope of research.
- Rapid changes in government policies and schemes may affect the relevance of results.
- Farmer responses may be influenced by personal bias or lack of awareness.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Singh (2024)

Singh examined the structural barriers affecting agricultural marketing in rural India, focusing on price discovery and farmer awareness. The study found that lack of digital literacy and poor access to market information significantly reduce farmers' bargaining power. It emphasized the importance of strengthening digital platforms and farmer training. The research also highlighted the continued dominance of intermediaries in rural markets. The author suggested policy reforms to improve transparency in agricultural trade.

2. Kumar and Patel (2023)

Kumar and Patel analyzed marketing inefficiencies among small and marginal farmers. Their findings revealed that inadequate storage and transportation facilities lead to post-harvest losses and distress sales. The study stressed the need for better rural infrastructure and farmer cooperatives. It also noted that farmers often depend heavily on local traders due to lack of market access. The authors recommended expanding cold storage networks in rural areas.

3. Ramesh (2023)

Ramesh focused on the role of digital marketing platforms in agricultural product sales. The study showed that farmers who used online platforms received better price realization. However, adoption remained low due to lack of awareness and internet connectivity issues. The research highlighted the digital divide in rural regions. The author concluded that government support is essential to promote digital inclusion among farmers.

4. **Verma and Singh (2022)**

Verma and Singh studied the impact of middlemen on farmers' income in rural markets. Their research indicated that multiple intermediaries significantly reduce farmers' share in the consumer price. The study also observed weak farmer bargaining power due to fragmented production. It recommended strengthening Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs). The authors emphasized the need for regulated markets to protect farmers.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

TABLE NO 1

SHOWING THE NATURE OF FARMING

Nature of farming	No of Respondents	Percentage
Food crops	54	36%
Cash crops	33	22%
Horticulture	19	12.70%
Mixed farming	33	22%
Plantation crops	11	7.30%
Total	**150**	**100%**

INTERPRETATION

The table shows that food crops are the most common type of farming (36%) among respondents. Cash crops and mixed farming each account for 22%, indicating moderate preference. Horticulture (12.70%) and plantation crops (7.30%) have lower adoption among farmers.

INFERENCE

The most of respondents (**36%**) are engaged in **food crop cultivation**

TABLE NO 2

YEARS OF FARMING EXPERIENCE

Years of Farming	No of Respondents	Percentage
Less than 1 years	59	39.30%
1-5 years	59	39.30%
6-10 years	17	11.30%
11-20 years	9	6%
Above 20 years	6	4%
Total	**150**	**100%**

INTERPRETATION

The table shows the years of farming experience of the respondents and another **39.30%** have **1–5 years** of experience. About **11.30%** of the respondents have **6–10 years** of farming experience. A smaller proportion have **11–20 years (6%)** and **above 20 years (4%)** of experience. Overall, the data indicates that most respondents have relatively **less farming experience**.

INFERENCE

The most of respondents (**39.30%**) have **less than 1 year** of farming experience.

TABLE NO 3

AVAILABILITY OF NEARBY AGRICULTURALS MARKETS

Nearby Markets	No of Respondents	Percentage
Adequate	36	24%
Moderate	84	56%
Inadequate	17	11.30%
Highly adequate	8	5.30%
Not available	5	3.30%
Total	**150**	**100%**

INTERPRETATION

The table shows the availability of nearby markets for the respondents. About **24%** of the respondents stated that markets are **adequate** for their needs. Around **11.30%** feel that nearby markets are **inadequate**. A small proportion reported **highly adequate (5.30%)** and **not available (3.30%)**, indicating that only a few farmers face serious market accessibility issues.

INFERENCE

The majority of respondents (**56%**) reported that nearby markets are **moderately available.**

TABLE NO 4

BARGAINING POWER OF FARMERS IN THE MARKET

Bargaining powers	No of Respondents	Percentage
Very high	35	23.30%
High	36	24%
Moderate	63	42%
Low	13	8.70%
Very low	3	2%
Total	**150**	**100%**

INTERPRETATION

The table shows the level of farmers' bargaining power in the market. About **24%** stated it is **high**, while **23.30%** felt it is **very high**. A small proportion of respondents (**8.70%**) indicated **low** bargaining power and **2%** reported **very low**. Overall, the results suggest that most farmers have a **moderate level of bargaining power in the market**.

INFERENCE

A most of the respondents **(42%)** reported that farmers have a **moderate** level of bargaining power.

TABLE NO. 5

AWARENESS ABOUT GOVERNMENT MARKETING SCHEMES

Govt Scheme Awareness	No of Respondents	Percentage
Fully aware	47	31.30%
Partially aware	84	56%
Not aware	19	12.70%
Total	**150**	**100%**

INTERPRETATION

The table shows the level of awareness about government marketing schemes among respondents. About **31.30%** are **fully aware** of government marketing schemes. Meanwhile, **12.70%** of the respondents are **not aware** of these schemes. Overall, the results indicate that most farmers have only **partial awareness** about government marketing schemes.

