

Awareness about Minimum Support Price among the farmers over the Agro-Ecological Zones of Jammu Province of Jammu & Kashmir state, INDIA.

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Abstract: The present is paper an attempt to analyse the awareness level about MSP among the farming community. The various initiatives taken by the government would result into a more fruitful way if the programmes are widely spread over both the horizontal and vertical strata of a region. The objective of extending support to the farming community through such programmes is to strengthen the agriculture sector by giving security to the farmers to face the price fall. This would certainly ensure the fair remunerations to the farmers resulting in the development of the rural areas. The data used in the analyses are collected from the field survey well spread over the different agro-ecological zones and the response of the farming respondents are recorded on the well designed questionnaire. The study shows that the vulnerable sections of the society are still neither aware of such programmes nor getting reasonable benefits.

Key words: Minimum support price, Agriculture, farming community, vulnerable sections

INTRODUCTION

Minimum Support Price (MSP) is a form of market intervention by the Government of India to insure agricultural producers against any sharp fall in farm prices. The minimum support prices are announced by the Government of India at the beginning of the sowing season for certain crops on the basis of the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP). MSP is the price fixed by Government of India to protect the producer - farmers - against excessive fall in price during bumper production years. The minimum support prices are a guaranteed price for their produce from the Government. The major objectives are to support the farmers from distress sales and to procure food grains for public distribution. In case the market price for the commodity falls below the announced minimum price due to bumper production and glut in the market, government agencies purchase the entire quantity offered by the farmers at the announced minimum price. Such policy decisions are taken by the government with the objective to support the farmers to get their due share which helps to have assured earning in the season. Minimum Support Price (MSP) is an integral component of Agriculture Price Policy of India. It targets to ensure minimum support price to farmers and affordable price to consumers through public distribution system (PDS) (Parikh & Singh 2007). The price support system was conceptualized as an institutional mechanism to extend incentives to the farmers to adopt new technologies during the period of green revolution (Planning Commission 2005; Deshpande 2008). MSP is viewed as a safety net to ensure price security for a long-term investment decision to farmers.

There have been many concerns off late regarding operation and effectiveness of MSP. In the given study, MSP is considered as a safety net ensuring a sustained development in agriculture sector and an attempt has been made to understand the awareness regarding MSP over the six agro-ecological zones of the study area. It has been analysed that in the growing structural change in the landholding size from medium to small and marginal farmers the diversification of crops is an excellent way for generating better livelihood in the agriculture. The awareness regarding such government intervention will help the farmers to diversify their agricultural practices which would help them to generate good income. The key objectives of the study are to understand the status of farmers' awareness of MSP of crops grown by them and its low correlates and to explore the nature of the relationship between farmers', awareness regarding MSP and their decision to diversify the crops.

OBJECTIVES:

The paper attempts to examine the following objectives:

1. To understand the importance of Minimum Support price in agriculture
2. To examine the awareness of MSP among the various social group.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY/RESEACH ELABORATIONS

The study region comprises of ten districts namely, Doda, Rajouri, Poonch, Jammu, Samba, Reasi, Ramban, Kishtwar, Udhampur and Kathua. The region is divided into approx. 60 blocks. The given problem is investigated over the ten districts comprising these 60 blocks of the region. Since, the physiographic of the region is so diverse in nature as the terrain, climate, soils, and slope all are so diverse in the region. There is so much of physiographical diversity within a block and within the districts in Jammu province. The basic concept of the region is the ideology of geography as a discipline. It helps in understanding the interrelationships of physical and non- physical attributes on the earth surface. According to George Kimble (1950's) "Any portion of earth's surface where physical conditions are homogeneous can be considered to be a region in the geographic sense." A region is not an object, either self-determined or nature given. It is an intellectual concept, an entity for the purpose of thought created by the selection of certain features that are relevant to an aerial interest or problem and by the disregard of all features that are considered to be irrelevant. In order to have a sustained agricultural development it is the need of the time to have a systematic planning of agricultural activities. There are several reasons assigned by the researchers for the popularity of the concept of region in various studies focusing on the regional planning and development. The failure of the socio-economic development in the country over the planning era has led to emphasize on new thinking focusing the provision of equal living conditions in different regions including employment, housing and social security, ensuring an appropriate infrastructure equally distributed and brought close to the people resulting in minim sizing the social, economic poverty.

