

“A Study on the Problems and Prospects of Small Tea Growers with Special Reference to Margherita Area of Tinsukia District”

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Abstract

Small tea growers in Margherita area have immense potential from the point of providing both employment and generating revenue. It can be a lucrative profession and can play a vital role in improving the socio-economic condition of the economically backward state. The Small Tea growers are an important and integral part of the tea industry of Assam. But small tea growers have been confronted with multiple existential challenges via finance, land problem, labour supply, lack of training in tea culture and practices, marketing of green leaves, natural disasters like flood, erosion, climate change, poor infrastructural facilities. The present paper tries to highlight the problems and prospects of small tea growers with special reference to Margherita area of Tinsukia district and makes analysis on the basis of the following criteria viz percentage of the small tea growers in the area under study, area of plantation held by the tea grower, production per year in kg from the tea estate owned by the small tea growers, source of finance, cost of labour, amount of subsidies received, percentage of profit earned, tea growers contribution towards the socio-economic development, problem faced from labours working in the tea garden under study, factors which contributes to their income etc. and for analysis the researcher has conducted its study on the basis of primary data where the information were collected through well framed questionnaire meant for small tea growers and secondary sources like journals, newspaper, articles, government reports, websites etc. The paper also presents certain findings of the study and provide various recommendation in order to improve the status of small tea growers.

Keywords: *Small tea growers, Employment, Area of plantation, Socio-economic development.*

Statement of the problem

Small tea growers in Margherita area have immense potential from the point of providing both employment and generating revenue. It can be a lucrative profession and can play a vital role in improving the socio-economic condition of the economically backward state. But the small tea growers are facing many problems related to availability of finance, processing of tea leaves etc. They are forced to sell their tea leaves to big tea gardens at a low price due to absence of tea factories of their own. Hence, this study aims at identifying the constraints and factors that

influenced the small tea growers. The Small Tea growers are an important and integral part of the tea industry of Assam. But a small tea growers have been confronted with multiple existential challenges via finance, land problem, labour supply, lack of training in tea culture and practices, marketing of green leaves, natural disasters like flood, erosion, climate change, poor infrastructural facilities.

Prospects of small tea growers

- Employment generation of the rural people.
- Proper utilization of unused land.
- Better source of income generation.
- Utilisation of unused land.

Problems of small tea growers

- Financial problem.
- Pest problem.
- Unregulated growth of small tea growers.
- Low price of green leaves.
- Lack of marketing of green leaves.

Objective of the study

- To examine the socio economic status of small tea growers.
- To analyse the various sources of funds of the small tea growers.
- To identify the various expenses incurred by the small tea growers.
- To identify the cost structure of small tea growers.
- To identify the prospects and problems of the small tea growers.

Significance of the study

The small tea growers forms an interesting field in economic geography. There are many intensive studies which have been carried out on tea industry in different disciplines in different parts of the world, but very little contribution were available from the geographers as well as economists on the importance of cultivation by small tea growers in Assam as well as in other parts of the country. The economic contribution and employment opportunity generated by these small tea growers have great significance in Assam. Therefore, it is an interesting field of research how it has changed people's attitude in their occupational structure, thus providing better economic condition and employment opportunities.

Review of Literature

Bindhu K (2008) in the thesis entitled “A study on livelihood issues of small tea grower of the Nilgiri district” highlights that fall in the tea price have serious impact on the small tea growers livelihood of the Nilgiri districts.

Ganguli P (2014) in the thesis “Small Tea Growers of Assam: Theories, Practices and Challenges of an Indigenous Entrepreneurship” mentioned about the challenges faced by the small tea growers along with the innovative indigenous small scale enterprise.

Guwalla H (2015) in the study “A Study on the Problems and Prospects of Small Tea Growers in Assam with special reference to Jorhat District” focused on the various challenges faced by the small tea growers namely financial problem, land related problem, labour supply, lack of training in the culture.

Baruah P(2015) in the study “Problems of Small Tea Growers: A Study in Sonitpur District, Assam” highlights that the small tea plantation sector plays an important role in economy of Assam and also contributes towards employment generation. However, the sector is not free from problems.

