

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Skill gap in cultivation practices of oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis* Jacq.)

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ABSTRACT

Oil palm is grown commercially under irrigated conditions in India since 1990-91. Though the farmers are aware and adopt the practices, they could not adopt the correct skill in oil palm. A study was taken to find out the skill gap in cultivation of oil palm. A pre tested interview schedule was used to collect the data from 31 farmers. Most of the farmers (71%) are in low skill category. Skill gap ranged from 14.25 to 69.60 percent in the practices *viz.*, ablation, plant protection measures, planting of seedling, weed management, utilization of oil palm wastes, pruning of leaves, pit preparation, selection of seedling for planting, mulching, fertilizer management, basin Management, irrigation management, land preparation and management, selection of suitable inter crops and harvesting of oil palm Fresh Fruit Bunches (FFB).

Key words: Oil palm, adoption, skill gap.

INTRODUCTION

Oil Palm is being cultivated commercially in an area of 2,70, 000 ha in identified potential states in India since 1990-91, of which the state of Andhra Pradesh has 1,60, 000 ha. Government is providing subsidies and other benefits to the farmers to promote Oil Palm cultivation. However, the area expansion is at slow pace due to various factors. One among the main problems as it exists today is that of transfer of fruitful technologies and their skills pertaining to various practices of oil palm cultivation among the growers. It has also been observed that even if the farmers have technical know how, they resist adoption as they are unskilled in utilization of technology in their oil palm plantations apart from other constraints faced by them in adoption. No specific effort has been made to know

the extent of skill gap in oil palm cultivation. Keeping this point in view a study conducted with an objective “to find out the skill gap in cultivation practices of oil palm”.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was undertaken in three districts in Andhra Pradesh *viz.* Krishna, East Godavari and West Godavari districts. Among these three districts one village was selected at random. Thus from 3 villages 31 farmers were selected at random for the study. The data were collected by personal interview with the help of interview schedule developed for the study. Fifteen package of practices containing 33 skills were measured in five point rating scale *i.e.* very highly skilled (5 score), highly skilled (4 score), moderately skilled (3 score), skilled (2 score), less skilled (1 score) and unskilled (0 score). After collecting the data, the mean scores obtained and technological gaps were worked out. Based on the percentage gaps, the ranks were assigned to each practice.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results from the table 1, revealed that majority of the farmers are in low skill category indicating that they are not practicing the correct techniques in adoption of oil palm cultivation practices. The findings from the table 2, showed that skill gap is existing in the practices in that order *viz.*, ablation, plant protection measures, planting of seedling, weed management, utilization of oil palm wastes, pruning of leaves, pit preparation, selection of seedling for planting, mulching, fertilizer management, basin Management, irrigation management, land preparation and management, selection of suitable inter crops and harvesting of oil palm Fresh Fruit Bunches (FFB).

Table 1: Categorization of farmers based on their Skill in oil palm cultivation

Category	No. of farmers	%
Low	22	71
Medium	9	29
High	—	—
Total	31	100

The results indicated that the highest skill gap was 69.60% in ablation, though farmers are aware of the practice, they don't practice recommended technique of ablation. A gap of 67.73% was found in Plant protection measures, as many of the farmers are not practicing correct technique of pesticide/fungicide application. The gap in Planting of Seedling was 66.80%, this may be due to non practicing recommended technique of planting, skill gap of 66% was noticed in weed management, since farmers are not practicing correct method of application. Gap in utilization of oil palm wastes was 65%, as many of the farmers either through the oil palm wastes or burn. Gap of 62.80% was found in pruning of leaves, as many farmers are cutting the leaves excessively. Gap in pit making for planting was 60%, it is observed that many farmers don't follow the recommended method of pit making. The gap in selection of seedling for Planting was 58.40%, most of the farmers are taking less aged seedlings for planting. Gap in mulching was 58.20%, as many of the farmers don't do proper mulching. Skill gap of 49.04% was found in fertilizer management, since farmers are not following recommended method

of application. The gap in basin management was 43.20%, irrigation management was 42.24%, land preparation and management was 33.86%, selection of suitable inter crops was 22.60 and harvesting of oil palm fresh fruit bunches was 14.25% respectively. The lowest gap observed in harvesting, since this skill has got direct impact on yield, farmers are cautious about harvesting of oil palm bunches.

Skill gap with respect to oil palm cultivation ranged from 14.25 to 69.60 percent, though majority of oil palm farmers are in high knowledge category (61%) and medium adoption category (53%) in Andhra Pradesh (Prasad and Raju 2004).

CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that wider skill gaps exist in cultivation of oil palm by oil palm growers. These gaps in most of the practices need to be reduced, by adopting correct techniques for getting high yields. Thus, it emphasizes the need of transferring the skill oriented technology to the oil palm growers in the trainings, where they are lacking the proficiency in practicing various operations in oil palm cultivation.

REFERENCES

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Table 2: Practice wise skill gap and ranking

Practice	Max obtainable score	Avg. obtained. score	Skill Gap	Skill Gap%	Rank
Ablation	5	1.52	3.48	69.60	I
Plant protection measures	15	4.84	10.16	67.73	II
Planting of Seedling	10	3.32	6.68	66.80	III
Weed management	10	3.4	6.60	66.00	IV
Utilization of oil palm wastes	5	1.75	3.25	65.00	V
Pruning of leaves	5	1.86	3.14	62.80	VI
Pit making	5	2.0	3.0	60.00	VII
Selection of seedling for Planting	10	4.16	5.84	58.40	VIII
Mulching	5	2.09	2.91	58.20	IX
Fertilizer management	25	12.74	12.26	49.04	X
Basin Management	5	2.84	2.16	43.20	XI
Irrigation Management	25	14.45	10.55	42.24	XII
Land Preparation and management.	15	9.92	5.08	33.86	XIII
Selection of Suitable inter crops	5	3.87	1.13	22.60	XIV
Harvesting of oil palm Fresh Fruit Bunches	20	17.15	2.85	14.25	XV