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हिंदी साहित्य निकेतन, 16 साहित्य विहार,  
बिजनौर 246701 (उ०प्र०)  
फोन : 0124-4076565, 09557746346  
ई-मेल : shodhdisha@gmail.com  
वेब साइट : www.hindisahityaniketan.com

क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय

हरियाणा

डॉ० मीना अग्रवाल

ए-402, पार्क व्यू सिटी-2 सोहना रोड,  
गुडगाँव (हरियाणा)

दिल्ली एन०सी०आर०

डॉ० अनुभूति

सी-106, शिवकला अपार्टमेंट्स  
बी 9/11, सेक्टर 62, नोएडा  
फोन : 09958070700

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# Problems of Sugarcane Farmers of River Banks in Palus Tahsil, Maharashtra

Maske Satish Ashok

Assistant Professor

Dr. Khade Ashok Shrirang

Associate Professor & Head of Dept.

Ms. Madavi Asha Budharam

Dr. Patangrao Kadam Mahavidyalaya,

Ramanandnagar (Burli)

**Introductions:** Mainly since the establishment of Maharashtra, Sangli district is known as the leading district in sugarcane production. A large amount of sugarcane has been produced from alluvial soils along the banks of rivers in Sangli district. Co-operative sugar factories located in Sangli district depend on this sugarcane producer. Sugarcane growers are the primary source of raw material to the sugar factory. This is the second pillar of the sugar industry. The prosperity of the sugar industry depends on the regular and continuous supply of sugarcane during the harvest season. Although the farmers have a stake in the factory, they have many options to supply sugarcane for the mill. A farmer is always aware of the production and income of the farm, because they have invested heavily in sugarcane cultivation. The factory should maintain good relations with the farmers to achieve the highest target of sugar production. Sugarcane growers have some problems with sugar mills. This study focuses on the life and work of sugarcane farmers. He expects that first priority should be given to farmers. The factory should implement a welfare approach for the development of farmers.

## Review of Literature:

1) Jha T.N. Viswanathan K.U. (1999), published an article entitled "Problem and Prospects of Agricultural Development in Bihar". In this paper he has observed the relation between irrigation and crop diversification in Bihar state. Formation of irrigation latent involves personal and public investment. As a natural consequence, the farmer will not only make good use of irrigation, but will also use it in agriculture, which increases farm income

2) Patil P.V. (2002), his thesis is on "Geographical Analysis of Agricultural Technology in Sangli district". He analyzes the changes in farm technology and technical equipment is inevitable as to how changes in agriculture are done.

3) S.T. Arote and Dr.S.M. Lawande (2011), studied the "Agricultural Problems and Prospects of Yeola Taluka". his emphasis on agriculture problems in Nashik district of Maharashtra and Prospectus in Yeola Taluka. They said that

the Physiography, soil and water scarcity are the major limitations for agricultural development.

4) **Patil A. K. (2012)**, studied the "Problems and Prospects of Agriculture in Drought Prone Area in Maharashtra". In this study, he highlights the problems of drought prone region of Maharashtra. He is also including in its study the impact of drought on the physical, social and economic environment of Maharashtra.

5) **Pawar D. H. and Jadhav K. R. (2012)**, in his research paper entitled "Agricultural problems and Prospects of the drought prone region in Satara district", there is the discussion on the discussed distribution of rainfall in drought prone region. There is also a study of the crop productivity and present irrigation status in the same region.

6) **Pol S. N. and Dr. Gatade D. G. (2012)**, In this research paper entitled "Agricultural problems and prospects of drought prone area: A case study of Kavay Mahankal Tehsil, Sangli district in Maharashtra". They discuss discussed about the impact of drought on agricultural cropping pattern. In addition, they have suggested remedies for prevention of drought. They also discussed various schemes of the government for preventing the drought and its responsibility also.

7) **Chavan S. M. (2013)**, submitted her Ph.D thesis on "Problems and Prospects of Agriculture in Satara District (Maharashtra): A Geographical Study". She discussed about the present status and problems of agriculture in Satara district. Along with her focused traditional and modern inputs, growth of irrigation facilities, cropping pattern and agricultural productivity.

**Methodology :** This Research Paper is studied on the basis of Primary and secondary data collected from various articles, thesis, books, newspapers and internet related to Problems of Sugarcane Farmers.

#### **Objective of the Study :**

- 1) To study the production of sugarcane in the river bank of Palus Tahsil
- 2) To study the problem of riverbank in Palus Tahsil sugarcane farmers.
- 3) To study the decrease in production per hectare and per capita of river bank sugarcane farmers.