Chowdhury A (2016) in the study entitled “Prospects and Problems of Small Tea Growers in Terai and Dwars of West Bengal” focused on the establishment of small units of production would provide youth of the state opportunities for self employment.

Methodology

The present paper is based on descriptive and exploratory research. It is descriptive in the sense that description regarding the management and operation of the tea plantation has been made. It is also exploratory as the various problems encountered by the small tea growers have been properly identified. The researcher has made the use of both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected from the study area from 30 respondents through a well framed questionnaire. The secondary sources include journals, newspapers, articles, government reports.

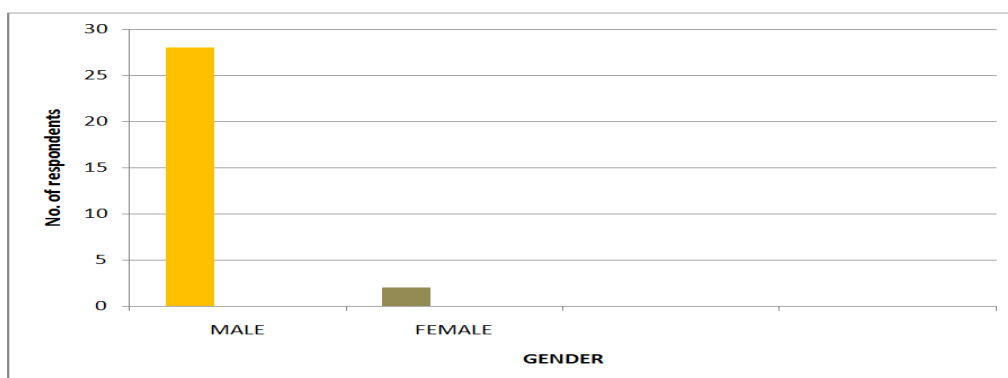
Data analysis

Table No. 1: Table showing the percentage of small tea growers in the area under study.

BASIS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Male	28	93.33%
Female	2	6.67%
Total	30	100%

Source-Field study

Figure No.1:- Column diagram showing percentage of small tea growers in the area under study-



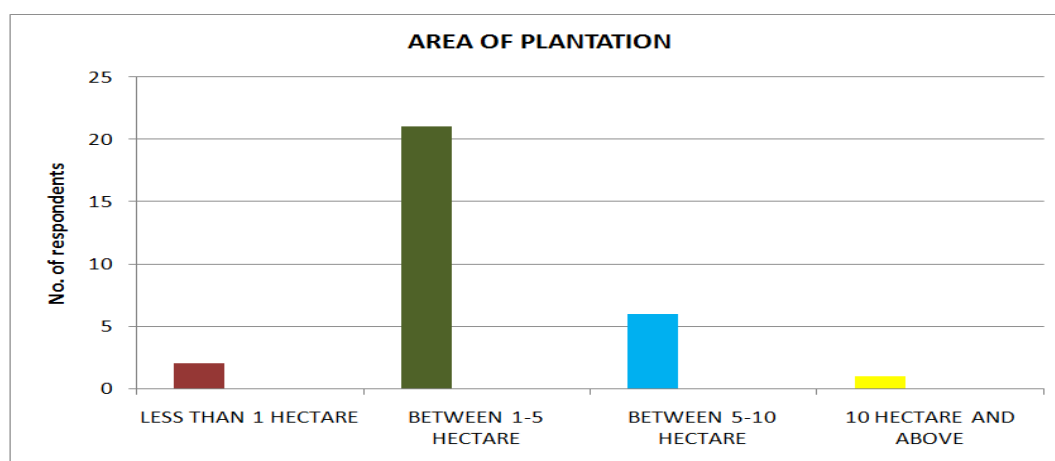
Interpretation:- From the above Table No.1 and Fig No.1, it is transparent that 93.33% small tea growers are male and the rest 6.67% growers are female engaged in tea plantation. It is therefore analysed that majority of the small tea growers (i.e. 93.33%) are males.

Table No. 2:- Table showing the area of plantation held by the growers of the area under study.