INFERENCE

The majority of the respondents **(56%)** are **partially aware** of the schemes.

CHART NO 1

AWARENESS ABOUT GOVERNMENT MARKETING SCHEMES

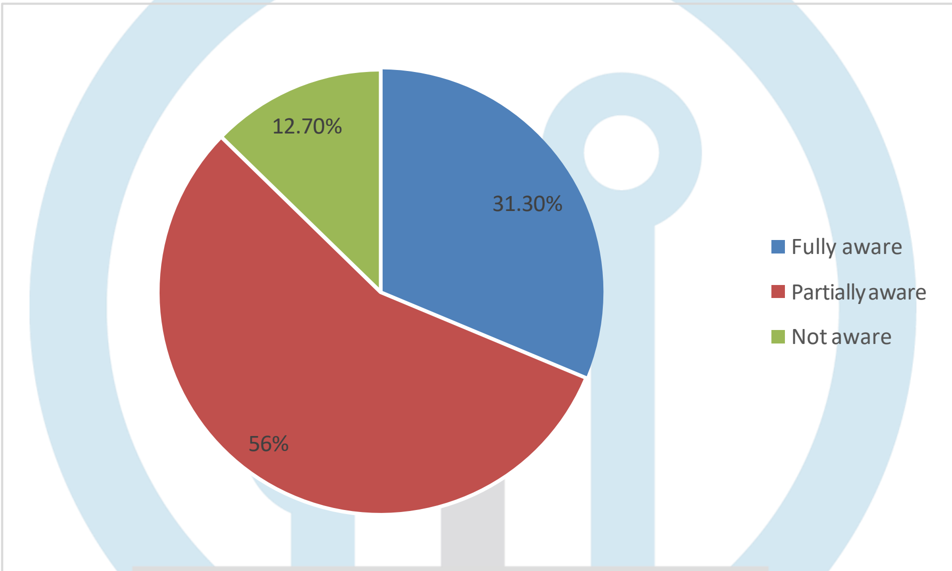

TABLE NO. 6

BEST MEASURE TO IMPROVE AGRICULTURAL MARKETING

Improve Agri Marketing	No of Respondents	Percentage
Better storage facilities	59	20%
Improved transport	65	43.30%
Fair pricing system	59	20%
Reducing middlemen	48	9%
Digital marketing platforms	40	7.70%
Total	**150**	**100%**

INTERPRETATION

Improved transport (43.30%) is the most important factor for better agricultural marketing, highlighting the need for strong connectivity. Better storage and fair pricing systems (20% each) are also key concerns for farmers. Reducing middlemen (9%) and digital platforms (7.70%) are less preferred. Overall, farmers prioritize infrastructure and fair pricing improvements.

INFERENCE

The most of the respondents **(43.30%)** for **Improved transport.**

CHART NO 2

BEST MEASURE TO IMPROVE AGRICULTURAL MARKETING

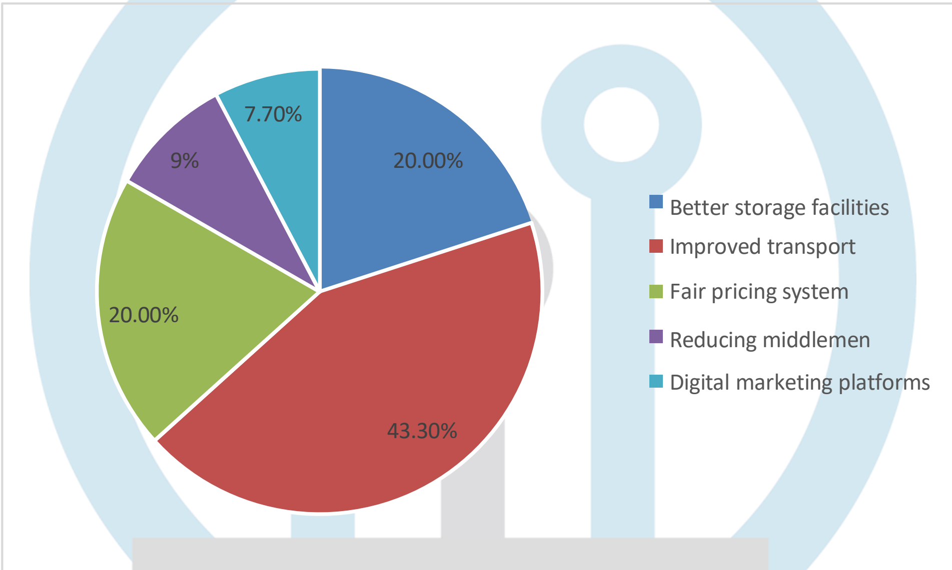

TABLE NO 7

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT MARKETING SYSTEM

Marketing System Satisfaction	No of Respondents	Percentage
Highly satisfied	29	19.30%
Satisfied	54	36%
Neutral	41	27.30%
Dissatisfied	21	14%
Highly dissatisfied	5	3.30%
Total	**150**	**100%**

INTERPRETATION

Most respondents (36%) are satisfied with the current marketing system. About 27.30% remain neutral, indicating mixed opinions. Around 19.30% are highly satisfied, showing a positive outlook. A smaller proportion (17.30%) are dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied, reflecting some concerns.

