

ABSTRACT

Agriculture is a fundamental pillar of Assam's economy, with agricultural marketing playing a crucial role in informing farmers about crop values across various markets. This study, conducted in the Barbaruah Development Block of Dibrugarh district, Assam, aims to analyze the socio-economic characteristics of vegetable farmers, examine their marketing behaviour and practices, assess the knowledge and opinion on agricultural marketing, identify barriers in vegetable marketing and assess the impact of educational awareness on agricultural marketing. A total of 600 vegetable farmers were selected from six villages across two Gram Panchayats using a stratified random sampling method. The study found that sixty-six percent of the farmers were male, while thirty-four percent were female, with forty-three percent classified as marginal farmers. In terms of marketing practices, most of the farmers (93%) harvested their produce early in the morning, sixty-six percent engaged in sorting and grading and forty-two percent washed their produce before sale. Electronic weighing machines were used by fifty-seven percent of the farmers and fifty-three percent traveled 11 to 30 km to reach markets. Weekly markets were the preferred selling point for thirty four percent of the farmers, whereas forty one percent relied on commission agents. For packaging and transportation, seventy-five percent used jute or gunny bags, with bicycles being the most commonly used mode of transport. Also, farmers opted for direct payment and sold their produce based on volume, ensuring efficient market transactions. The findings also revealed that forty-four percent of the farmers exhibited a moderate level of marketing behavior, with a significant relationship observed between educational qualifications and marketing behaviour. Among the various influencing factors, income generation and sustainable livelihoods had the highest mean score of 3.00, while age showed a significant correlation at the 1% level. Factor analysis identified key elements shaping farmers' opinions on vegetable marketing, including knowledge of preservation, transportation facilities, market accessibility and promotional activities. Major barriers reported by farmers included the high cost of inputs, low profitability, limited access to market information, poor road infrastructure and the high perishability of produce. Furthermore, an assessment of the impact of the educational awareness programme on farmers' knowledge, opinions and marketing behavior indicated a significant improvement with a highly significant change at the 1% level ($p < 0.001$). These findings highlight the importance of integrating both digital and traditional marketing strategies to enhance market access, improve price realization and promote sustainable agricultural practices.

Keywords : Agriculture, Behaviour, Farmers, Marketing, Practices, Vegetables