BASIS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Less than 1 hectare	2	6.67%
Between 1-5 hectare	21	70%
Between 5-10 hectare	6	20%
10 hectare and above	1	3.33%
Total	30	100%

Source-Field study

Figure No. 2:- Bar diagram showing the area of plantation held by the small tea growers of the area under study.



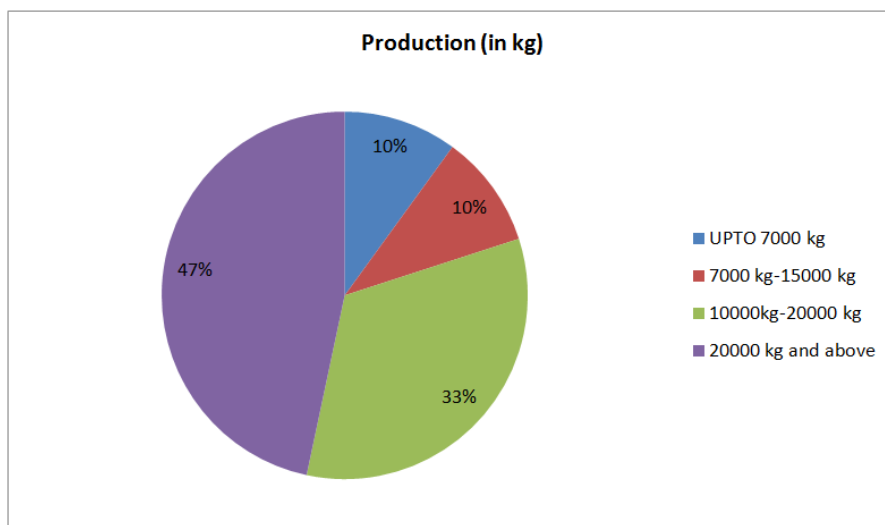
Interpretation:- From the above Table No.2 and Figure No.2, it is transparent that 6.67% of the small tea growers holds land less than 1 hectare, 70% of the small tea growers holds land between 1-5 hectare, 20% has an area between 5-10 hectare and 3.33% holds 10 hectares and above. It has been analysed that majority holds land between 1-5 hectare.

Table No. 3:- Table showing production per year in kg from the tea estate owned by the small tea grower.

BASIS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Upto 7000 kg	3	10%
7000 kg-15000 kg	3	10%
10000 kg-20000 kg	10	33.33%
20000 kg and above	14	46.67%
Total	30	100%

Source-Field study

Figure No.3:- Pie Diagram showing production per year in kg from the tea estate owned by the small tea grower



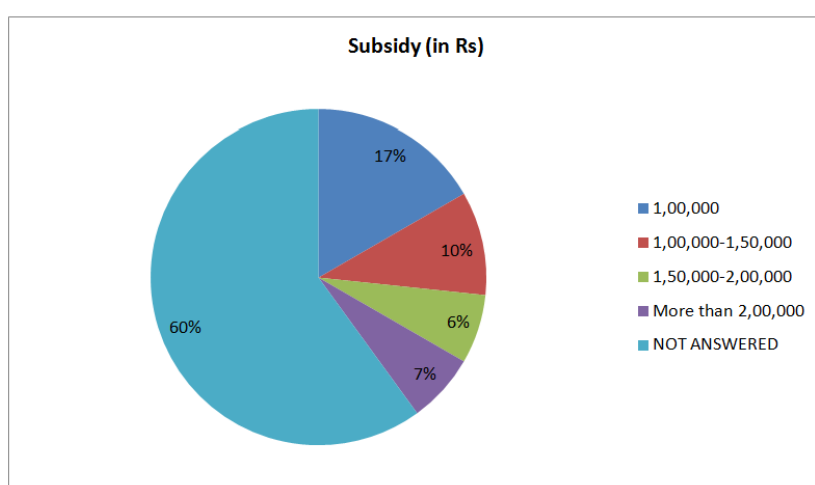
Interpretation:- From the above Table No.3 and Figure No.3, it is transparent that 10% of the tea growers produces upto 7000 kg, another 10% produces between 7000-15000 kg, 33.33% produces between 10000 kg-20000 kg and the remaining 46.67% of the small tea growers of the area produces 20000 kg and above.

