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Problems and Constraints in Marketing -A Case Study on Underutilized Horticultural Crops of Manipur

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ABSTRACT
This study is based on underutilized crops which have perspective supply chain horticultural commodities which have been produced, marketed and having its economic importance in the state of Manipur. These underutilized and unexploited species fall within the broad basket of "minor crops". These crops are also often called as neglected; orphan; minor; promising; niche and traditional one or underutilized. Underutilized crops are often used to describe the sorts of plant species that are grown, eaten or used very little, or very locally, but have great promise. Increasing urbanization and emphasis on health care have an effect on the production and supply chain of these commodities as vegetables, fruits and processed foods. This offers new opportunities for underutilized plant species to enter the markets, creating income and job opportunities in the rural areas of the Manipur. Also ,the growing awareness regarding the impact of green revolution on the environmental aspects calls for immediate attention of various stakeholders on these underutilized horticultural crops which have been growing/ cultivating since our forefathers. However, the production and marketing aspects is not well organized.
The lists of underutilized/ unexploited crops found in the state of Manipur have been collected from various sources namely the ICAR-RC Manipur Centre, KVKs of Manipur, National Horticulture Board, Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture, Small Farmer Agri-business Consortium, Agricultural Technology Management Agency and other Non Governmental Organizations as the secondary information sources and Village traders, wholesalers, retailers and growers are the primary sources of respondents. A total of 100 retailers, 30 wholesalers and 30 traders/middlemen were purposively selected as a representative sample.
The major problems and constraints facing the various stakeholders includes the transportation, lack of market infrastructures, unorganized market and informations, frequent social problems like bandhs, curfew and strikes, illegal taxations, lack of institutional credits, perishability nature of commodities, exploitations by the middlemen and Processing units etc.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The north-eastern region of India comprises of eight states namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. The total geographical area of the region is 2.55 lakh km^2, which is about 8 % of the country's total geographical area. The physiography of the region is divided into three divisions namely Meghalaya plateau, the north-eastern hills and the Brahmaputra valley. The NE hills accounts for 65% of the total land area while the Brahmaputra valley and the Meghalaya plateau covers 22% and 13% of the area respectively.

The region offers scope for cultivation of a wide variety of horticultural crops such as fruits, vegetables, flowers, tuber and rhizomatous crops and species because of its diversities in topography, altitude and climatic conditions. A range of fruit crops varying from highly temperate types like walnut, apple, etc., to subtropical as well as tropical fruits are coming up well in the region. Thus, a variety of fruits and vegetable crops can be raised throughout the year in some or other parts of the region.

Agriculture is the mainstay of most of the people of Manipur and North-Eastern hill region of India. Agriculture and allied activities accounts for about 23.33% and 16.44 percent of the Net Domestic Product of the states respectively (Basic Statistics of NEH Region 2015). The existence of subtropical to temperate climatic conditions and also the fertile soils in the region offer good scope for the cultivation of various types of vegetables, fruits and flowers throughout the year. Over the past of one decade, the production and marketing of these crops have improved continuously.

The recent development of horticultural sector in Manipur after the introduction of Technology Mission and efficient efforts of KVKs and NGOs under the umbrella of ICAR has increased the area and production of horticultural crops in this state. In addition, the consumers began to demand high value

horticulture crops in response to demand generated out of income increase, food habit change and health concern too.

II. IMPORTANCE

Underutilized or unexploited and neglected species fall within the broad basket of "minor crops". In fact, these crops are those grown primarily in their centre of origin/diversity by traditional farmers and are still important for the subsistence of the local communities. Underutilized crops are often used to describe the sorts of plant species that are grown, eaten or used very little, or very locally, but have great promise. These crops are also often called as neglected; orphan; minor; promising; niche and traditional one or underutilized. A widely accepted definition of these crops is "species with underexploited potential for contributing to food security, nutrition, health, income generation, and environmental services".