In order to have a sustained agricultural development it is the need of the time to have systematic planning of agricultural activities. The Agro-ecological zoning is one of the most important base for agricultural development planning as the agricultural enterprises is the outcome of physical and the social attributes of a region. The identification of these agro-ecological zones will help to have a careful assessment of agro-climatic resources and as far as the study region is concerned it has huge agro-climatic potential, as the region experiences sub-tropical to temperate type of climate. The modern tool such as satellite remote sensing and GIS have been providing newer dimensions to have effective management mobilization of the natural resources. It has been conceived that GIS and remote sensing has a great role to play in agro-ecological zoning for sustainable development due to its multi-stage character of comprehensive approach to agro-ecological zoning. Sustainable development of mountainous regions is a challenging task because of its diverse physiography and fragile eco-system. The most important striking characteristic of mountainous region is its spatial variability. This makes the planning and use of natural resources of this region more complex than any other. The present study is conducted in the Jammu province of J&K (latitude...) to demonstrate the use of remote sensing and GIS as a tool for demarcation of agro-ecological zoning with mountain perspective (Patelet *al.*.2002). The methodology used in the study is described as follows:-

METHODOLOGY ADOPTED FOR DELINEATION OF AGRO-ECOLOGICAL ZONES OF JAMMU PROVINCE

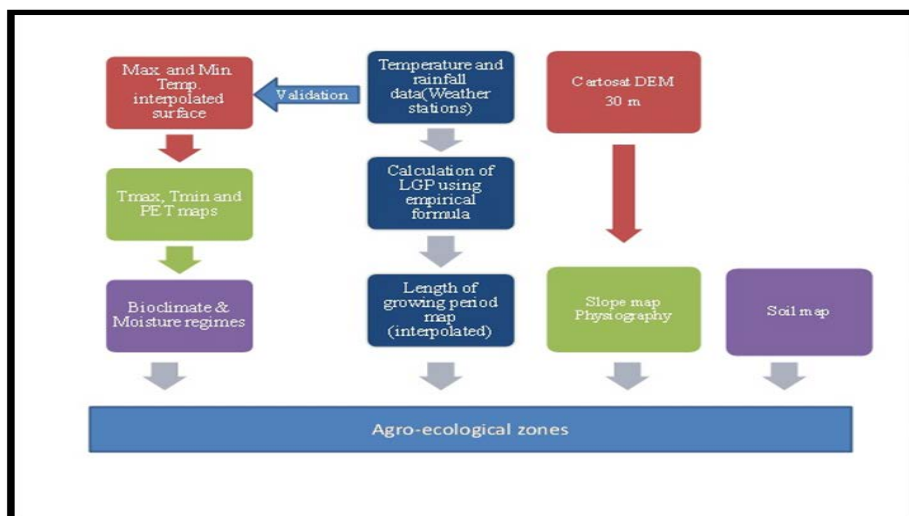


Figure: 1.1

DATA SET USED:

In this study spatial datasets of, LANDSAT ETM+ and IRS LISS III were used correspondingly, including the Survey of India Toposheets (1972). The area of interest was extracted by sub-setting of the town planning map of Jammu & Kashmir. All the images were first geo-corrected and geo-referenced in Earth Re-source Data Analysis System (ERDAS) Imagine 9.0 soft-ware, assigning Universal Transverse Mercator with World Geocoded system (UTM WGS 84) projection parameters. Further for assistance in the process of interpretation SOI toposheets was also geo-referenced and were given similar projection and datum. Satellite imagery was stacked into different bands to produce a false color composite (FCC), the area of interest was extracted by sub-setting of the image. These images were digitized in GIS environment using ArcMap 10 software in the form of polygons representing different categories.