Table No. 4:-Table showing the amount of subsidy received by small tea growers of tea garden.

BASIS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Rs 1,00,000	5	16.68%
Rs 1, 00,000-1,50,000	3	10%
Rs 1,50,000-2,00,000	2	6.66%
More than Rs 2,00,000	2	6.66%
Not answered	18	60%
Total	30	100%

Source-Field study

Figure No. 4:-Pie Diagram showing the amount of subsidy received by small tea grower

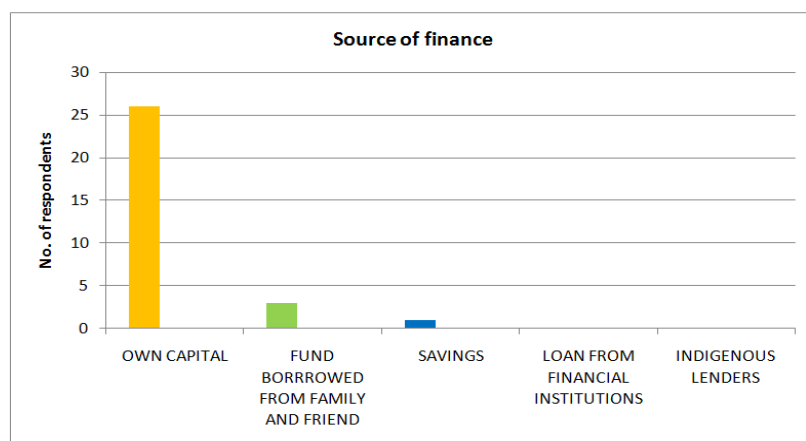


Interpretation:- From the above Table No.4, and Figure No.4, it is transparent that 16.68% of the small tea growers get subsidy upto Rs 1,00000, 10% gets subsidy between 100000-1,50,000, 6.66% of the small tea growers get Rs 1,50,000-2,00,000, 6.66% gets subsidy more than 2,00,000 and 60% of small tea growers did not answered.

TableNo. 5:-Table showing the source of finance of the small tea growers at the time of opening of the garden.

BASIS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Own Capital	26	86.67%
Fund borrowed from family and friend	3	10%
Savings	1	3.33%
Loan from financial Institution	0	0%
Indigenous lender	0	0%
Total	30	100%

Source-Field study

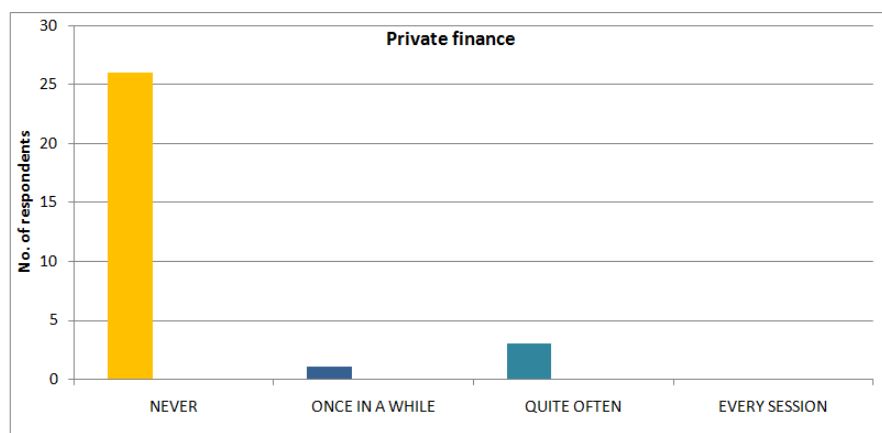
Figure No. 5:- Column Diagram showing the source of finance at the time of opening up of garden

Interpretation:-From the above Table No.5, and Figure No.5, it is transparent that 86.67% of small tea growers started their business with their own capital, another 10% of small tea growers started their business with funds borrowed from family and friends, 3.33% of small tea growers started their business from their savings.

Table No. 6:- Table showing private finance availed by small tea growers of the area.