The north Eastern Hill Region, Manipur, in particular, is naturally well endowed with a large biodiversity. Most of the underutilized horticultural fruit crops are grown in the backyard and are providing subsidiary income to the rural mass and tribal community of the region and are also good sources of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients such as carbohydrates, proteins and fats. The underutilized crops of this state have been managed by local farmers and offer many benefits to farmers. They provide food for consumption, make productive use of marginal lands and thus provide income to the farmers. There are many medicinal, aromatic and even energy plants available which, if properly utilized, can generate employment and income to people in the rural areas and thus contribute to poverty alleviation. Survival, environmental adaptation and to provide increased income for the poor and strengthening of stakeholders capacity for conservation and enhancing biological assets are the essence of the underutilized crops. These underutilized horticultural crops have been supplying the essential nutrients on seasonal basis since our forefather time and thus provide nutritional security of all ages of the state of Manipur.

III. JUSTIFICATIONS

As compared to many developed countries and even some developing countries, India;s per capita per day consumption of fruits is one of the lowest (46g) being much below the minimum dietary requirements of 85g. To meet the demand of the growing population, increase in production and expansion of area under cultivation needs top priority.

Apart from the major fruits, underutilized and minor fruits grown mostly in the backyard play a vital role in providing the nutritional security and generating subsidiary income to the rural mass and tribal community of the region. Underutilized crops and commodities play a vital role in the lives of the rural and urban poor, because they contribute to livelihoods, poverty alleviation and sustaining the environment. Many of these species are included in the traditional subsistence farming systems particularly in marginal areas and in many cases, these crops and commodities are life-savers for lakhs of resource poor people in the region where food and nutritional security are significant problems. Increasing urbanization and health care have an effect on the production and supply chain of these commodities as vegetables, fruits and processed foods. This offers new opportunities for underutilized plant species to enter the markets, creating income and job opportunities in the rural areas of the Manipur. A coordinated framework is required to strengthen the efforts of all stakeholders working on documentation and marketing aspects of such underutilized commodities so that the farmers' livelihood in the state can be enhanced on sustainable basis.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Underutilized horticultural crops have been growing and cultivating in both the valley and hill regions of Manipur since long back. However, their productions and marketing aspects have not been technically well supported by the related stakeholders too. Giving a first- hand alarm to the policy makers is the essence of this study.

OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the problems and constraints perceived by the various stakeholders in marketing of underutilized- unexploited horticultural commodities and
2. To draw the suitable measures to enhance the marketing mechanism of underutilized -unexploited horticultural commodities in the state of Manipur.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURES

Placing too much reliance on just a handful of crops is risky, crops fail, wars and sterile and strife wreak havoc on harvests and commodity prices oscillate. Climate change threatens to destabilize production and, as the global population shoots up, the Green Revolution is reaching its limits in generating the ever-increasing amounts of food needed to feed it. Bringing underutilized or unexploited crops out of shadows into

the mainstream reduces the risks. These crops are often the main inhabitants of such areas and underutilized crops give them alternative sources of income-path out of poverty.

Underutilized or unexploited and neglected species fall within the broad basket of "minor crops". In fact, these crops are those grown primarily in their centre of origin/diversity by traditional farmers and are still important for the subsistence of the local communities. Underutilized crops are often used to describe the sorts of plant species that are grown, eaten or used very little, or very locally, but have great promise. These crops are also often called as neglected; orphan; minor; promising; niche and traditional one or underutilized. A widely accepted definition of these crops is "species with underexploited potential for contributing to food security, nutrition, health, income generation, and environmental services".

The NER is one of the 14 biodiversity hotspots in the world and is considered as the centre of origin of certain crop species. Many wild species and primitive land forms of tropical vegetables like cucumber, brinjal, gourds, beans and okra are available in the region. Rich genetic diversity has also been reported for crops like citrus, yams, ginger, medicinal aromatic plants like Aconitum, Panax, Termialis, Cymbopogan, Cinnamomum, etc. a large number of ornamentals and flowers are found to grow wild and semiwild conditions. About 600 species of orchids are also available in this region.

Most of the underutilized species of different horticultural crops have not been exploited fully. Certain poly-embryonic and early flowering mango types have been reported from Manipur and Tripura but no serious effort has been made for their use. Seeded banana has been domesticated and consume locally. Some of them have high baby food values.

"Kachai Lemon", a landrace of rough lemon grown by tribal farmers in kachai Village under Ukhrul district of Manipur is very high yielding (70-80 tonnes/ha fruit yield) and is used mainly as lemon for its flavor and high juice content. Processing option is yet to be explored. High curcumin containing turmeric Lakadong of Meghalaya; hottest chilli "Naga Chilli" and some others have been exploited partially and their documentation is needed.

