

Rythu Bazars Alternative to Agriculture Marketing System Poonam Kamar

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In Indian Agriculture Economy the small and marginal farmers account for about 70% of the population in order that small and marginal farmers have also their share of benefit it should be provided to resist courtesy by way of market, inputs, technical know-how etc. it is known to all that there is a large gap between the price a producer gets and the price a consumer pays.

In order to help both farmers and consumers and to ensure the producers get a good remunerative price for their produce and the end-users get quality products at reasonable prices the Government of Andhra Pradesh had evolved a direct marketing initiative called Rythu Bazars, Rythu Bazar means farmers market. This is an institutional arrangement created in urban and semi-urban areas here the farmer can sell his products directly to the consumers in the market without having any mediation between the seller and the farmer. It is a progressive and novel concept which assists the farmer or vegetable producers to get remunerative prices and enabling regular supply to consumers. The concept is conceived in the sense it avoids middlemen, thereby both the consumers and farmers are benefited in their own way.

Farmers enjoy better marketing infrastructure free of cost and they receive considerably higher price than what they receive from middlemen at village or private markets in towns. At the same time consumers benefit in the form of purchasing fresh vegetables, green leaves, fruits and good marketing environment at lower price than the private market price. Thus, the government's attempt to bridge the gap between farmers and consumers by setting up Rythu Bazars in Andhra Pradesh in 1999 to help both sections bargain for a fair price. This has caught the attention of people at both ends and it became popular at once.

The main aim of Rythu Bazar is to help producers to get a fair price and also to help consumers. It provides a direct interface between farmers and consumers, eliminating intermediaries from the system. Infrastructure facilities are provided for all Rythu Bazars through funds from the

agricultural marketing committees. In Rythu Bazars the farmers are issued photo identity cards to eliminate the entry of non-farmers or middlemen and they alone will allot the shops or stalls in such. Rythu Bazars are well organized as the Directorate of marketing is responsible for facilitating and marketing agricultural products in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Each Rythu Bazar has an Estate officer and who is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of such Bazars, daily allotment of space to farmers, provision of weighing scales, formation of price committees and actual fixation of prices and so on.

Andhra Pradesh is the second largest producer of fruits next only to UP. With an area coverage of 5 lakh hectares with an output of around 50 million tonnes. It stands 8th in respect of vegetables covering 2 lakh hectares in area and production around 20 lakh million tonnes. The marketing of fruits and vegetables falls under the purview of AP (Agriculture Produce and Livestock) Act of 1966. At present there are 107 Rythu Bazars in the state which enable direct interaction between producers and the consumers. Rythu Bazars have great success in Andhra Pradesh and have brought immense benefits to the farmers. However, modifications in the present market framework are necessary to strengthen the existing Rythu Bazars.

Rythu Bazars have an outstanding success in Andhra Pradesh and have brought immense benefits to the farmers participating in them. However, modifications in the present market framework are necessary to strengthen the existing Rythu Bazars and to the following aspects.

It is recognized that location is very important for the successful functioning of Rythu Bazars. Experience suggests that the location of the Bazars should be away from the existing wholesale markets and in the neighborhood of consumers. They should also be accessible by direct transport, for the benefit of farmers. Therefore, it is necessary to shift or close those Rythu Bazars that are located near wholesale markets.

Consumers prefer markets where all varieties of vegetables and fruits are available. Self-help groups (SHGS) are being encouraged to play a useful role in promoting the sale of vegetables not cultivated in the district. Rice and other essential commodities are also being made available through government agencies, rice millers' association or through the wholesalers. Thus, efforts are being made to provide a holistic marketing environment of consumers.

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