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Problems and suggestions in the operation and utilization of custom hiring centres: As perceived by the service providers and beneficiary farmers

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Abstract

The present study was conducted on custom hiring centres in five selected districts of Chhattisgarh plains. In case of service providers of CHCs, the majority of service providers expressed payment problem (delay and bargaining to reduce hiring charges by the farmers), high maintenance cost of machinery and implements, some implements are not demanded by the farmers and high cost of fuel as a major problems and most of them expressed the government should be increased the subsidy component of custom hiring centres, implements should be provided by the government in the CHC on the basis of farmers demand, bank process for subsidy should be easy and simple and timely disbursement of government subsidies must be ensured to reduce the financial pressure on custom hiring centres as a major suggestions. In case of beneficiary farmers, the majority of respondents expressed that non-availability of farm machinery during the crop season, Compactness of soil physical condition due to use of heavy machinery viz. combine harvester, tractor, etc., high rental cost and particular crop wise implements are not available in CHCs were the major problems and most of them expressed that number of implements (machinery) should be increased for solving the farmer's problems particularly in crop session, hiring charges should be reduced, custom hiring centre should be established at panchayat level and particular crop wise implements should be available in CHCs were the major suggestions suggested by the farmers.

Keywords: Custom hiring centres, problems, interview schedule

Introduction

Chhattisgarh is a state located in central India, covering 4.1 per cent of the country's geographical area (approximately 135,194 sq km) and accounting about 2.1 per cent of the nation's population (around 30 million).

Agriculture is a very labour-intensive occupation that is now dealing with a labour shortage. Increasing urbanization and industrialization further aggravate the shortage of labour. The new work opportunities in off-farm occupation will also add to the pressure to raise efficiency of use of labour on the farm. Hence, Indian agriculture is gradually shifting from relying on human and animal power to mechanical power due to the rising costs of maintaining animals and the increasing scarcity of human labour. The migration of labor from farm to non-farm activities poses a threat to agriculture as it results in a shortage of labor for farming operations. Therefore, the use of mechanical power directly impacts crop productivity, reduces labor drudgery, and ensures the timeliness of farming operations. Therefore, there is a significant need to embrace farm mechanization.

Farm mechanization which entails the use of machines to perform several activities on the farm in order to save time, money spent on hiring of labour and most importantly increases the level of production which will automatically lead to a simultaneous increase in the farmer's income. Custom hiring centres (CHCs) are basically a unit comprising a set of farm machinery and implements meant

for custom hiring by farmers. Providing farm machinery and implements on custom hiring basis to the farmers in time and at reasonable rates is possible through CHCs. Custom hiring centers are beneficial to small and marginal farmers. Government of Chhattisgarh promoting CHCs in order to make available the high cost of farm machinery and implements within the reach of small and marginal farmers. Custom hiring requires no initial investment or repair and maintenance costs from farmers. Farmers only need to pay rental charges.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in five selected districts of Chhattisgarh plains viz. Raigarh, Rajnandgaon, Raipur, Durg and Dhamtari districts of Chhattisgarh state during the year 2023-24. Because these districts were having maximum custom hiring centres. There are 778 custom hiring centres are working in selected districts, out of which 10 per cent custom hiring centres were selected and 4 beneficiary farmers from each custom hiring centres were selected purposively. In this way total 385 ($77 \times 4 = 308 + 77$) respondents (77 service providers of CHC's and 308 beneficiary farmers) were selected. Primary data were collected through personal interview with the help of pre-tested structured interview schedule. Collected data were tabulated and processed by using appropriate statistical tools.

Results and Discussion

Problems faced by the service providers in the operation of custom hiring centres

Table 1: Problems faced by the service providers in the operation of custom hiring centres

Sl. No.	Problems	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1.	Non availability of skilled farm machinery operator	16	20.78	X
2.	Non availability of service centres nearby village for repairing the machinery in the vicinity of CHCs.	32	41.56	VII
3.	Lack of shed for keeping the machinery and implements of CHCs.	20	25.97	VIII
4.	Payment problem (delay and bargaining to reduce hiring charges by the farmers).	68	88.31	I
5.	High cost of fuel.	49	63.64	IV
6.	High maintenance cost of machinery and implements.	57	74.03	II
7.	Cumbersome bank loan with high interest rates.	44	57.14	VI
8.	Some implements are not demanded by the farmers.	52	67.53	III
9.	Delayed in receiving subsidy and more time taking process.	45	58.44	V
10.	Problem faced by the service providers to move heavy machinery from one place to another, Particularly in remote areas.	19	24.68	IX

The problems as perceived by the service providers in the operation of custom hiring centres are given in table 1. Majority (88.31%) of respondents were expressed their views that payment problem (delay and bargaining to reduce hiring charges by the farmers) as a major problem which was ranked first, followed by high maintenance cost of machinery and implements (74.03%), some implements are not demanded by the farmers (67.53%), high cost of fuel (63.64%), delayed in receiving subsidy and more time taking process (58.44%), cumbersome bank loan with high interest rates (57.14%), non-availability of service centres

nearby village for repairing the machinery in the vicinity of CHCs (41.56%), lack of shed for keeping the machinery and implements of CHCs (25.97%), problem faced by the service providers to move heavy machinery from one place to another, Particularly in remote areas (24.68%) and non-availability of skilled farm machinery operator (20.78%) were other important problems as reported by the respondents (service providers).

