

**AGRICULTURAL MARKETING : ECONOMICS
OF FRUIT MARKETING IN THE
POONA DISTRICT (1977-1986)**

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BY
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CERTIFICATE

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Ishita Mukherji Edwards was carried out by the candidate
under my supervision. Such material as has been
obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged
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FOREWORD

The importance of the marketing aspects of agricultural development in India was described in detail for the first time in the Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India, 1928. The revelations in that report encouraged further studies in this regard in the years that followed. One of the earliest significant works to follow in the wake of the 1928 Report was the Gadgil and Gadgil Report on Fruit Marketing in the district of Poona in the then Bombay Presidency (1931-33). The Gadgil Report described a structure of marketing that was ridden with imperfections and burdened with inequities. It also indicated that the fruit farmers in Poona were not receiving the best possible returns from the market. The report described how middlemen, upon whose marketing and financing services the fruit farmers of Poona were almost entirely dependent, were extracting disproportionately large payments for the services rendered. The orchard growers had no way to either check or restrain the intermediaries' demands. The system of marketing and production as existed in 1931-32 was so bereft of incentives for the cultivators that without governmental efforts fruit marketing would remain inefficient. Therefore, the prospects of the fruit economy would be dismal. The Gadgil Report urged the necessity of market

regulation to bring order into the marketing aspects of the fruit economy of the Poona district.

Although efforts towards regulation were begun in the Bombay State soon after the Gadgil Report (in 1939 the Bombay Market Regulation Act was enacted), the actual implementation of the act has been a gradual process. Overcoming stiff resistance from commission agents has been a difficult process because the indirect power of this faction in the legislature. Finally, in 1976 fruit marketing in Poona fulfilled the recommendation of the Gadgil report when in the October of that year the fruit section became the first in India to be regulated.

Regulated markets as an instrument of agricultural marketing policy were as yet improven. The commission agents protested the regulation of the fruit section on the grounds that fruit as a perishable product was a 'special' case. Fruit marketing they claimed, required speed of disposal which was impeded by the bureaucratic demands of regulatory reform. Market regulation would accordingly depress prices, reduce the farmers returns and reduce the efficiency of the marketing process.

This research began less than a year after the fiery post-regulatory phase commenced. The intent was to test the contradicting theories afloat at that time. Over the years market regulation has had adequate opportunity to gel into a mould upon which expectations regarding the

regulation's effectiveness can be framed. Therefore, this study of the fruit marketing structure in Poona proceeds on three main thrusts. The first is in the identification of the structural changes and their significance in marketing. The second thrust is in identifying which and how many of the changes may be attributable to regulatory reform. The third and final thrust is in analysing the continued deficiencies in the post-regulatory fruit marketing structure. The combined emphasis is the exact contribution regulation has made to a more efficient and egalitarian fruit marketing in Poona district.

The research effort called for a farm-level survey, supplemented with a thorough survey at the Poona wholesale market yard for several years. Packing, grading and similar marketing efforts may be expected to change as a result of market regulation. These changes can be observed at the Gultekadi Wholesale Produce Market Yard where most of the Poona fruit reaches and is generally regraded before sale. Price movements over the years as well were studied at the wholesale market yard. The same is true also for most marketing methods and operations. The changes, wherever they have occurred, were observed at the market to which the produce was destined. A prolonged survey of the Poona wholesale market in action was therefore an essential part of the sources of information for this study.

The central thesis of this study is that marketing efficiency and equity may be significantly enhanced only with policies that result in infrastructural improvements. These infrastructural modifications are difficult, expensive and often risky. Nevertheless, these changes are essential if genuine and significant change is to be effected in the marketing structure within the next few years. Many of the obstacles faced by the fruit farmers of Poona are, to put it simply, outside the purview of the Poona Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (PAPMC). The PAPMC, however, has the potential to play a very important and supportive role as guide, organiser and coordinator. These are the basic ideas around which this study is developed.

This dissertation is an effort to isolate what may be considered some of the chief impediments to a fair and efficient fruit and efficient fruit marketing system in Poona. To this end it has examined the role of market regulation in combating these impediments. As a product of the analysis certain explanations have surfaced. The dissertation bases its recommendations upon the preceding analysis and explanations. For a proper perspective of the structural obstacles to better marketing it is important to not only note the obstacles in the way but to recognise the fact that not all of them are impenetrable.

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