INFERENCE

The most of the respondents **(36%)** are satisfied with the **current marketing system.**

FINDINGS

The major findings of the study based on the analysis of the collected data are as follows:

- The majority of respondents (58.70%) belong to the below 25 years age group.
- The majority of respondents are male (58%).
- The majority of respondents (79.30%) have graduate and above level education.
- The most of respondents (36%) are engaged in food crop cultivation.
- The most of respondents (39.30%) have less than 1 year of farming experience.
- The majority of respondents (56%) reported that nearby markets are moderately available.
- The most of respondents (38.70%) travel 5–10 kms to reach the market.
- The majority of respondents (54.70%) reported that storage facilities are moderate.
- The most of the respondents (41.30%) stated that they sometimes face lack of storage facilities.
- The most of the respondents (40.70%) use owned vehicles for transporting produce.
- The most of the respondents (38%) stated that the road condition is good.
- The majority of the respondents (71.30%) stated that transportation costs affect their profit.
- The most of the respondents (38%) stated that they sometimes depend on middlemen.
- The most of the respondents (36.7%) stated that the role of middlemen in fixing prices is moderate.
- The most of the respondents (32%) agree and 22% strongly agree that middlemen exploit farmers.
- The most of the respondents (41.30%) stated that the pricing system is transparent.
- The most of the respondents (40%) prefer Government Markets as their selling method.
- The most of the respondents (42%) reported that farmers have a moderate level of bargaining power.
- The majority of the respondents (56%) are partially aware of the schemes.
- The most of the respondents (34%) stated that MSP is effective.
- The most of the respondents (35.30%) are satisfied with government support.
- The most of the respondents (43.30%) for Improved transport.
- The most of the respondents (43.30%) are sometimes in selling price.
- The most of the respondents (28.70%) are in price fluctuation.
- The most of the respondents (36%) are occasionally affected by price fluctuations.
- The most of the respondents (29.30%) often sell their produce at a fair price.
- The most of the respondents (38.70%) sometimes receive Timely price information.
- The most of the respondents (32.70%) for the mobile apps in market information.

- The most of the respondents (36%) are satisfied with the current marketing system.

SUGGESTIONS

- Improve Transportation Facilities Better road connectivity and affordable transport services should be provided to help farmers easily access markets and reduce delays.
- Develop Storage Infrastructure Establish warehouses and cold storage facilities in rural areas to prevent post- harvest losses and allow farmers to sell at the right time.
- Ensure Fair Pricing Mechanisms Strengthen Minimum Support Price (MSP) implementation and regulate middlemen to ensure farmers receive fair prices.
- Promote Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) Encourage farmers to join FPOs to improve bargaining power, reduce marketing costs, and access better markets.
- Enhance Market Information Systems Provide real-time price and demand information through mobile apps, SMS, and local information centers.
- Reduce Role of Middlemen Promote direct selling methods such as farmer markets, government markets, and online platforms to increase farmers' income.
- Digital Marketing Adoption Train farmers to use e-NAM and other digital platforms for wider market access and better price discovery.
- Financial Support and Credit Access Provide easy loans and subsidies for transportation, storage, and marketing activities.
- Government Awareness Programs Increase awareness about government schemes related to agricultural marketing and subsidies.
- Market Infrastructure Development Improve rural market yards with proper facilities like weighing machines, grading, and packaging units.

CONCLUSIONS

The study of sales trends and customer satisfaction towards Honda reveals that it has strong brand awareness, largely driven by advertisements, but increasing the frequency and visibility of these ads could further strengthen this awareness. The competitive pricing and good value for money offered by Honda are key factors contributing to customer satisfaction, and discounted pricing remains an effective promotional tool to drive sales. However, the rising fuel prices affect Honda's sales trends, emphasizing the importance of focusing on fuel-efficient vehicles to remain competitive. Expanding service centers and offering budget-friendly models could further enhance Honda's market position and appeal to a broader customer base. While vehicle availability is a positive factor, after-sales service needs improvement, particularly in resolving issues promptly and reducing delays in service appointments. Comfort features and vehicle quality are highly valued by customers, and continuing to prioritize these aspects will help retain customer loyalty. Additionally, Honda's digital platforms are widely used and should be continuously improved for a seamless customer experience. Despite high levels of satisfaction with some aspects of Honda's service, addressing major issues.

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