BASIS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Never	26	86.67%
Once in a while	1	3.33%
Quite often	3	10%
Every session	0	0%
Total	30	100%

Source-Field study

Figure No. 6:- Bar diagram showing private finance availed by small tea growers of the area.

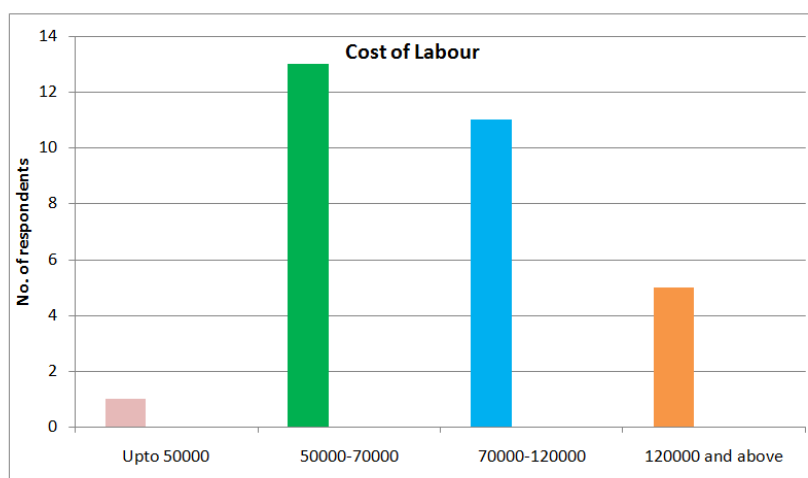
Interpretation:- From the above Table No.6 and Figure No.6, it is transparent that 86.67% of the small tea growers of the area never applied for private finance, another 3.33% of the growers availed private finance once in a while, the remaining 10% avails private finance quite often. It can be analysed that private finance was not a much reliable source for majority of the small tea growers.

Table No. 7:-Table showing cost of labour incurred by the small tea growers in terms of plantation and plucking bonus.

BASIS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Upto Rs 50,000	1	3.33%
Rs 50,000-70,000	13	43.33%
Rs 70000-120000	11	36.67%
120000 and above	5	16.67%
Total	30	100%

Source-Field study

FigureNo. 7:- Bar diagram showing costs of labour incurred by the small tea growers in terms of plantation



Interpretation:- From the above Table No.7 and Figure No.7, it is transparent that 3.33% of the small tea growers of the area incurred a total cost upto Rs 50,000 for labour.43.33% among them incurred Rs 50,000-70,000, another 36.67% of the growers incurred a cost between Rs 70000-1,20,000 while the remaining 16.67% of the small tea growers incurred cost above Rs 1,20,000.

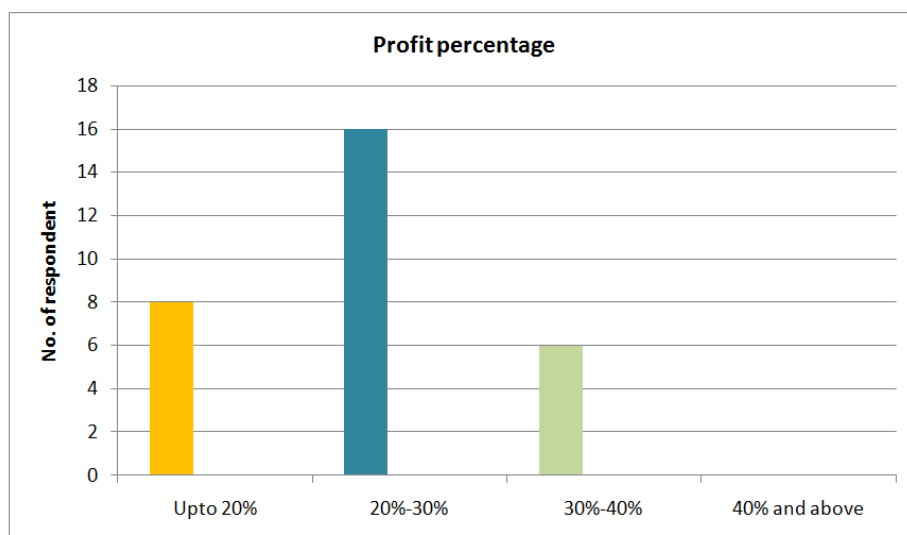
Table No. 8:-Table showing the percentage of profit earn per year from the garden by the small tea growers of the area.