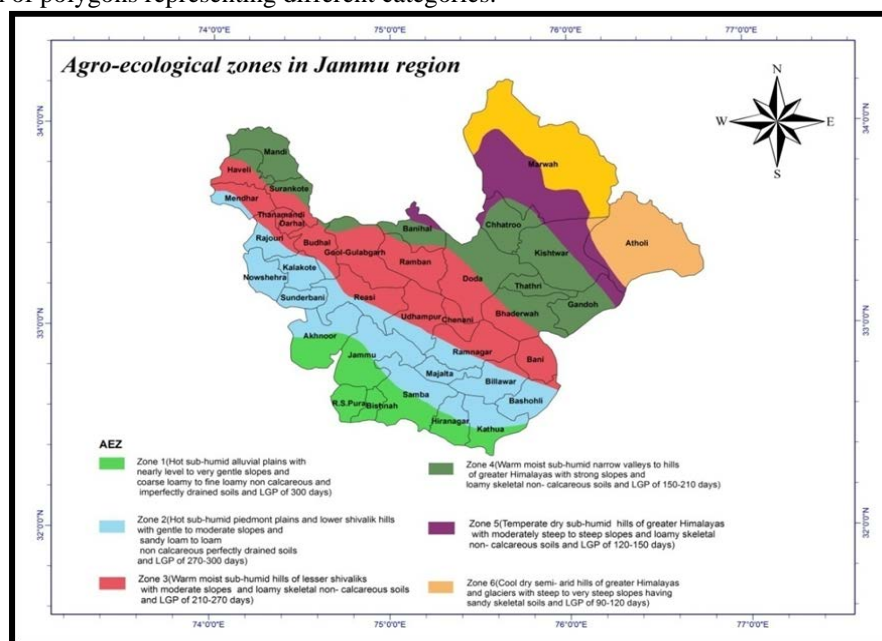


Figure: 1.2

SAMPLING FRAMEWORK

Further, an attempt has been made to identify the number of villages falling under different AEZ. Following are the details of the number of villages and number of households (hhs) falling under different zones, identified with the help of proportion allocation technique which is as follows:

$$ni = (n \times Ni) \div N$$

n = Number of sample size (1% of the total number of households (hhs) in the study region) **ni= Number of households (hhs) falling under each zone.**

N= Number of hhs falling under the study region.

With the above formulation we will get the size sample hhs to be obtained from each AEZ.

In the present study the sample size is 7253.

$$\text{Agro-ecological zone 1} = (7253 \times 181162) \div 725345 = 1811.50$$

Similarly, the size of sample from the each AEZ has been calculated as under:

TABLE: 1.1 AGRO-ECOLOGICAL ZONE SHOWING THE SELECTED SAMPLE SIZE OF THE HOUSEHOLDS.

S.No	Agro-ecological Zones	Number of sample hhs
1	Zone A = $(7253 \times 181162) \div 725345 = 1811.50$	1811
2	Zone B = $(7253 \times 215321) \div 725345 = 2153$	2153

3	Zone C = $(7253 \times 2072245) \div 725345 = 2072$	2072
4	Zone D = $(7253 \times 95707) \div 725345 = 957$	957
5	Zone E = $(7253 \times 21651) \div 725345 = 216$	216
6	Zone F = $(7253 \times 4259) \div 725345 = 42$	42

Source: Field work, 2016-17

After getting the numbers of sample households from each zone we had to select the criteria for selection of farming families from each zone and in the present work the size of landholdings was considered in order to identify the number of respondent (farming families) to be selected from the different size of landholdings. A well designed questionnaire is prepared to generate the required data through the field survey. While filling the questionnaire, care has been taken to cover almost all the social and economic attributes which help us to understand the poverty issues in the agriculture sector.

Since, the obtained size of sample was still on the higher side and keeping in mind the time and the cost factors the obtained 1% sample of the entire population (7253) was further reduced to 50% of the sample households to be selected from the all identified zones. Therefore by reducing it to 50% of sample households from all the zones, the selected number of sample has been presented in the following table.

