

Empirical Assessment of Pre- and Post-Harvest Losses of Soyabean Crop in Maharashtra

Deepak Shah

This study attempts to estimate the losses occurring during the pre- and post-harvest stages of soyabean among oilseeds cultivated in Maharashtra. It shows about 14-16 per cent of the total production of soyabean as lost on account of pre-harvest, harvest and post-harvest operations. Such a high loss of crop production is a matter of concern. Therefore, efforts need to be initiated to curb it by adopting appropriate measures. Programme initiatives such as adoption of improved pre- and post-harvest technology and water and pest control practices will not only increase the productivity of individual crops and their quality but are also likely to substantially minimize the post-harvest losses, increase the total crop area cover and generate adequate quality surplus for their conversion into value-added food products.

I Introduction

The crop diversification drive witnessed during 1980s and 1990s and changes in the nature of demand for agricultural commodities during 2000s, both in the domestic and foreign markets, have led India to pass through a complex type of situation. Changes witnessed during the last three decades have also led to a specialized system of commodity production which, in turn, has resulted in loss of area under traditional crops. It is disquieting to note that while many sectors of India show remarkable growth in the post-reform period, there are still several difficulties to cope with or tackle more than 300 million people living below the poverty line, which stands at one-fourth of the world's poor and represents the highest concentration of poverty in any country in the world. Sustained rural poverty reduction heavily depends on the growth of agriculture sector which employs 75 per cent of the rural working population and accounts for 65-70 per cent of rural income. Although there has been slow growth of agricultural sector in India, the growth in oilseed sector has been phenomenal mainly due to crop diversification drive in favour of oilseed crops. However, developments witnessed in recent past have caused widespread prevalence of pests and diseases, and consequently use of higher amounts of pesticides to raise the productivity of crops. Increased use of pesticides has also resulted in developing insects and disease resistance which further led to a reduction in crop yield.

Deepak Shah, Faculty Member, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Deccan Gymkhana, Pune 411004, Maharashtra, Email: deepakshah@gipe.ac.in