

Impact of CoVid 19 in Cuttack and Ganjam project sites of Odisha

The standing crops in the month of March – April 2020 is vegetables like brinjal, tomato, okra, pumpkin, cauliflower, cabbage etc, chillies, groundnut , cashew nut, tamarind and betel leaf. Almost all the crops are in the harvesting stage and farmers prepared for selling and waiting to realize income. Also, farmers made arrangements to sow groundnut as summer crop. The critical issues identified are as follows:

- Breakdown of supply chain
- Distress selling to the opportunistic middle men with a very low price
- Unemployment to the landless farmers
- lack of access to agriculture inputs due to the closure of inputs shops
- Fall out of credit from market traders
- Ripened produces falling in the field which potentially harbor more insects and diseases
- Stagnation of sale of poultry - broilers

Breakdown of supply chain

The supply chain of vegetables especially Chillies was severely affected, as almost all the local market is closed and the marketing opportunities are almost nil. The farmers are not willing to harvest the fruits in their field and if at all harvested, due to the lack of demand from buyers, it was dumped in varied places. This kind of problem is quite new to the small and marginal farmers and they were stuck and expecting a right move and guidance of government. The unharvested fruit left in the field is considered as a potential threat for its living pool of pathogens, eggs, larva and pupa of many pests.



Distress selling to the middlemen

The local middlemen are approaching the farmers with an offer of buying, quoting a very low prices, citing the current challenges. Without any alternatives, the farmers are forced to sell their produces to the remunerative prices. **Pressure of money lenders:**The unscrupulous money lenders pressurizing the small and marginal farmers to repay their credit loan citing their own issues. This is also one of the reasons for the farmers forced sale.

Lack of access to inputs and farm machinery

The standing crop of cashew is affected by the tea mosquito bugs which suck the sap of flowers and tender leaves. Though they get the technical advisories from the virtual sources, they could not do the operation right time because of their inability to access pesticides, and now the crop is in bad shape. With this farmers are worried that the yield will go down by 20-25%.

This is the appropriate season for the groundnut sowing. But the closure of shops cut the supply chain of availability of good quality seeds and fertilizers. The non-availability of the tillage equipment and tractors forcefully postpone the sowing of groundnut and farmers are under stress and fear that they might miss the season. If they miss it, the farm income to the farmers and employment to family and farm workers in the region is at stake.

Poultry and dairy crisis

The dairy farmers are facing the difficulty in accessing the milk centers due to the restriction of the movement. The milk vendors who collect milk from farmers are confined to their home due to fear about the infection. The closure of tea shops and hotels are also added the problems. Farmers could not sell the milk and meeting a daily loss in income to an extend of Rs 120-150 per household. The stagnation of poultry birds due to no takers fearing of bird flu and CoVid 19 also troubled the small scale poultry owners. The poor priced eggs turned the total enterprise as loss making one.

II Agriculture labour issues

The farm landless labourers are severely affected that they are not getting any work in the field. Apart from working in their own villages, they used to travel to the nearby villages by the public transport for labour work. Now, the complete closure of transport system restricted the movement of farm labours and the poor money flow also discourages the farm labourers to work in the field. The farmers also facing problem in closure of farm equipment mechanic shops because if there is any repair in their equipment (power sprayers, tractor mounted implements) they can approach the farm mechanic shop, due to this lockdown all the shops are closed and their farm work also pending.

Actions taken by MSSRF:

The Village Knowledge Centres (VKCs) established under the RESILIENCE project is conducting ICT based programmes for the benefit of the men and women farmers during this ockdown period of total shutdown as well as necessity to maintain the physical distance. The mobile-based audio advisories, farmers helpline services and phone-in programme are helping the men and women farmers to get timely advisories and extension services related to pest, disease and nutrient management, cultivation practices, Government guidelines from their home through mobile technology.