



Research Article

Assessment of Problems faced by Farmers regarding Saffron Production in Afghanistan

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Abstract

We conducted total face to face interviews with the fifty farmers selected from the five villages in the Pashtoon Zarghon district of Herat province. The results of the study indicated that farmers were accessing information about the saffron production from variety of sources like training programs, field days and workshops. Of the total respondents, majority was satisfied with the services provided by the agricultural extension department to the saffron growers. Results further indicated that farmers were using certified seeds. As for as problems were concerned, financial problems and problem of storage were prominent as perceived by the farmers. This study concluded that farmers' capacity should be increased through the training and field days. Moreover, credit facilities should be provided to the small farmers.

Keywords: Saffron, problems, finance, storage, extension services

Introduction

Saffron is an important crop having a very strong history. According to the experts, saffron had been cultivated in Greece, Turkey, Afghanistan and Iran, and the crop spread from the north to east of India, China (Katawazy, 2013). Saffron is a valuable spice, but its natural propagation rate is relatively low, so biotechnological approaches have become a valuable tool for producing more propagating material in a short time and for producing important chemical constituents. The article reviews the progress made in the genus *Crocus* through biotechnological interventions and highlights the potential for future expansion in this field (Ahmad, 2014).

Saffron is produced in Afghanistan and the crop is also perceived as very economical and profitable for the farmer. According to the estimates of World Bank (2015) more than 6,000 farmers in Herat province Afghanistan. The statistics also confirmed that opium cultivation decreased Herat province and at the same time the cultivation of saffron increased, which establishes its economic importance in the Afghanistan (World Bank, 2015).

Saffron the magical herb which is famous as Red Gold is well-known in international markets. Many years ago, in Afghanistan most of the farmers even weren't familiar with its name. But in the past decade, this herb was added to agricultural products of Afghanistan and today most of the farmers in the provinces of Herat, Kandahar, Ghor,



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Baghlan and Kunduz grow Saffron on hundred acres of their agricultural lands. Cultivation of this herb began in a small field in Herat province of Afghanistan a decade ago.

Saffron is the most expensive and the only agricultural product that is sold by the weight per gram, it has its importance among agriculture products, its importance is due to its limited need for water, once harvested it can be cultivated for five to seven years, can be harvested infertile land, can easily be transported. The three stigmas of the saffron flower are the most important economic part of the plant. The saffron stigma is rich in aroma and colour. In dried or powdered forms, stigmas are commonly used as spice or colouring in food preparation materials in the pharmaceutical, cosmetic and perfume industries, and dye material in textile production. Saffron's anti-cancer effects have been studied extensively in recent years. Saffron leaves are also used as animal feed. Five (5) Jerib of saffron produces about 1.5 tons of leaf dry matter per year (Katawazy, 2013).

Materials and Methods

This chapter includes a discussion regarding the research methodology and tools used for the analysis of the current study. Herat province of Afghanistan was chosen for the universe of the study because of the huge amount (90% of the whole country) of saffron production. For the present study, five villages were selected randomly from the district of Pashtoon Zarghoon. The interview schedule was constructed based on the objectives of the study. The data collection and interview schedule were analyzed accordingly based on simple counts and percentages.

Results and Discussion

This field survey was conducted at the Agriculture Extension Department of Pashtoon Zarghon district internship period in 2017. This chapter deals with the interpretation of data regarding saffron production in Afghanistan.

Utilization of Extension Department and DACAAR services regarding saffron

Table 4.6 indicates that 72% of the respondents benefited from different programs of the Extension Department and DACAAR in the Pashtoon Zarghon district followed by 28% of the total respondents who did not get any benefit from the Agriculture Extension department and DACAAR services.