TABLE: 1.2 AGRO-ECOLOGICAL ZONES SHOWING THE SELECTED SAMPLE SIZE OF THE HOUSEHOLDS.

S.No	Agro-ecological Zones	Number of sample hhs	Number of samples after reducing to 50%
1	Zone A = $(7253 \times 181162) \div 725345 = 1811.50$	1811	905
2	Zone B = $(7253 \times 215321) \div 725345 = 2153$	2153	1076
3	Zone C = $(7253 \times 2072245) \div 725345 = 2072$	2072	1036
4	Zone D = $(7253 \times 95707) \div 725345 = 957$	957	479
5	Zone E = $(7253 \times 21651) \div 725345 = 216$	216	108
6	Zone F = $(7253 \times 4259) \div 725345 = 42$	42	21

Source: Field work, 2016-17

ANALYSIS/RESULTS

The share of agriculture in the India's GDP has fallen steadily from around 25 per cent in the early part of the century to less than 17 per cent now. But almost half of India's population is dependent on agriculture for livelihood. Farming is a risky business with the farmer's income dependent on the vagaries of weather and pests, as well as local and international price trends. The MSP mechanism shields farmers to an extent, from such risks, by guaranteeing a floor price for their produce. MSP also ensures that the country's agricultural output responds to the changing needs of its consumers. This year, for instance, the prices of pulses have shot up sharply due to a sharp fall in production in the just concluded rabi season. The Centre has thus hiked the MSP of pulses by a larger margin than for paddy, to expand sowing of pulses in the coming year.

There are many policy decision taken by the government for strengthening each and every sector of economy. The agriculture sector has a great role to play in the economy of the country and time to time constructive measures are taken by the government to support the farming sector. In the given paper an attempt has been made to examine the awareness of Minimum support price system as government intervention to ensure fair price to the farmers in the country. The awareness of MSP over the different agro-ecological zones in the study area has recorded through the field visits to different zones. The effective and efficient planning for the inclusive development would be more fruitful when the performances of different developmental indicators are examined from the regional approach. The approach of sustainable development in the agriculture sector along with the other sectors of the economy is possible only when each and every section of the society would get the benefits. Therefore, in the given attempt an effort has been made to understand the awareness of the farming respondents about MSP over the different sections of the society in the six identified agro-ecological zones in the study area.

Table: 1.3 CASTEWISE RESPONSES OF THE RESPONDENTS ABOUT MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE

Have you heard about the Minimum Support Price?						
Caste	Zone		Heard	Not heard	Can't say	Total
			Count	Count	Count	Count
SC	Zone	A	28	82	28	138
		B	72	36	0	108
		C	0	220	0	220
		D	45	90	0	135
		E	18	22	0	40
		F	0	6	0	6
ST	Zone	A	0	45	0	45
		B	0	0	0	0
		C	0	42	0	42
		D	10	20	0	30
		E	0	0	0	0
		F	0	6	0	6
OBC	Zone	A	9	0	0	9
		B	36	18	0	54
		C	20	42	0	62
		D	40	21	0	61
		E	6	14	0	20
		F	0	2	0	2
OTHER (GENERAL)	Zone	A	36	657	18	711
		B	517	397	0	914
		C	222	490	0	712
		D	144	109	0	253
		E	34	14	0	48
		F	2	5	0	7

Source: Field survey (2016-17)

CASTE WISE RESPONSE OF THE RESPONDENTS REGARDING THE MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE OVER THE AGRO-ECOLOGICAL ZONES: JAMMU PROVINCE (2016-2017)

