**BASIL (Tulsi) PRODUCTION IS AN INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITY FOR POOR AND MARGINAL FARMERS IN INDIA**

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Basil, the "Royal Herb" in India is popularly known as Tulsi. Tulsi has been described as early as the vedic period. Tulsi is the most sacred and holy plant of India dedicated to Hindu culture and Hindu ceremonies. Its leaves are used in the worship of gods, goddesses and partaken as Prasad (Holy food). Chamoli is one of the backward hilly districts of Uttarakhand State. Although women in this area play a very significant role in subsistence economy, their contribution to socio-economic development is not recognized yet. Over 70% of the total population mostly women are engaged in traditional agricultural activities. Most of the agriculture in the region is rain fed with a very low productivity of the food crops. The farmers / producers in the region are poor and marginal and are totally dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. Apart from the low productivity the farmers are facing a severe problem of wild animals (wild boar and monkey) damaging their crop and further reducing the food production and the ultimate annual income.

**Introduction**

Tulsi (basil) plants are increasingly being recognized as an important source of significant livelihood opportunities for rural poor and a source of revenue for Government also. The collection and cultivation of Tulsi (basil) provides an important source of cash income to many rural communities specially women, primitive forest dependent tribes, poor and marginalized farmers. According to Government of India’s Statistics, the collection and processing of medicinal & aromatic plants contribute to at least 35 Million working days of employment in a year (GOI, 2000). The global demand of medicinal plants has been estimated at 60 to 62 billion US $ which is increasing at a rate of 7 -10 % annually.

The project “Enhancing livelihood of the poor & marginal farmers through pro-poor value chain development of Tulsi (basil)” is been carried with an objective to assure better economic security to the small, marginal and poor farmers by providing technologies throughout the value chain of Tulsi (basil); from procurement to the market development of the value added products. The project is financial assisted by ICIMOD and implemented in Ghat and Kaleshwar area in district Chamoli of Uttarakhand. HARC as a facilitator worked with 200 targeted families, which are engaged in Tulsi cultivation. The cooperative working in processing with the SHGs at CFC mainly women members are in achieving increased income by production and sale of high value products from Tulsi (Basil).

**Objective Of The Study:**

The Primary object of the base line study is to identify what ails in this region, few are detailed below:-

a. To evaluate the current status of the producing crops in identified this region in terms of the productivity and availability, the number of farmers and size of the farm land (irrigated, un-irrigated or barren land). Status of the farmers and agricultural activities in which they are engaged as well as role of support organization (if any) and prevailing infrastructure facilities.

b. The socio-economic technical, non- technical knowhow environmental, ecological and cultural, educational development of the region.

c. Income Generating and self employment generating program through adopting new method of agricultural practices, skill development and value addition techniques through local resources available.

To fulfill the above objectives the primary base line survey in these villages has conducted for understanding of this region, is based on analyzing the value chain that exist in the cluster. It includes the farmers, producing traditionally growing crops, major cash crops, production, market and the role of the institution/ organizations. The support institutions are the government bodies and social organization.

**Methodology:**

The research is conducted at the grawehal region of Uttarakhand. In order to get the information about the availability, varieties, production and marketing opportunities etc., the primarily data was collected through household survey. In the first stage Chamoli district of Garhwal region was selected purposively based on the importance and contribution in terms of area and production of Basil in Uttarakhand. The study was conducted in 05 villages of three development block i.e. Karanpryag, Pokhari
Ghaat in Chamoli district as it had the highest area under Basil production. A sample size of around 100 growers was selected randomly. 05 village level meeting were organized during the survey, it was kept in mind that household from all socio economic classes of the society are presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL</th>
<th>Name of the Village</th>
<th>Development Block</th>
<th>Nos. of HH (SC/ST/OBC)</th>
<th>Nos. of HH (General)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Interview with HH</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sainti</td>
<td>Ghaat</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Faali</td>
<td>Ghaat</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Chamali</td>
<td>Karanpryag</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Langashu</td>
<td>Karanpryag</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Jilashu</td>
<td>Pokhari</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study was conducted in 05 villages in three development block i.e. Karanpryag, Pokhari & Ghaat in Chamoli district of Uttarakhand state. The survey covered 100 households include those, who are marginal farmers and are just above or below poverty line.