Table 1. Utilization of Extension and DACAAR services regarding saffron by respondents

Villages	Utilization	
	Yes	No
Shah Abad	8	2
Gulmir	6	4
Salemi	8	2
Manzal	6	4
Said Abad	8	2
Total	36	14
Percentage%	72%	28%

Source: Field Survey

Main problems of saffron growers in the research area

While the farmers practice or grow saffron they face different obstacles. According to (NUSG) 2016, a great deal of progress has been achieved since the inception of the saffron project in early 2005, but there are still challenges ahead related to saffron cultivation in terms of improving corm quality, saffron processing and quality control and expanding the volume of

production to market the product as the “Afghan saffron” in the international markets. In the Figure 1, some of the obstacles faced by saffron growers are presented.

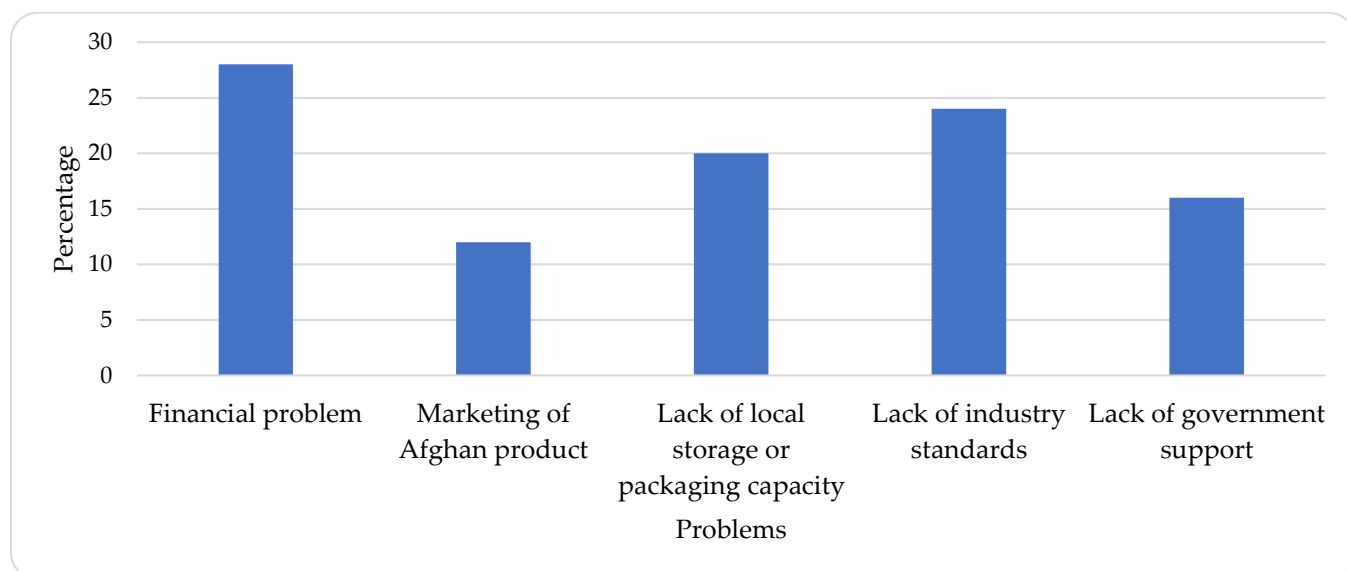


Figure 1. Major problems of saffron growers in the research area.

Figure 1 indicated that 28% of the respondents in the study area reported that finances were the major problem faced by them followed by 12% who revealed that Marketing Afghan product is the big constraint for them. About 20% revealed that Lack of local storage or packaging capacity, 16% mentioned a Lack of government support while 24% of the respondents thought that the Lack of industry standards was the major obstacle in growing saffron up to its process.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study concludes that saffron production was economically good for the farmers. However, saffron growers were facing some problems like distribution of saffron corm, fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides. In the study area, farmers were unsatisfied with the extension services provided by Agricultural Extension Department. It is recommended that the agriculture ministry should provide satisfactory programs regarding saffron to all saffron growers. Extension workers in every district of the province to provide services such as Training programs, Field days, Demonstrations, and workshops to improve the knowledge level of saffron growers.

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