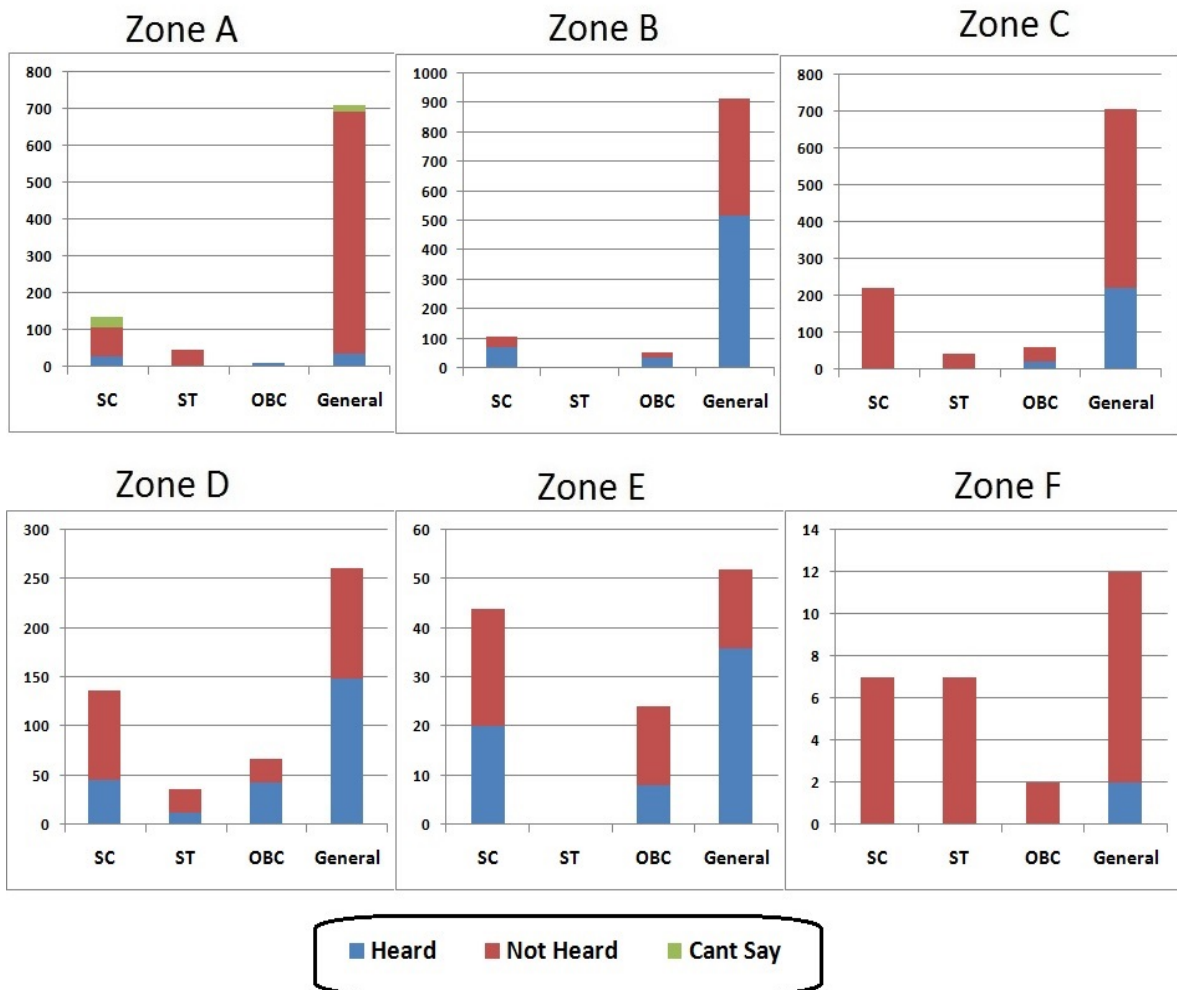


Figure: 1.3

The above graphic presentation shows the caste wise response of the farming respondents over the different zones in the study area. As far as the awareness about MSP in zone A is concerned it is evident from the above figure (fig1.3) that there are variations in the response regarding the awareness of MSP among the different castes in zone A. In case of awareness of MSP among the schedule castes, the majority of the respondents have not heard about MSP which constitutes 81 respondents followed by the response under the ‘can’t say’ category recording 27 responses, 27 respondents who heard about MSP in zone A. It is interesting to record in zone A that in the schedule tribe category only the response under the ‘not heard’ category has been recorded. Further, in case of OBC all the responses have recorded under the ‘heard’ category which constitutes 9 respondents (table 1.3). In the general category the maximum number of the respondents have been recorded as 657 who have not heard about MSP and 36 respondents are with the response of ‘heard’ and a represent able number of response have been recorded in the third category of response i.e. ‘can’t say’ which has 18 number of respondents.