4.1 Socio economic profile: The socio-economic profile reveals the social status and economic condition of the household families. Assessing the socio-economic profile of the household is crucial for prioritizing the needs of the stakeholder which is linked with the successes of any developmental programme. Most of the household around 75% (i.e. 38% & 37%) are engaged in farming and household activities and rest of them are 10%, 5% and 6% are in wage labor, petty business, shop keeping and just 4% are studying. The literacy level is low among women than men in the families. As far as young generation is concerned almost all children are attending the school.

4.2 Land ownership & type (in Nali): Land is the most valued productive resources which is wealth creating and
livelihood sustaining assets for a significant majority of the interview household. The size of land holding and its productivity determine the social and economic status of a farming family. (50 Nali = 1 Ha)

4.3 Land holding scattered:

Agricultural land are scattered in the region and divided into 4 types. The analysis of data regarding the land holding reveals that the average size of land holding per family is less than one hectare. As per the following 33% land are divided in two pieces, 27% in four, 24% in 6 and 16% in more than eight pieces. When, we ask about the time take to reach each of the cluster plots household takes minimum 20 minutes and maximum 1 hour to reach their field.

4.4 Traditional Crop Production:
The data reveals that most of the farmers are still producing traditional crops and very few farmers having annual family income Rs. 10000 to Rs.100000.

4.5 Cash Crops Production: In agrarian society agriculture and livestock rearing is the main source of income. So earning from these sources is always a family income. Now more than 65 household out of 100 interviewed are engaged in fruit, vegetable and basil cultivation. The cooperative is also engaged in marketing of spices, fruits and tulsi. The member sells their produce to the cooperative especially in fruits & tulsi. The cooperative fixes a rate for these produce, which is much better than the rate given by the middlemen, and buy it from the member on cash basis. Farmers are showing more interest in tulsi cultivation. It is very clear through the observation and interaction with the household that from tulsi, the HH are getting better productivity as well as higher prices for their crops in less time and without damaging their crop by the wild animals.

4.6 Constraints in crop production: As per the data reveals that, most of the household about 21% says irrigation is the most constraint for them, without that how can increase the productivity. It is highly concerned with use of barren land and productivity and market. 19% household says that it is very difficult for them to approach banks and apply for the loan.

4.7 Taken up new high value crop:

As per the data reveal that 65 of 100 household are taking their interest to producing new high value crops specially in tulsi cultivation. We ask who decides which crops to produce to the household, 60% from them answered women. It was obvious; women in this region play a very significant role in subsistence economy. Though women are engaged in agriculture activities but when the time comes for marketing the produce, it is the man who handles all the monetary matters and transaction.
When we ask to them why are they cultivating new crops? Approximately 90% of them are agreed with each other and their answer was “yes” reason was pay back guarantee from the local cooperative are available so market is close to the producing villages and cooperative is providing technical knowhow, input services as well as better prices for their produce.

Conclusion And Policy Implications

The present study has clearly found that marketing problems of hilly areas is different from other regions of the country. Scattered farms, poor irrigation, finance, animal attack and high input cost, therefore, producers are reluctant to bring their produce themselves in the market. Although the cooperatives are working in the village level but government have to play the crucial role for basil production and its marketing strengthen. Create pressure group to channelize the total government budget to rural irrigation arrangement. Government Market regulatory authorities should provide loan to the farmers in a low interest rate (Low interest for agriculture and herbs). This would be an attraction for poor farmers and provide confidence and encourage cultivating the basil crops.

References

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