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ENDURANCE OF AGRO-BASED INDUSTRY DURING COVID-19

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ABSTRACT:

The pandemic's outbreak has had a long-term impact on India's small and cottage industries, particularly agriculture. The purpose of this research was to see how COVID-19 affected the agro-based industry in Panchgani, Maharashtra, during the lockdown. It investigates how the lockdown has affected agriculture and agro-based sector production. It also aims to figure out how the research area's impact on dairy farming and cheese production. Agro-based industries are those that rely on agro-products as a source of raw materials. In Panchgani, the agro-based industries "Pure Gold" and "Pure Berry's" are the most prominent. I believe that the producers have suffered losses as a result of transportation and selling of their goods. Farmers had to raise losses in the case of milk and agricultural goods due to price drops during the lockdown. Industry had to deal with a debt issue and postpone short-term investment decisions. As a result, experts estimate the cost of the COVID-19 lockdown at 4% of GDP. The industry's long-term viability has been assessed using both primary and secondary data. During this pandemic, net profit drops by 15% to 20%.

Key Word – Agro-based industry, COVID-19 effect, losses, debt issue, raise losses.

INTRODUCTION:

The Indian economy had to dread more than 32,000 corers per day during the first 21-day nationwide lockdown. The indigenous and informal sectors suffered significant losses. Daily earnings have been badly impacted as a result of the economy's unorganized sector. During the lockdown, about 53% of small, medium, and cottage businesses were impacted by a scarcity of raw material, a halt in payment recovery, a decrease in product sales, and other factors (The Indian Express 2020). The agro-based community, which is primarily made up of small to marginal farmers that cultivate food crops, was confronted with uncertainty.

The pandemic's outbreak impacted every segment of society, but the unorganized sector of workers and labourers in agriculture and small industry were the hardest hit.

According to prominent studies and surveys, 95% of firms had a negative impact in the April 2020 national lockdown, which was imposed nation-wide. Business and other business-related activities, which contributed roughly 70% of the total, remained hampered and disrupted until August 2020, despite phase-wise unlocking. According to additional research and assessments, over 40% of business and related activities did not resume normal operations until the end of February 2021.

India has had severe and far-reaching economic, social, and financial consequences. It has also harmed the long-term viability of multinational company. To get control of all concerns, IOT methods have been employed to track down the affected individuals, which may aid in the spread of the terrible virus, and so they are the best way to return the economy to normal. (Sandeep Kumar M. 2020).

This novel pandemic of covid-19 has placed two challenges on countries around the world: one, the need to rebuild or reorganize their health systems, and the other, the depleting economy, which has become extremely vulnerable as a result of the pandemic. During this trying period, the Indian economy had to hold together despite suffering massive losses. The economy needed financial backing while also gradually unlocking and attempting to contain the spread of the infection. The government had to unlock the system in stages while adhering to a set of laws and regulations. It did everything it could to avert long-term economic damage. (Rajeshwari Sengupta and S. Mahendra Dev)

The pandemic had a significant influence on India's agriculture industry. The lockdown was established during harvest season. Non-availability of labour in the fruit crop harvesting, transportation, and export of the produce was also a major issue, as export had established new standards. Weddings and religious gatherings are prohibited in the horticulture industry, which produces perishable items. For the next four months, the livestock industry will be closed. The canning and food processing sectors were in a similar situation. (A. K. Singh, 2020).

A sudden lockdown had long-term consequences for people's lives and the economy. Millions of people have lost their jobs and livelihoods, primarily in the unorganized sector, which includes daily wage earners and small business owners, accounting for almost 50 million migrants who have returned to their hometowns and villages on foot (as mode of transport like trains were not functioning). Many people lost their lives. As the state's boundaries were locked, a large number of individuals moved to government and NGO-run campuses. There have been tales of some of them returning to cities in quest of work. It was not easy to get rid of the stuff. Consumer consumption patterns were also affected, as millions of individuals lost their jobs and their disposable income drastically decreased, forcing them to postpone purchases of non-essential goods, as well as FMCG and fast moving consumer durable goods.