North Eastern Hill (NEH) region of India enjoys a prominent position on the pomological map of the world. The varying weather conditions of this region provide a suitable environment for growing a variety of fruits. These fruits are available in abundance and also in different seasons. This has resulted in limited scope for expansion of other minor fruits, though they are nutritious, and are the main source of livelihood of the poor. Most of the underutilized fruits of the region are often available in the local markets and are practically unknown in other parts of the world. Today the consumers are becoming increasingly conscious of the health and nutritional aspects of their food basket. The tendency is to avoid chemicals and synthetic foods and preference for nutritional aspects through natural resources. A large number of these fruits can grow under adverse conditions and are also known for their therapeutic and nutritive value and can satisfy the demands of the health-conscious consumers. However, some of these fruits are not acceptable in the market in fresh form due to their acidic nature and astringent taste. Hence, there is a need to concentrate on research efforts in diversification and popularization of such underutilized fruits crops.

Most of the underutilized horticultural fruit crops are grown in the backyard and are providing subsidiary income to the rural mass and tribal community of the region and are also good sources of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients such as carbohydrates, proteins and fats. These fruit crops needs value addition technique to popularize in the market. However, at present least value added products from these crops are commercially available in the market. The reason being lack of awareness among the farming community about the nutritional and medicinal value of these crops, low production, lack of desirable seeds and planting materials, limited and inadequate marketing support and infrastructure facilities for transportation, storage and processing units etc.

Post harvest losses of almost all the farm produce in the region is very high due to near zero facility for their handling, processing, value addition, packaging and even organized marketing. It is an irony though the region produces best quality of turmeric, ginger, king chilli, pineapple, orange, and passion fruit; there are no organized processing units for any of these crops. inaccessibility and transportation bottleneck restricts timely linkage between production site and market, lack of quality testing and certifying laboratories, working capital, taxation and overshadowing of consumption patterns by cultural practices; post harvest losses particularly for fruit and vegetables crops become very high ranging between 30-60%.

Table 1. Genetic resources of Orchids in NEH Region

State	Genera	Species
Arunachal Pradhesh	133	614
Sikkim	122	520
Mizoram	104	374
Meghalaya	73	230
Nagaland	74	249

Manipur	66	207
Assam	75	195
Tripura	34	52

Source: NRC on Orchids, ICAR, Sikkim, 2010.

Table 2. Lists of Underutilized Horticultural Crops with reference to Manipur.

Fruits	**Vegetables & Spices**	**Flowers**
Citrus macroptera(Haribob)	Fryngium foetidum (Awa phadigom)	Vanda coerulea (Blue vanda)
Calamus tenius(Heiri)	Phaseolus calcaratus (Chak hawai)	Dendrobium moschatum (Ingellei)
Ficus auriculata(Heirit)	Amaranthus spinosus (Chingkrook tingkhang panbi)	Lillium spp.(Lilly)
Flacourtia jangomas(Heitroi)	Sechium edule (Duskush)	
Elaegnus umbellata thumb (Heiyai)	Sesbania cannabina (Chuchurangmei)	
Amoora rohikuta (Heirangkhoi)	Neptunia oleacea (eshing ekaithabi)	
Rhus sunialata (Heimang)	Zizania latifolia (Eshing kambong)	
Spondias pinnata (L.F) kurz (syn.S.. Mangifera) (Heining)	Eleocharis dulcis (eshing kaothum)	
Luglans regia (Heijunga)	Autocarpus lakoocha (Harikokthong)	
Citrus medica Linn (Heijang)	(Hawai mubi) vicea fava Linn.	
Heijampet (Rubus ellipticus)	Ipomea aquatic (Kolamni)	
Dillenia indica Linn (Heigri)	Sagattaria sagittifolia (Koukha)plumbago lanica Linn. (Kengoi)	
Garcinia xanthocymus (Heiboong)	Meriandra bengalensis (Lomba)	
Ficus glomerata (Heibong)	Hedycheum coronarium Roxb. (Loklei)	
Meyna laxiflora (Heibi)	Allium spp. (Maroi nakupi)	
Elacocarpus floribundus (chorphon)	Psophocarpus tetragonolobus (Tengnoumanbi)	
	Euryale ferox (Thangjing)	
	Bambusa schrub (ushoi)	
	Cyphomandra betacea (U-khamen)	
	Capsicum chinense jacq (U-morok)	
	Perkia roxburghii (Yongchak)	
	Zingiber zerumbet (Yaimu)	
	Lentinus edodes (Shitake)	