The status of awareness of the respondents in zone B about MSP is showing a completely different picture when compared with zone A. The number of respondents who are aware about MSP are of higher proportion or those falling in the category of ‘heard’ are constituting 72 respondents as compared to 36 respondents falling under the category of ‘not heard’ in case of schedule caste. This zone has not recorded any response from the schedule tribes under any category of ‘heard’, ‘not heard’ or ‘can’t say’ as a response by the respondents about MSP. In case of OBC 36 respondents have heard about MSP followed by 18 respondents falling under the ‘not heard’ category. The picture of the general category is little satisfactory where the response in the ‘heard’ category is exceeding from the ‘not heard’ category (fig 1.3)

While considering the zone C the trend followed in the response of the respondents are very discouraging as in case of schedule caste and schedule tribes no response of the respondents have been recorded in the ‘heard’ category of assessing the awareness of MSP. In case of OBC a mix response has been witnessed which constitutes of 20 responses in the ‘heard’ category followed by

42 responses in 'not heard' category. The general category has shown a higher number of responses in the 'not heard' category constituting 488 respondents (table 1.3)

While discussing about the response of respondents about MSP in zone D it has been found that both in schedule caste and schedule tribes community the response in the 'not heard' category about MSP is exceeding but in case OBC a opposite trend has been witnessed where the response in the 'heard' category is constituting 43 respondents when compared with the responses recorded in 'not heard' category

The picture of the response of the respondents about the MSP is showing a mixed trend in zone E about MSP in the 'heard' and 'not heard' category. In this zone no responses have been recorded in the schedule tribe category. In case of the schedule caste group this zone has shown the maximum response of respondents under the 'heard' category regarding the awareness about MSP when compared over the six agro-ecological zones in Jammu province.

CASTEWISE RESPONSE REGARDING MSP OVER AGRO- ECOLOGICAL ZONES OF JAMMU PROVINCE (2016-17)