This crisis struck our economy at a time when our economy's GDP growth had slowed and unemployment had risen due to poor economic performance. Previous years have not been optimistic, and the economy's top is also significant. Despite the fact that India's economy has shifted from primary to secondary and tertiary sectors in recent decades, the agriculture sector remains the principal source of income for the vast majority of the population. The epidemic has had a greater impact on this industry than on other sectors such as manufacturing and service. During this time, the logistical chains broke down. Harvesting, picking, grading, and packing are all agricultural tasks that suffer labor shortages and transportation constraints. The closure of restaurants, malls, mandies, and supermarkets, as well as the prohibition of gathering, resulted in a bottleneck in this sector, as demand for fresh vegetables, fisheries, and chicken supplies came to a standstill.

Agro-based businesses account for a significant portion of the Indian economy's manufacturing activities. It is also a significant industry that employs people in both rural and urban sections of the country. This sector, which is made up of unskilled and un-organized labor, is working hard to survive and thrive in these trying times.

OBJECTIVES:

- To determine the pace of growth of the food processing industries during COVID-19.
- To assess the impact of COVID-19 on Pure Berry's food processing sector.

METHODOLOGY OF STUDY:

The current study is descriptive in nature, with survey, interview, and observation methods are used to explain it. The study's focus is on the "Pure Berry" factory in Panchgani, Satara District.

This study used a descriptive and empirical research design.

SOURCES OF DATA:

Primary and secondary data sources were used to compile the information. Questionnaires and interviews are used to acquire data from primary sources. Secondary data comes from books, journals, and a variety of websites.

INFORMATION ON "PURE GOLD" AND "PURE BERRY'S"

Mr. Hussain Mala, the owner of "Pure Gold" and "Pure Berry's" health food items, discusses his company's products and provides a rare look into the honey cultivation, cheese manufacturing, and pure berry's product manufacturing processes. In India, the brand "Pure Berry's" has become synonymous with health food products. In 1984, he founded the company and began selling a variety of items under the brand names "Pure Gold" and "Pure Berry's." "Quality and only quality" is the company's key credo.

Tourists from all over the world flock to Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani, which are known for their hill stations. There are tourists here in all three seasons. Of fact, businesses thrive here due to the healthy atmosphere that they require.

He was well aware that honey and strawberries were in high demand. As a result, they began gathering honey from locals. He thoroughly investigated the business's loss and profit, and ushered in a new era in honey gathering. They are attempting to supply consumers with pure honey using innovative technologies in their company. They believe that honesty is a prerequisite for a successful career in this industry. According to them, to do this, numerous trials must be carried out while raising knowledge of the business among farmers and tribal people. Mala now employs people by collecting honey. He formed the band 'Pure Berry Jam' in addition to his hotel and honey collection business. This jam was superior to others in terms of quality. The cost being too expensive predicted that the product would fail to sell. Mala, on the other hand, was a firm believer in his product and was able to grab the cutting-edge jam market. This product of theirs is in high demand all around the world nowadays. They are attempting to obtain farmer consumer goods through their business, in addition to supporting organic farming. Both in business and in humanitarian service, Mustafa enjoys his father's full backing. The 'Pure Gold' brand has made short-term progress thanks to Mustafa's creative concept and his father's support in putting it into action. Many young people are entering the corporate field nowadays; nevertheless, they become frustrated with failure and leave. Mustafa advises such inexperienced workers that hard work is essential in all fields. It isn't simple to succeed.

Hussain Mala's son, Mustafa Mala, began his professional career as well. By assisting his father in starting a firm, he learned the ins and outs of the industry. Because business is in his blood, he has a reputation for being a successful entrepreneur in a short amount of time. Not only that, but they've also invented a new dairy product with the help of Pure Gold Hasta Band, which is currently at its peak of popularity.

Mustafa Mala began his business venture, 'Boutique Cheese Factory,' in August 2016. This location has excellent cheese-making milk. The idea for a boutique cheese factory arose from their brains, and the boutique cheese factory was born. He began gathering milk from local farmers and processing it into dairy products. What goes into making a product? It is visible to all; it is unique! The products' quality is not compromised in any way.