Source: ICAR-RC, Manipur Centre, 2010
Names inside the brackets represent the local names of the crops

Table 3. ***Land-use pattern of Manipur*** *('000ha)*

Geographical area	2233
Reporting area	1951
Forest area	1693
Misc. tree, crops & groves	6
Not available for cultivation	27
Permanent pasture	1
Culturable waste land	1
Fallow land	-
Current fallow	-
Net sown area	224

Source: Statistical Abstract of Manipur, 2015

Table 4. Area, production and productivity of Horticultural crops of Manipur

particulars	Fruits	vegetables	Spices
Area	42.4	16.6	8.89
Production	341.9	174.3	7.84
productivity	8.1	10.5	0.95

Area = 000ha; production = 000MT; productivity = MT/ha; Source: NHB Database, 2010

V. METHODOLOGY

This study is based on underutilized crops which have perspective supply chain horticultural commodities which have been produced, marketed and having its economic importance in the state of Manipur. Various statistical data in relation to the underutilized horticultural commodities have been collected from the various publications of the Department of Horticulture, Government of Manipur. Also, information's available in the ICAR-RC Manipur Centre, KVKs of Manipur, National Horticulture Board, Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture, Small Farmer Agri-business Consortium, Agricultural Technology Management Agency and other Non Governmental Organizations working in the field of Agriculture and other Livelihood support systems are also collected as a secondary source of data. Information's regarding the primary sources are also collected through direct interview mechanisms. Village traders, wholesalers and retailers and growers are the primary sources of respondents. A total of 100 retailers, 30 wholesalers and 30 traders/middlemen were selected as a representative sample using the proportionate random sampling technique.

The lists of underutilized/ unexploited crops found in the state of Manipur have been collected from various sources namely. Information pertaining to the marketing aspects has been collected using well structured pre-tested schedule. Also, secondary data are also collected from different organizations mentioned above through questionnaire method. Information on marketing aspects is also collected from village traders, middlemen, wholesaler, retailers and farmers too.

The collected information's are subjected for open discussion and thorough analysis in the presence of experts from central Agricultural University (CAU), ICAR-Manipur Centre and renowned economists. Views, suggestions relating to the marketing aspects are also taken from NGOs and well organized Farmers development organizations. The study is pertaining to the agricultural year 2016-17.

The problems and constraints perceived by the various stakeholders in the marketing of the underutilized horticultural commodities have been ranked and prioritized by using the conventional 5 point scale technique. In order to protect the interest of the various stakeholders in the marketing of the underutilized, some efficient measures or suggestions have also been attempted from the study. Suggestions of the farmers, wholesalers, retailers, and farmer's organizations/NGOs are also shown and listed below.

VI. OBSERVATIONS

Various problem and constraint perceived by the farmers in marketing of these underutilized crops have been listed, analyzed, prioritized and ultimately their ranks were given based on the respondent's total scores. The following tables show the results of various problems and constraints encountered by the different stakeholders in the marketing of their produces.

VII. PROBLEMS AND CONSTRAINTS

A. Problems and constraints perceived by the farmers in marketing of underutilized horticultural commodities

Sl. No.	Problems and Constraints	Rank
1	Transportation	**I**
2	Perishability	**II**
3	Bandh, blockade, strikes, curfew	**III**
4	Lack of market informations	**IV**
5	Presence of exploitive middlemen	**V**
6	Lack of storage facilities	**VI**
7	Inadequate market infrastructure(Market-shed,Lodging&Boarding)	**VII**
8	Lack of knowledge of proper grading & packaging	**VIII**
9	Low price	**IX**
10	Non-availability of market credit	**X**