BASIS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Upto 20%	8	26.67%
20-30%	16	53.33%

30-40%	6	20%
40% and above	0	0%
Total	30	100%

Source-Field study

FigureNo. 8:-Column Diagram showing the percentage of profit earned by the small tea growers per year from the garden



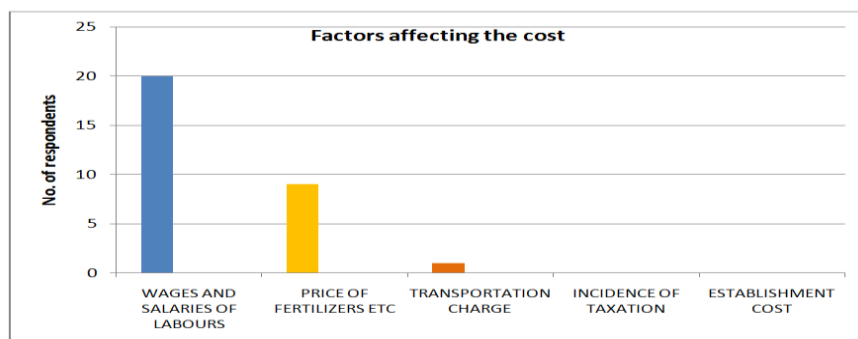
Interpretation:-From the above Table No.8 and Figure No.8, it is evident that 26.67% of the respondent earns profit from the garden upto 20%, another 53.33% is earning a profit of 20%-30%, 20% of the respondent is earning profit of 30-40% while the remaining 40% and above profit percentage is not achieved.

Table No. 9:- Table showing the factors that causes variances in the cost structure among the small tea growers of the area.

BASIS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Wages and Salary of labours	20	66.67%
Price of fertilizers etc	9	30%
Transportation charge	1	3.33%
Incidence of Taxation	0	0%
Establishment cost	0	0%
Total	30	100%

Source-Field study

Figure No. 9:- Bar Diagram showing the factor that causes variance in the cost structure among the small tea growers of the area.



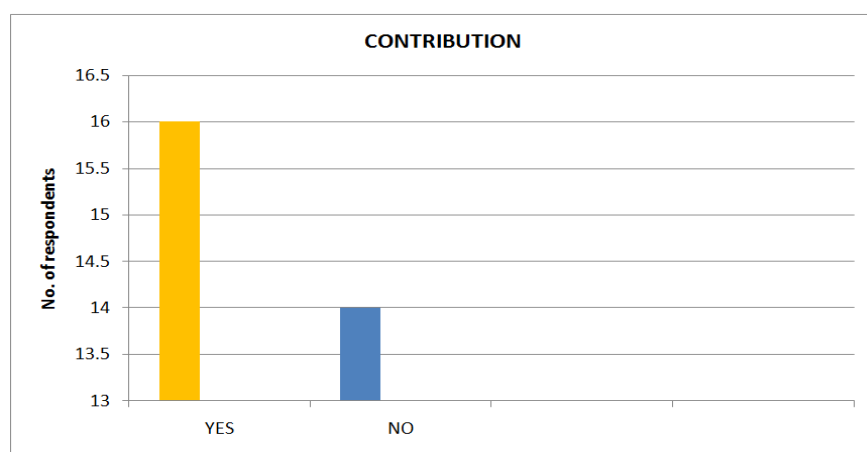
Interpretation:- From the above Table No.9 and Figure No.9, it can be interpreted that according to 66.67% of the respondents, the reason for cost variation is wages and salaries of the labourer, another 30% mention that it is because of price of fertilizer and remaining 3.33% says it is due to transportation cost.

Table No. 10:- Table showing whether the small tea grower of the study area donates towards the socio-economic development and enriching culture.