Problems faced by the beneficiary farmers in the utilization of custom hiring centres

Table 2: Problems faced by the beneficiary farmers in the utilization of custom hiring centres

Sl. No.	Problems	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1.	Non availability of farm machinery during the crop season.	293	61.04	I
2.	Lack of awareness about type of machinery and implements available at CHCs.	57	18.51	VI
3.	Compactness of soil physical condition due to use of heavy machinery viz. combine harvester, tractor, etc.	199	64.61	II
4.	High rental cost.	188	95.13	III
5.	Particular crop wise implements are not available in CHCs.	87	28.25	IV
6.	Implements are not available in CHC for horticultural crops.	43	13.96	VII
7.	Losses of straw when combine harvester is used.	78	25.32	V

The problems as perceived by the farmers in the utilization of custom hiring centres are shown in table 2. Majority (95.13%) of respondents expressed non-availability of farm machinery during the crop season as a major problem which was ranked first, followed by Compactness of soil physical condition due to use of heavy machinery viz. combine harvester, tractor, etc. (64.61%), high rental cost (61.04%), particular crop wise implements are not available in CHCs

(28.25%), losses of straw when combine harvester is used (25.32%), lack of awareness about type of machinery and implements available at CHCs (18.51%) and implements are not available in CHC for horticultural crops (13.96%) were other important problems as reported by the respondents.

Suggestions suggested by the service providers for effective operation of custom hiring centres

Table 3: Suggestions suggested by the service providers for effective operation of custom hiring centres

Sl. No.	Suggestions	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1.	Training should be provided to man power for efficient handling of farm machinery.	24	31.17	VI
2.	The government should be increased the subsidy component of custom hiring centres.	66	85.71	I
3.	Mobile repair units should be started by the government so that machines and implements can be repaired on spot.	37	48.05	V
4.	Subsidy should be provided by the Government for construction of shed to keep the machinery of CHC.	20	25.97	VIII
5.	Bank process for subsidy should be easy and simple.	46	59.74	III
6.	Implements should be provided by the government in the CHC on the basis of farmers demand.	58	75.32	II
7.	Timely disbursement of government subsidies must be ensured to reduce the financial pressure on custom hiring centres.	41	53.25	IV

The findings related to the suggestions suggested by the respondents to overcome the problems in operation of custom hiring centres are presented in the table 3. The data shows that majority (85.71%) of respondents were expressed their views that the government should be increased the subsidy component of custom hiring centres as a major suggestion and ranked first, followed by implements should be provided by the government in the CHC on the basis of farmers demand (75.32%), bank process for subsidy should be easy and simple (59.74%), timely disbursement of government subsidies must be ensured to reduce the financial pressure on custom hiring centres (53.25%), mobile repair units should be started by the government so that machines and implements can be repaired on spot (48.05%), training should be organized to man power for efficient handling of farm machinery (31.17%) and subsidy should be provided by the Government for construction of shed to keep the machinery of CHC (25.97%) were other important suggestions as reported by the respondents.

Suggestions suggested by the beneficiary farmers for effective utilization of custom hiring centres

The findings related to the suggestions suggested by the respondents to overcome the problems in utilization of custom hiring centres are presented in the table 4. The data shows that majority (94.48%) of respondents were expressed their views that number of implements (machinery) should be increased for solving the farmer's problems in crop session as a major suggestion and ranked first, followed by hiring charges should be reduced (61.69%), custom hiring centre should be established at panchayat level (57.47%), particular crop wise implements should be available in CHCs (27.60%), providing of rent charges should be less for marginal and small farmers (21.75%), creating awareness for hiring of machinery in CHCs among the farmers (20.78%) and equipment should be available at custom hiring centres for horticultural crops also (14.61%) were other important suggestions as reported by the respondents.

Table 4: Suggestions suggested by the beneficiary farmers for effective utilization of custom hiring centres

Sl. No.	Suggestions	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
1.	Custom hiring centre should be established at panchayat level.	177	57.47	III
2.	Number of implements (machinery) should be increased for solving the farmer's problems in crop session.	291	94.48	I
3.	Creating awareness for hiring of machinery in CHCs among the farmers.	64	20.78	VI
4.	Hiring charges should be reduced.	190	61.69	II
5.	Particular crop wise implements should be available in CHCs.	85	27.60	IV
6.	Equipment should be available at custom hiring centres for horticultural crops also.	45	14.61	VII
7.	Provision of rent charges should be less for marginal and small farmers.	67	21.75	V

Conclusion

It may be concluded that majority (88.31%) of service providers were expressed their views that payment problem (delay and bargaining to reduce hiring charges by the farmers), followed by high maintenance cost machinery and implements (74.03%), some implements are not demanded by the farmers (67.53%) as a major problems and most (85.71%) of them expressed that the government should be increased the subsidy component of custom hiring centres, followed by implements should be provided by the government in the CHC on the basis of farmers demand (75.32%), bank process for subsidy should be easy and simple (59.74%) as a major suggestion. In case of beneficiary farmers, majority (95.13%) of respondents expressed non-availability of farm machinery during the crop season, followed by Compactness of soil physical condition due to use of heavy machinery viz. combine harvester, tractor, etc. (64.61%), high rental cost (61.04%) as a major problem and most (94.48%) of respondents were expressed their views that number of implements (machinery) should be increased for solving the farmer's problems in crop session, followed by hiring charges should be reduced (61.69%), custom hiring centre should be established at panchayat level (57.47%) as a major suggestion.

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