B. Problems and constraints perceived by the retailers in marketing of underutilized horticultural commodities

Sl. No.	Problems and Constraints	Rank
1	Lack of demand	**I**
2	Inadequate facilities in the market	**II**
3	Bandh, blockade, strikes and curfew	**III**
4	Payment of unauthorized fees (bribing)	**IV**
5	Lack of storage facilities	**V**
6	Perishability	**VI**
7	Non-availability of market credit	**VII**
8	Transportation	**VIII**
9	Lack of market information	**IX**
10	High market fee	**X**

C. Problems and constraints perceived by the wholesaler in marketing of underutilized horticultural commodities

Sl. No.	Problems and Constraints	Rank
1	Bandh, blockade, strikes and curfew	**I**
2	Inadequate facilities in the market	**II**
3	Perishability	**III**
4	Payment of unauthorized fee (bribing)	**IV**
5	Competitions from other crops	**V**
6	Lack of storage facilities	**VI**
7	Non-availability of market credit	**VII**
8	High market fee	**VIII**
9	Lack of market informations	**IX**

D. Problems and constraints perceived by the Non-Governmental Organizations in marketing of underutilized horticultural commodities

Sl. No.	Problems and Constraints	Rank
1	High transportation charge	I
2	Exploitation by the factory	II
3	Illegal taxes and fees	III
4	Adulteration with low quality fruits by farmers	IV
5	Lack of storage facilities	V
6	Perishability	VI
7	Bandh, blockade, strikes and curfew	VII
8	Non-availability of market credit	VIII
9	Competitions from others crops	IX

VIII. SUGGESTIONS

Some suggestions which can enhance or improve the marketing of such underutilized horticultural crops are being attempted so that future researchers; ultimate users and policy makers and ultimate users may opt for the development of horticulture in the state of Manipur.

I. Suggestions of farmers for enhancing marketing of underutilized horticultural commodities

Sl. No.	Suggestions
1	Quick and efficient means of transport with good packaging
2	Introduction of an efficient market regulation
3	Intervention by the state govt. agencies by fixing reasonable price
4	Organization of intensive training related to post harvest handling of the produce at Govt. Level-grading packaging and transit mechanism.
5	Establishment of adequate cold storage facilities
6	Provision of adequate facilities in market
7	Improvement of market information delivery mechanism
8	Provision of institutional credit

9	Numbers of bandhs, blockade, strikes and curfew, etc. should be reduced

II. Suggestions of retailers for enhancing marketing of underutilized horticultural commodities

Sl. No.	**Suggestions**
1	Creating awareness regarding the importance of the underutilized horticultural commodities
2	Provision of adequate facilities in market
3	Numbers of bandhs, blockade, strikes and curfew, etc. should be reduced
4	Establishment of adequate cold storage facilities
5	Punishment of those taking and demanding unauthorized fees
6	Market credit should be made easily available
7	Regularization of high market fees

III. Suggestions of wholesalers for enhancing marketing of underutilized horticultural commodities

Sl. No.	Provision of adequate facilities in market
1	Numbers of bandhs, blockade, strikes and curfew, etc. should be reduced
2	Establishment of adequate cold storage facilities
3	Punishment of those taking and demanding unauthorized fees
4	Market credit should be made easily available
5	Provision of adequate facilities in market
6	Production of commodities should be made increased

IV. Suggestions of Non-Governmental Organizations for enhancing marketing of underutilized horticultural commodities

Sl. No.	Establishment of proper road connectivity
1	Setting up and strengthening of existing processing and semi-processing units
2	Punishment of those taking and demanding unauthorized fees
3	Numbers of bandhs, blockade, strikes and curfew, etc. should be reduced
4	Production of crops should be increased
5	Proper grading and packaging should be done
6	Provision of adequate facilities in market
7	Market credit should be made easily available
8	Introduction of an efficient market regulation
9	Formation of farmer Producer Organizations

IX. FUTURE COURSE OF ACTION/WAY FORWARD

1. Entrepreneurship's on both production and marketing of underutilized horticultural commodities for the rural and urban unemployment youths is highly recommended**.**

2. Collective effort on how to grow, produce and create awareness regarding these underutilized crops on socio-economic, environmental and health aspects must be taken up on priority basis.

3. Intensive training cum demonstration on cultivation of these crops along with the post harvest management techniques must be done by the concerned organizations.

