

Awareness level of Geographical indication (GI) on Madurai Malli

Abstract

The study aims to assess the awareness level of Geographical indication on Madurai Malli in Madurai district. It was found that Majority of the respondents were having low level of awareness on GI Madurai malli. It was inferred from farmers in the study area doesn't know the real benefits of GI and its importance in the socio-economic development of the community. In the domestic market the farmers really find any changes in the price hike due to GI tag might be the reason for low level of awareness on Geographical indication on Madurai Malli among the beneficiary respondents.

Keywords: Geographical indication, Madurai Malli, Awareness, Farmers.

INTRODUCTION

Jasmine (*Jasminum sambac*) is one of the oldest fragrant flowers cultivated by man. The plants are grown both as shrubs as well as climbers. Jasmines are distributed both in the tropical and sub-tropical areas. Jasmine flowers are used for making garlands, bouquets, adorning hairs of women, in religious and ceremonial functions perfumed hair oils, attars, soaps, wines and drinks (Thakur *et al.*, 2014). Madurai Malli, the jasmine flower known for its fragrance and its distinctive petal colour that originates from the district of Madurai in Tamil Nadu has been granted the GI (Geographical Indication) tag by the Registrar of Geographical Indications on January 11, 2013. This flower is the first horticultural product from Tamil Nadu to have been granted a GI status. Madurai Malli became eligible for registration as a GI as it fits the definition of a geographical indication under Section 2(e) of the GI Act. The flower which is cultivated in various parts of Madurai is known for its heavy fragrance as well as its thick petals which change colour from greenish white in the morning to milky white in the afternoon to creamy white with a slight silvery shade by evening. The heavy fragrance of the flower is a result of the accumulation of alkaloids such as 'jamone' and 'alpha terpineol'. These alkaloids accumulate owing to the topography of the Madurai region where the flowers are harvested.

Moreover, the colour of the flowers as well as its fragrance last for two days. This longer shelf life of Madurai Malli, which is due to its thicker petals as well as its longer petiole, makes it attractive for the consumers, especially exporters and flower weavers. Under Sec. 11 of the GI Act, any association of persons or producers or any organization or authority established by or under any law that represents the interest of the producers may apply for registration as a geographical indication. In this case, the application for the GI was jointly filed by the Madurai Malli Farmers' Association, Kurinji Vattara Kalanjiam and the DHAN Foundation, Madurai.

A GI tag is different from a trademark because it indicates the geographical location of the product and is enjoyed by the entire community of the region whereas trademark is enjoyed by a single entity and is exclusive and not shared. Geographical Indication tag is an indicator on a product that a particular item has originated from a particular region. GI may be more amenable to the particular context of developing countries. Consumers are increasingly concerned about food safety and food quality issues value the origin as a useful quality cue. These ongoing developments are reflected in the growing awareness on the number of products registered under GI act and also a rise in scientific literature investigating questions which are related to geographical indications for food products. (Teuber 2007).

The spread of GI recognition is concentrated in the southern states. Products from other states are getting registered now. At the same time many states, which have several traditional varieties of agricultural products or handicrafts, are not forthcoming in applying for GIs. Hence, more awareness on the registration of GI and its importance in the international market is the need of the hour.

METHODOLOGY

In Tamil Nadu, Madurai is renowned for jasmine cultivation. Madurai is the oldest inhabited city in the Indian peninsula, which is also referred as Malligai Maanagar (City of Jasmine), which shows the influence of jasmine in the city. Tamil Nadu holds number one position in producing of jasmine in India. The flowers produced in Tamil Nadu exported to the other countries like Sri Lanka Malaysia, Singapore and Middle East countries. The major Jasmine producing districts of Tamil Nadu are Madurai (1397 ha), Dindigul (1223ha), Erode (1133 ha), Salem (546 ha) and Trichy (450 ha). (Season and Crop Report 2014). Madurai district is to be purposively selected for this study. Because of the popular jasmine flower

known for its heady fragrance and international reputation bringing special fame to the temple city of Madurai, has been given the Geographical Indication mark. Thiruparankundram block was selected based on maximum area under jasmine crop, under thiruparankundram block, the six villages were purposively selected like Valayankulam, Vedarpuliyanakulam, O. Alangulam, Perungudi, Valayapatti, Kombadi based on the maximum area under jasmine cultivation. 120 Jasmine farmers will be purposively selected as respondents for the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Awareness being the first stage in the participation process is considered as a pre requisite to introduce any change in implementation of development schemes. The categorization of respondents according to their overall awareness level on geographical indication was analysed and it is presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to their overall awareness of Geographical Indication on Madurai Malli

S.No.	Category	Frequency	Percent
1.	Low	76	63.33
2.	Medium	32	26.67
3.	High	12	10.00
	Total	120	100.00

It was observed from Table 1 that majority (63.33%) of the respondents having low level of awareness on GI Madurai malli whereas, above one fourth (26.67) of the respondents having medium level of awareness and only 10.00 per cent of the respondents had high level of awareness on GI Madurai Malli.