BASIS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Yes	16	53.33%
No	14	46.67%
Total	30	100%

Source-Field study

Figure No. 10:- Column diagram showing whether the small tea growers of the area of study donates towards the socio-economic development and enriching culture.



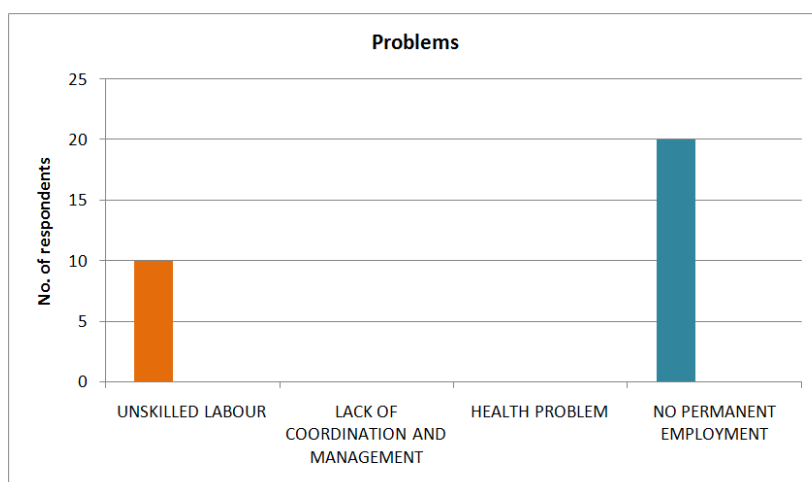
Interpretation:- From the above Table No.9 and Figure no 9, it can be interpreted that 53.33% of the respondent donates towards the socio- economic development and enriching culture while remaining 46.67% do not makes such contribution.

Table No.11:- Table showing the basic problem faced from labours working in the garden under study

BASIS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Unskilled Labour	10	33.33%
Lack of Coordination and management	0	0%
Health Problem	0	0%
No Permanent employment	20	66.66%
Total	30	100%

Source-Field study

Figure No. 11:- Bar Diagram showing the basic problem by the growers from labourer working in the garden



Interpretation:- From the above Table No. 10 and Figure No. 10, it is transparent that according to 33.33% of the respondent the problem faced from the labour working in the garden is unskilled labour while according to the remaining 66.66% of the respondent there is no permanent employment of the labourer.

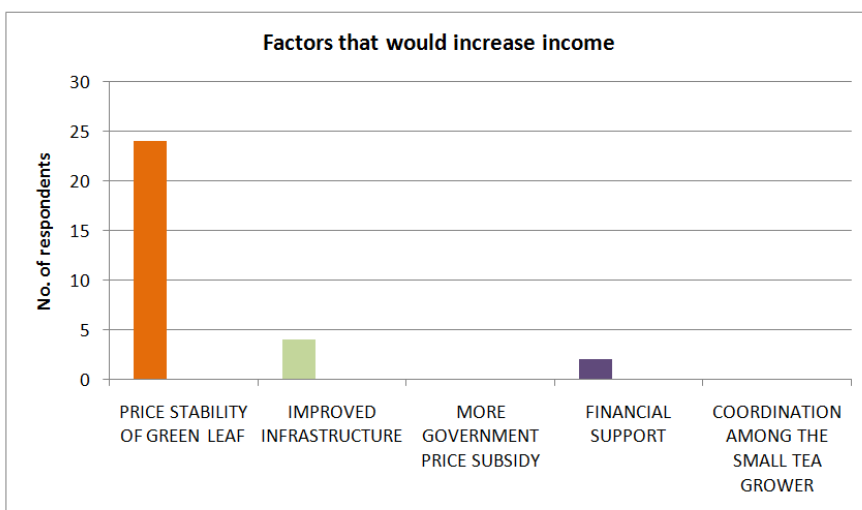
Table No.12:- Table showing the main factor according to the small tea growers of the area that would increase income from the tea estate.

BASIS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Price Stability of green leaf	24	80%
Improved Infrastructure	4	13.33%
More Govt. price subsidy	0	0%

Financial Support	2	6.67%
Coordination among STG	0	0%
Total	30	100%

Source-Field study

Figure No. 12:- Bar Diagram showing factor that would increase income.