4. Provisions for incentives and credit facilities for farmers should be made to encourage them to undertake cultivation of horticultural crops in the state.

5. Subsidies on poly/green house, planting materials and specialized equipments should be provided.

6. Formation of new cooperatives societies and strengthening of existing ones in the state that will take care of both production and marketing through institutional approach to backward and forward linkages is needed and recommended. Formation of more Growers' Association/Societies or organization for specific crops in the area to facilitate market channel as well as proper technology transfer and effective capacity building is also recommended.

7. Establishment of processing units near the production site to ensure higher returns to the producers will be of immense help to the growers.

8. The storage facilities need to be created near the production area for storage of the produce during the glut season which will help to decrease intra-seasonal price variation and to assure regular supply of the produce and reduction of wastage.

9. The govt. can give subsidy for building simple storage facilities so that they can keep their vegetables for some time when price are still low in the market.

10. Cheap and adequate supply of packaging material should be ensured.

11. The transportation facilities need to be strengthened for transporting the produce to the consuming market so as to take benefit of higher prices in these markets.
12. The strengthening of market infrastructure, strict implementation of regulatory measures and immediate pro-active measures of govt. during adverse conditions are very much essential in the present scenario to avoid distress sales by the actual growers during good harvesting years and sustain the production levels of the horticultural commodities.
13. Improvement in the dissemination of market information through all possible mass media communication aids for the benefit of the farming community.
14. Provision of needed training to the farmers as well as to the traders or product dealers on grading and standardization of produce to fetch higher price to the rural market is also suggested.
15. The encouragement of rural agri-business by establishment of commodity specific markets in rural areas with proper grading, storage and finance facilities can be a sustainable approach.
16. Regulation of commission agents or traders who are actually grabbing the market in times of large arrival can minimized the marketing costs of the commodities.
17. Rapid dissemination of market prices prevailing in different markets and bringing awareness on quality standards of the products to be maintained among the farming community.
18. The model of Farmers-Retailer- Consumers channel in vegetables marketing with basic infrastructure such as store house, weighing, drinking water, electricity and night halt facilities can be implemented. This system successfully integrates many producers with consumers/retailers, eliminates middlemen, cuts maximum marketing cost and provides good market infrastructure and environment. One such leading example is Uzahavar Sandai in Tamil Nadu, Apni mandi in Punjab and Rajasthan, Rhythu Bazar in Bihar and Raithara Santhegalu in Karnataka.In case of fruits and flowers, public-private partnership resulted into higher marketing efficiency can be adopted in Manipur. Development of such marketing system may strengthen the supply chain management.
19. Manipur not only geographically isolated from the other states of India, the inter-village and inter-district connectivity of the state is also in very pathetic shape. The Govt. needs immediate attention to improve the road connectivity by way of repairing the motor able roads and creation of new roads so that the transportation of the various underutilized crops will reach the market at affordable cost. Certain innovative ideas like use of the local resources such as the "Manipuri Pony" (a horse use in playing of Polo game) in transportation of the underutilized crops from the interior and difficult village and border areas can be a huge benefits both for the farmers and community as a whole in terms of transportation of the produced and the conservation of this rare species of horse on the other side.

X. CONCLUSION

North Eastern Hill Region is a home to the most of horticultural crops and Manipur is also one of them having found numerous underutilized horticultural commodities. The growing awareness regarding the impact of green revolution on the environmental aspects calls for immediate attention of various stakeholders on the underutilized horticultural crops which have been growing/ cultivating since our forefathers. However, the production and marketing aspects is not well organized. The major problems and constraints facing the various stakeholders includes the transportation, lack of market infrastructures, unorganized market and informations, frequent social problems like bandhs, curfew and strikes, illegal taxations, lack of institutional credits, perishability nature of these crops, exploitations by the middlemen and Processing units etc.

Measures like immediate improvements on transport mechanism, creations of market infrastructures, rural storage structures/godowns, minimizing social problems, legal actions on illegal taxations, improving the productions technologies, provision of institutional credits, increasing awareness on underutilized crops and immediate Govt. attentions on both production and marketing aspects will ease both the backward and foreward linkage mechanism of the various stakeholders not only in the state of Manipur but also in the entire north eastern region of India.

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