The table revealed that majority of the farmers in the study area (63.33%) doesn't know the real benefits of GI and its importance in the socio-economic development of the community. In the domestic market the farmers really find any changes in the price hike due to GI tag. Hence, majority fall under low level of awareness on GI. The medium and high levels (36.67%) might be due to the efforts taken by DHAN foundation and Madurai Malli Farmers Association.

AWARENESS LEVEL ON GI MADURAI MALLI

Various attributes of GI and its benefits with regard to Madurai Malli and its unique characters were collected and tested to identify the awareness level and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to their Awareness level on GI

(n=120)

S.No	Questions	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Geographical indications associated with names and places or production areas with products	76	63.00
2.	An individual cannot a get a GI	71	59.00
3.	Registration of a GI is valid for 10 years	34	28.00
4.	Price variation for GI products	38	31.66
5.	GI is a location specific	80	67.00
6.	GI tag is an important tool that creates consumer awareness and loyalty	48	40.00
7.	Madurai Malli as a GI product	88	73.00
8.	Madurai malli has long keeping quality	102	85.00
9.	Madurai malli has thick petals, deep fragrance, lengthiest petiole and helps in postponing the anthesis (due to thick petals of madurai malli)	120	100
10.	Unique style of flower garlanding using maduari malli (uruttu kattu, pattai kattu, thirumbippaar)	96	80.00
11.	Mixing of other varieties in Madurai malli is illegal and may invite punishment	46	38.33
12.	If a registered geographical indication is not renewed it is liable to be removed from the register	31	26.00
13.	Credibility and benefits of GI	36	30.00
14.	GI on Madurai malli have influence on export	40	33.33

The unique features of Madurai Malli like thick petals, deep fragrance, lengthiest petiole and helps in postponing the anthesis, long keeping quality for which it attains GI status were unique style of flower gardening like uruttu kattu, pattai kattu, thirumbippaar

were very well known by 80.00 -100.00 per cent of the farmers. The long experience in jasmine cultivation, daily observation of flowers in the field and marketing places contributed for the awareness of the unique features of Madurai Malli.

The awareness on Madurai Malli as a GI product was known by 73.00 per cent of the respondents. Madurai Malli got GI during 2013 by the effort of Kurinji Vattara Kalanjiyam through DHAN foundation, AC &RI Madurai and Madurai Malli Farmers Association. Hence, majority aware on Madurai Malli as GI product but doesn't know the real benefits of GI. The attributes like location specific nature of GI and associated with names and production areas with products were aware by 60.00 – 70.00 per cent of the respondents. The farmers aware about the basic and important criteria of GI as location specific. The origin of the product or place of production which improves the livelihoods of producers and to get actual benefit in the supply chain. Hence majority aware on the above aspects. With regard to GI registration procedure, 59.00 per cent of the respondents very well known about the GI is not for individual person and it is a group activity. GI is a collective process and the whole community belonging to five districts namely Madurai, Theni, Dindigul, Sivagangai and Virudhunagar were benefitted out of this GI Madurai Malli. Basically it protects the interest of producers and helpful for improving the socio – economic status as a whole.

Further with regard to marketing of GI products, the awareness seems to be low to medium only. The awareness on price variation for GI products and its influence in export to other countries, GI tag in creation of consumer awareness and loyalty, punishment for mixing of other varieties with Madurai Malli were known to the farmers ranging from 30.00 to 40.00 per cent only. The farmers had low awareness on the above aspects because they don't know the purpose of GI tag in making the product differentiation of specific and remunerative demand based on the consumer's preference and it is an important marketing tool to create consumer awareness etc., Hence resulted in the same level of marketing price obtained by the producers in the domestic and abroad markets. The GI got during 2013. Hence is with the shortest period they could have only this much awareness. But in future, if they realize it more opportunities are possible in domestic and foreign markets.

The attributes like Registration of a GI is valid for 10 years and the credibility and the real benefits of GI were aware by 25.00 to 30.00 per cent of the respondents. Further, the farmer doesn't know the valid period of 10 years and its regular renewal. Only 30.00 per cent of the respondents aware of this issues. Overall credibility and real benefits known by 25.00

to 30.00 per cent of the respondents, due to the intermediaries and lack of consumer awareness.

CONCLUSION

The overall awareness level of Geographical indication on Madurai Malli was low. Further, it was observed from the awareness level of Geographical indication, that respondents had less awareness about Registration of a GI is valid for 10 years, Price variation for GI products, mixing of other varieties in Madurai malli is illegal and may invite punishment, Credibility and benefits of GI, and GI on Madurai malli have influence on export. Hence the government has not come with proper strategies for consumer protection and for the promotion of international market for the Indian products protected under GI. Most producer groups cannot effectively defend or promote their GI brands as they do not possess the necessary resources. The Indian government has been active in getting GIs registered but it has not made any headway in adoption of strategies for branding and promotion of GI products as well as their marketing and distribution in both domestic and export markets. The agriculture department officials may take steps to increase awareness on Geographical indication through distribution of printed literature like leaflets on GI, Export oriented avenues and trainings.

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