

## **Interview with a Sugar Cane farmer in Trichy District, Tamil Nadu.**

### **Introduction**

I am a farmer. I have been cultivating Sugarcane for the past 30 years in Manachanallur village near Tiruchirappalli. We encounter a lot of crop damage due to animals like deer, pigs. There are also other problems like high cost of labour, fertiliser, pesticides, etc. We usually erect Barbed wire Fence to protect the crop from these wild animals. In these 30 years of my experience as a sugarcane farmer, I have seen that usually expenses are more than the returns.

The returns per acre last year was Rs.1,17,500 /- whereas expenses were Rs.1,27,500/- The rate of sugarcane fixed by the Government was Rs.2,500/ton and that's very low. (In my opinion) We can get reasonable returns only if the government fixes the rate around Rs.4000/ton. We have been driven to the point of giving up sugarcane cultivation.

### **What was the effect of Coronavirus and the Lockdown?**

Since I had harvested (my crops) just before lockdown, there was not much of a problem. Furthermore I supply to the nearby Kothari Sugar Mills. They arrange for harvesting and shifting to their factory within reasonable time.

### **How would you compare between manual harvesting and use of machinery for harvesting?**

It is seen that using machines for harvesting leaves a longer stub, and it must be shifted to the mill within four hours. Otherwise there will be losses due to evaporation, resulting in reduction in weight and (the cane) can turn sour also. Whereas manual labour will cut the full crop and we haven't seen much damage (losses), even after 24 hours.

For machine cutting, it takes 4 hours per acre at a cost of Rs.500-550 per acre, plus extra (manual) labour for picking (the cane). For manual work we only have to pay 800-850/acre.

### **Will the farmers buy the chemicals, if research is made and a suitable one is found to reduce evaporation loss?**

Since our field is in the proximity of the Sugar Mill, and harvesting and shifting is scheduled by the factory; there is no significant loss. Just the rate per ton (for sugarcane) is relevant to me.