#### **Content :**

1. **Control of stem borer on sugarcane :** The main problem of the farmer in Palus taluka is the trunk pest. Sugarcane is severely damaged by stem borer. So the farmer has to face financial crisis due to this pest. Sugarcane cultivation is done on the banks of the river and in the plains of Palus taluka. In both such places trunk pest (humni lagane) is found. The entire farm crop is destroyed due to drought. If the amount of water in agriculture is very low, this pest occurs in large number. Sugarcane leaves turn yellow due to this pest. The growth of sugarcane is stunted and after a certain period of time the entire cane is separated from the root and the farmer becomes a financial victim.

2. **Heavy use of chemical fertilizers :** The sugarcane farmers in Palus taluka on the river banks and on the plains try to maximize the yield per hectare and per



capita from their land. A large amount of chemical fertilizers and pesticides are used for this. Due to the higher use of these chemical fertilizers, the farmer gets maximum production per hectare and per capita from his land in the first few years of agriculture.

Continuous use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in the soil reduces the productivity of the area after a certain period of time. Also, due to the application of fertilizers and pesticides which the land does not need, the manure accumulates in the upper part of the land and when such land is supplied with excess water, the salt in this land rises up and forms saline land and such land is converted into unproductive land in a certain period of time. Improper use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides is one of the biggest problems faced by sugarcane farmers.

**3. Delay in sugarcane bill :** Payment of sugarcane is a very sensitive matter. As soon as the fall season begins in western Maharashtra every year, the issue of sugarcane payment is increasing. Under the leadership of any political organization, the farmers are doing some or the other agitation regarding the price of sugarcane and the mode of payment. Central and state governments are imposing certain rules and regulations on the factories. Some government agencies regularly monitor the working of factories.

Delayed payment of sugarcane is a major problem faced by sugarcane growers in Palus taluka. Sugar mills follow FRP rules, but bill is not distributed within 14 days. They split the bill in 2 to 3 installments. Farmers' payments are not paid on time. Ken Agro has not distributed the dues of farmers in 2017, 2018, 2019. Turchi Sugar Factory did not pay two consecutive bills and Vasantdada Sugar Factory did not pay some amount of payments and did not pay the rest. According to the Cane Control Order 1966, every factory is required to make payment within 14 days of supply of sugarcane or the farmers will have to pay interest penalty. Before the start of the fall season, the sugar factory announces the price of sugarcane with the payment system offered by the factory.

Some sugar mills in this area do not reduce the amount offered in installments. After two to three months of supply, the farmers have received the bill amount. The installment amount is not paid on time. Sometimes they pay less installment amount than declared. Kane Agro Sugar Factory has not paid the second installment for the last two years. Another problem faced by the farmers is that the factories cut off the bills of the farmers without notifying them about the loan. Farmers expect to be notified with details about the interest amount by sending a letter before deduction.

**4. Political connection :** There are many sugar factories in the vicinity of Palus Taluka. Some sugar mills are cooperatively owned while some sugar mills are privately owned. The chairman of all the sugar mills is taking into account the political connections of the farmers. In all the sugar mills, the farmers of the opposite party are ignored. Farmers are clearly of the opinion that the sugar factory workers harass the sugarcane growers over trivial issues. At the time of



agricultural councils, agriculture and health camps, farmer's gatherings, distribution of drip irrigation schemes, distribution of fertilizers etc., and the sugar factory considers the political relations of the sugarcane growers first. Although the farmers have a stake in the factory, the ruling party of the sugar factory does not care about the farmers of the opposite party.

During the sugarcane harvesting season, the factory gives preference to sugarcane growers with political connections. Farmers with good political connections are given some concessions by the factory (pilots, nurseries etc.). Therefore, if the farmers who do not have any interest relationship with the chairman of the sugar factory do not get cut on time, they demand money for cutting sugarcane from him and the sugarcane payments are not paid on time. Since some sugar mills are owned by cooperatives, elections are held every five years. After the election, the factory power is about to be harassed by the newly elected board of directors. So sugarcane growers are always in a mixed state, especially before and after elections. There are many sugarcane growers who fall prey to such political problems. Therefore, the sugar factories knowingly ignored the farmers who had no political background and connections to cut sugarcane.

**5. Saline soil :** Sugarcane farmers in Palus Taluka have their own irrigation system to irrigate their fields. Sugarcane is a crop that requires perennial water and due to its self-irrigation facility, the farmer supplies water to his sugarcane crop whether it needs it or not, so the sugarcane crop gets more water than it needs. Farmers along the river have their own motor to supply water to their farms. They turn on the motor after the light comes on at night and go to sleep and in the morning it is checked by putting pebbles in the water. Due to this wrong way of continuously giving more water to the soil than required, the alkaline elements present in the soil come to the top of the soil and the soil acquires a white color, which is what we call salt erosion.