Interpretation:- From the above Table No.11, and Figure No. 11, according to 80% of the respondent the main factor that would increase their income is price stability of green leaf, 13.33% pointed out due to improve infrastructure, 6.67% pointed out due to financial support from various institutions etc.

Findings

- It is found from the study that 93.33% of the small tea growers in the study area are males and 6.67% are females. Thus it can be pointed out that majority of the small tea growers are males.
- 6.67% of the small tea growers holds land less than 1 hectare. 70% of the small tea growers hold land between 1-5 hectare, 20% holds between 5- 10 hectares and 3.33% hold 10 hectares and above
- 10% of the small tea growers produces upto 7000 kg, another 10 % produce between 7000kg-15000 kg, 33.33% produces between 10,000kg-20,000 kg, 46.67 % of the small tea growers produce 20,000 kg and above.
- 16.68% of the small tea growers receives subsidy of Rs. 1,00,000, 10 % receives subsidy between Rs 1,00,000-1,50,000, 6.66 % receives subsidy between Rs 1,50,000-2,00,000, 6.66 % receives subsidy of an amount more than Rs 2,00,000.

- 86.67 % of the small tea growers in the area under study started their business with their own capital, 10% borrowed from their family and friends, 3.33% had their past savings using which they started their business.
- 86.67 % of the small tea growers of the study area never applied for private finance, another 3.33 % of the tea growers availed private finance once in a while, 10 % avails it quite often. Thus from the findings it can be concluded that private finance was not considered to be a reliable source for majority of the small tea growers in the area under study.
- 3.33% of the small tea growers in the study area incurred total cost of labour upto Rs. 50,000, 43.33 % incurred cost in the range Rs. 50,000- 70,000, 36.67 % of the small tea growers incurred a cost in the range 70,000-1,20,000 and 16.67 % of the small tea growers incurred a cost of 120,000 and above.
- 26.67 % of the small tea growers under study earn a profit upto 20 %, 53.33 % earned profit in the range 20%-30%, 20 % of them earned a profit in the range of 30%-40%.
- 66.67 % of the respondents pointed out that the reason for variation in cost structure is wages and salaries of labourers, 30% and 3.33 % respondents pointed out the variation in cost is due to price of fertilizers and transportation charge respectively.
- 53.33% of the respondents contribute towards the socio-economic development and enriching culture while 46.67 % do not make such contribution.
- 33.33% of the respondents pointed out that the main problem faced from the labour working in the garden is unskilled labourer and 66.66 % pointed out that there is no permanent employment of the labourer.
- 80 % respondent pointed out that the main factor that would increase their income is price stability of green leaf, 13.33 % of the respondents pointed out that improved infrastructure also resulted in their increase of income, , 6.67 % of the respondents pointed out that financial support from various financial institutions has resulted in their increase of income.

Recommendations

It is recommended that modern scientific technique should be implemented so that the productivity of the workers can increase and thus they can earn a higher profit. Effective marketing technique should be adopted by the small tea growers in order to avoid the problem of marketing which are mostly faced by the small tea growers in the area under study. They have to encounter huge loss as they do not have a proper storage facilities so efforts must be made in order to introduce proper storage facilities. It is also suggested that the small tea growers sell their leaves to the processing units on their own rather than selling it through distributors.

Conclusion

The study has given the researcher an opportunity to interact with the small tea growers of the Margherita area and see how they carry on their business and analyse their problems and prospects. The survey has been conducted upon 30 respondents relating to the tea cultivation. During the study, it was found that employment generation was the foremost prospect of small tea growers. They can improve their standard of living by engaging in tea plantation. Although income is generated from the tea production sector they are not free from problems and challenges. Market related problem is the major challenge faced by the small tea growers of the area. The production level has declined throughout the past five years which is very bad indicator for the small tea growers. The production level can be increased by using the fertilizers in an efficient manner and also by using organic manures. If the problems are taken into consideration by the initiation of government policies and NGO's then tea plantation will be very potential business in this area and also can be considered as one of the important prospects for income generation, employment generation and revenue generation of the state.

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