

## CONSTRAINTS IN THE CULTIVATION OF BITTER GOURD (*MOMORDICA CHARANTIA* L.)

Bitter gourd is widely cultivated in South India. As a vegetable, its nutritive value is very important. It is a rich source of iron, phosphorus and vitamins A and C. The considerable increases in bitter gourd production is no doubt remarkable, but the fact remains that the bitter gourd growers are engrossed with a number of problems, like the pests and diseases, high labour charge etc. Keeping these in view, this study was carried out with the objective of identifying the constraints encountered in the cultivation of bitter gourd.

The study was conducted in Kalliyoor Panchayat in Thiruvananthapuram district, as this is one of the prime vegetable growing areas in the district. Forty farmers, growing bitter gourd were selected as the respondents for the study. A list of constraints collected through review of literature, discussion and experience of the researchers was given and the respondents were asked to indicate whether they were experiencing the constraints or not, in the cultivation of bitter gourd. The frequency of responses for each of the constraint was found separately and ranked.

The findings related to the constraints in the cultivation of bitter gourd as perceived by the

farmers are presented in the Table 1. These constraints were grouped into production and economic constraints. A cursory look at the results presented in the table revealed that, among the production constraints, incidence of pests and diseases ranked first followed by labour scarcity. Non-availability of inputs ranked third followed by weather problems in the fourth position. The other constraints included uneven production and unawareness of plant protection measures.

Among the economic constraints, high cost of material inputs ranked first followed by high labour charge. Price fluctuation of the produce was the third important constraint faced by the bitter gourd farmers. Inadequate credit facilities ranked fourth and high transporting charges the fifth. Inadequate marketing facilities obtained the sixth rank among the economic constraints. It could be concluded that there exists a need to launch a massive training programme to motivate and educate the farmers to adopt effective plant protection measures. Efforts should be taken by the extension agencies to strengthen the infrastructure facilities and to evolve low cost technologies, which can be easily adopted by the farmers.

Table 1. Frequency distribution of constraints in bitter gourd cultivation as perceived by the farmers

| Sl. No.   | Constraints                                       | Frequency | Rank |
|-----------|---|-----------|------|
| <b>I</b>  | <b>Production constraints</b>                     |           |      |
| i         | Incidence of pests and diseases                   | 35        | 1    |
| ii        | Non-availability of labour in time                | 32        | 2    |
| iii       | Non-availability of inputs                        | 28        | 2    |
| iv        | Weather problems like drought and flood           | 20        | 4    |
| v         | Variability in production                         | 12        | 5    |
| vi        | Lack of awareness about plant protection measures | 8         | 6    |
| <b>II</b> | <b>Economic constraints</b>                       |           |      |
| i         | High cost of material inputs                      | 36        | 1    |
| ii        | High labour charge                                | 34        | 2    |
| iii       | Price fluctuation of the produce                  | 20        | 3    |
| iv        | Inadequate credit facilities                      | 12        | 4    |
| v         | High transporting charges                         | 4         | 5    |
| vi        | Inadequate marketing facilities                   | 3         | 6    |