If this soil is continuously watered, the productive capacity of the soil decreases and the soil becomes completely saline. The top layer of that entire soil becomes white. This is the most important problem of sugarcane farmers in recent times.

**6. Improper procedures during sugarcane cutting season :** Sugarcane is a perennial crop. It can grow up to 3 years after planting. Farmers of Palus Taluka are harvesting sugarcane crop. To avoid the cost of cultivation, farmers prefer to grow sugarcane over several years. Sugarcane growers are dissatisfied with the allocation planning of cane cutters in the field. The factory did not appoint a cane cutter on time to cut the sugarcane. It affects the total sugarcane production. Sugarcane growers are very optimistic about sugarcane that it should be harvested at the right time as it has a good tonnage capacity and if it is not harvested on time the tonnage capacity decreases. Improperly implemented procedures for hiring cane cutters cause loss of tons of sugarcane to farmers.

A chitboy is a person appointed by the factory to coordinate the sugarcane harvesters and the group of sugarcane growers. A chitboy expects special treatment from sugarcane growers



(ie dinner invitations, alcohol, etc.) Most of the time he manages a group of sugarcane cutters without consulting the authorities, sometimes the chitboy asks farmers for money to cut sugarcane in the fields. Sugarcane cutters come to the fields to cut sugarcane and demand money from the farmers. Sometimes, due to political animosity, the factory does not order the sugarcane cutters to cut the sugarcane, causing loss to the farmers.

**7. High tonnage varieties are neglected for cutting sugarcane :** Farmers cultivate different types of sugarcane. Some varieties of sugarcane have higher tonnage capacity (ie Co 265). It is a popular variety with high tonnage capacity among sugarcane growers. Timely water is required for that. It can yield desirable tones if cut at the right time. All sugar mills in Palus taluka neglect to harvest such varieties on time due to high tonnage capacity and low sucrose content. This is a very risky variety of sugarcane because if it is not cut on time, the weight of the sugarcane will decrease and it will rot and ultimately the yield will be very low. In Palus taluka, the number of farmers cultivating sugarcane has increased to 265. Planters this year 24.65 percent farmers have cultivated this variety. He expects the sugar factory to cut such varieties in time. Factories give last priority to cut sugarcane of this variety. Therefore, sugarcane growers are dissatisfied with this kind of policy of sugar mills.

**8. Doubt about the weight of sugarcane :** Each cane is made in a factory. There is a weighing system. The weight of the cut sugarcane uploaded by the weighbridge is being measured by the vehicle. Then, the weight of the empty vehicle is measured. The difference between the weight of the uploaded cane in the vehicle and the empty vehicle is taken as the exact weight of the cane. As the weighbridge is connected with a computerized system, its measurement is done automatically. All the sugar factories in Palus tahsil have installed computerized atomic weighing scales at the factory premises. The Weight and Sensing Officer inspects the balance every fall season without giving any information to the sugar factory. They certify the quality of sugar factory weighing scales. Sugarcane growers have doubts about the weight of the sugar factory.

Although checked by the government officials, the farmers are skeptical about the weighing certificate as the officials manage the factory inspection. Farmers have experience that factory workers cheat in the measurement of cane in every trip of the vehicle. Many farmers complain about the weighing of the sugar factory. Some farmers weigh sugarcane on commercial scales. Therefore, the farmers in the command area of the sugar factory are skeptical about the weighing of all the sugar factories in Palus tahsil.

**Conclusion :** After studying the problems of sugarcane farmers it is understood that agriculture is the primary occupation of most of the people of Palus Taluk. Sugarcane is the main crop in this farm and all the sugar factories and other businesses in the area have developed on this crop. Sugarcane farmers in the river basin of Palus taluka are facing many problems. Due to that problem, the per hectare and per capita



production of sugarcane farmers is decreasing. As a solution to this, sugarcane farmers should plan appropriate measures to increase production from their farms.

Most of these problems can be easily overcome if the sugarcane farmers of Palus taluka practice modern farming methods. New hybrid seeds should be used with improved and higher yielding seeds. Annually, farmers should conduct a soil test of their soil to ensure that only the required amount of chemical fertilizer and pesticides are applied to the crop so that there is no soil pollution and saving 25 to 30% in fertilizer cost. Also, organic fertilizers should be used more than using chemical fertilizers in large quantities so that the productivity of the soil and the amount of humus will increase and the upper layer of the soil will remain fertile.

Sugarcane farmers in Palus taluka should use modern irrigation systems without excessive irrigation of their crops. 10 to 15% of water and fertilizer cost can be saved by using mist and drip irrigation systems.

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maskesatish2013@gmail.com