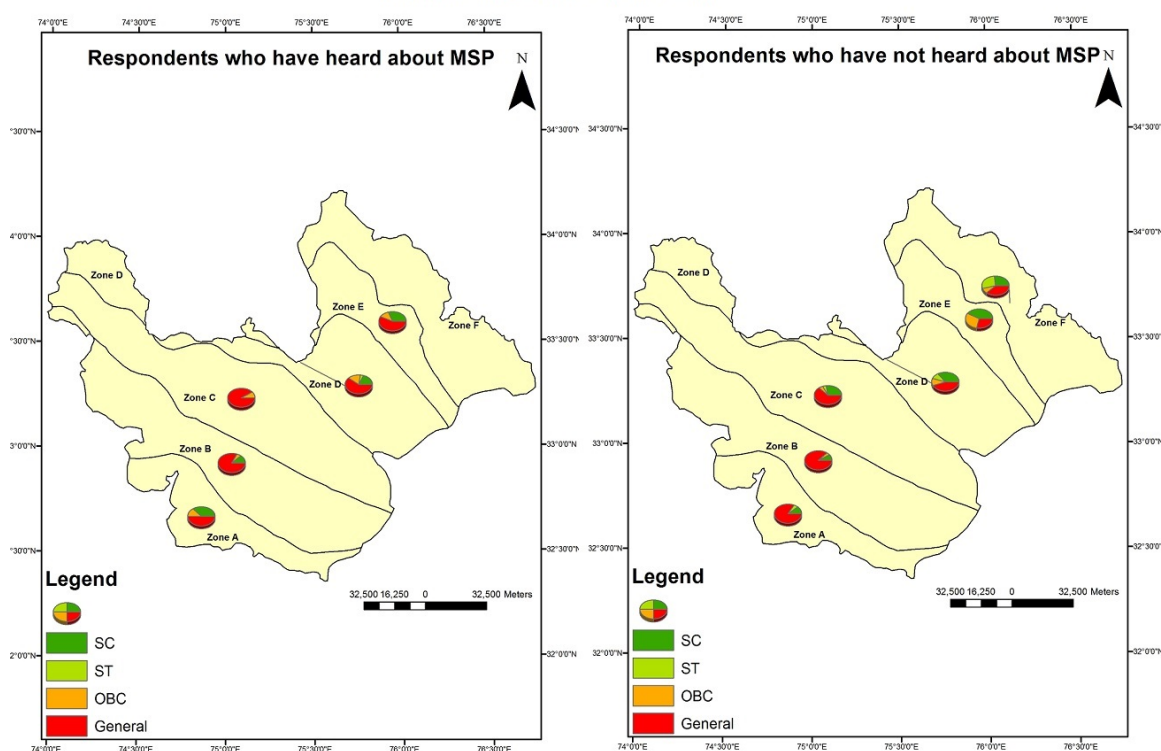


Figure: 1.4

The OBC has exceeded in the responses under the 'not heard' category while the responses under the general category are satisfying. (table 1.3)

The zone F is the last zone of the study area this zone has shown a trend of the responses about MSP which when compared with other zones in Jammu province is really discouraging. In this zone except in the general caste there is no response recorded about MSP in the 'heard' category in case of schedule caste, schedule tribe and OBC caste in the study area. Moreover the response in the 'heard' category is also on lower side when compared with zone B, C, D and F (fig 1.3). Therefore, it is quite evident from the above discussions the every zone in the study area has recorded different types of responses and therefore all the zones are in need of having a zone specific planning to encounter the different developmental issues.

CONCLUSION

- The Minimum Support Price (MSP) has more advantages if implemented properly it can be used by the government as a powerful tool in stabilising the economy resulting in the sustained development of the agrarian sector in the country.
- Minimum Support Prices are considered as an important pillar of Indian Agricultural price policy rolled out with an intention of providing price security to farmers.

- Theoretically, the support prices are to give benefit to the farmers of the entire nation. In this article, an attempt has been made to examine the awareness of MSP over the identified agro-ecological zones in Jammu province.
- This can be concluded from the study that there is clear evidence on the awareness level on MSP, among farmers in the study area, being very low particularly in the schedule case, schedule tribe and OBC sections of the study area.
- The farmers, due to numerous factors, end up selling their produce at prices below MSP, which either mean losses or very low profits. Thus, it is imperative to link MSP and farmers most realistically.
- There is a need to raise awareness levels on MSP among farmers and explaining them on how it works to their benefit. This could be made possible by organising awareness drives, initially pushing the government agencies to foray into the non serviced villages to procure food grains directly from farmers rather than the farmers coming to the agencies.
- This is because few villages are situated far off from these agencies, which make it difficult for the farmers to have access. Agencies reaching out to farmers should also help in the trust building on government schemes among the farmers.
- Moreover, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) might also play a vital role in educating farmers on MSP. Once a strong MSP and farmer linkage is firmed up, it ought to make farmers realise the benefits of the government support system for agriculture produce and in turn raising their income levels.
- There is a need to create a platform where farmers might be able to voice their concerns and suggestions. The farmers had historically fallen prey to high interest rates and ever increasing debts, which, for them, became a vicious cycle to come out from.
- The support needs to come from the other end as well like the farmer bodies, gram panchayats and civil societies. Partnership between various governmental and non-governmental agencies at the district-level could be fostered to further the implementation of government schemes, especially the MSP. This will also ensure the holistic coverage of all vulnerable categories of farmers.

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