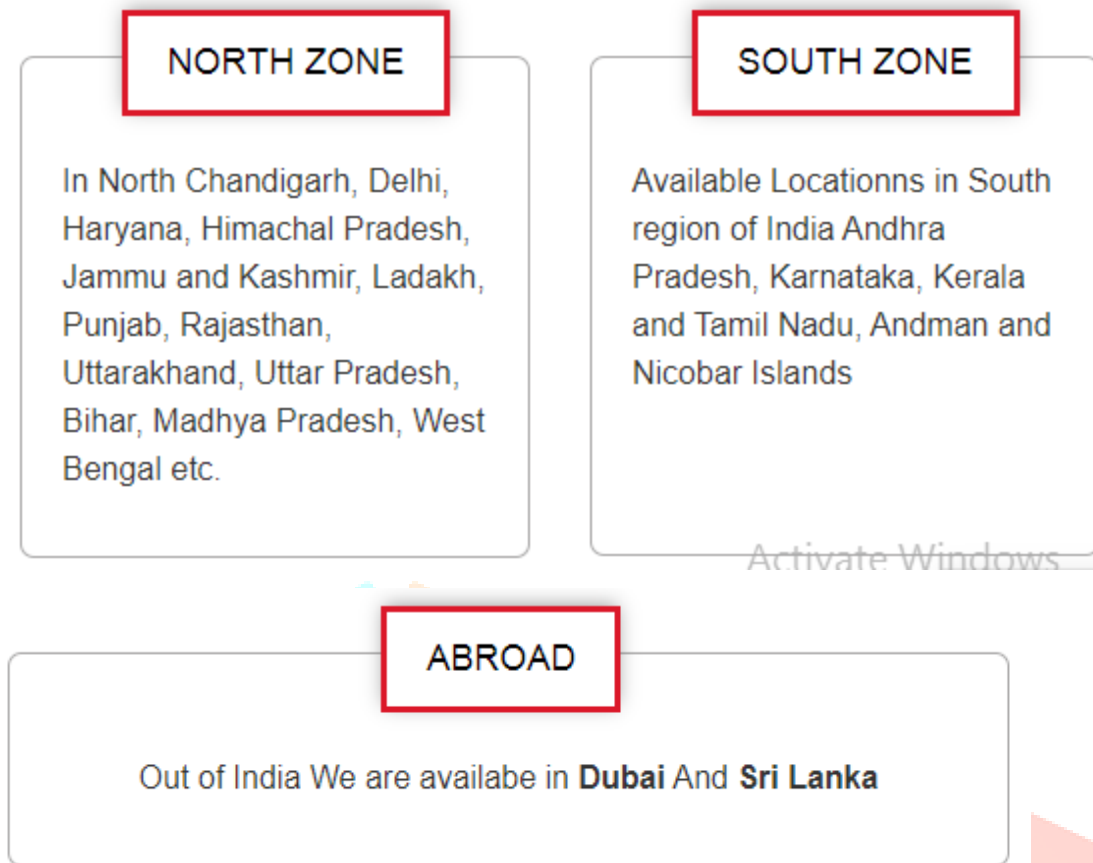
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NEGATIVE IMPACT ON INDUSTRY DURING COVID- 19

"Pure Berry's" is currently one of India's most well-known food production companies. This industry's total revenue exceeds \$20 million. However, the COVID-19 pandemic, which has been affecting this industry over the past two years, has had a significant impact on firm turnover. Their revenue falls by 15 to 20%. Fresh berries such as strawberry, gooseberry, mulberry, and others are grown in big quantities in Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani, and are beneficial to one's health. As a result, the Pure Berry sector maintains product quality and enjoys a positive market reputation. However, as a result of the lockdown, the corporation suffered significant marketing, tourism, and hospitality losses, as well as significant losses in online marketing.

The Panchgani, Maharashtra is home to this industry. They get 70% of their raw materials from nearby villages and the other 30% from outside Maharashtra. Lockdown has a negative influence on the transportation of raw materials. The pandemic mostly impacted farmers, who suffered massive losses on a large scale. Due to a lack of raw material availability at the proper moment, they receive a low level of raw material, and as a result, the company suffers a negative influence on large-scale production. Less manufacturing has a direct detrimental influence on India's sales, marketing, and company. As a result, the company's financial recovery and payment of the debt were hampered significantly, also, today company have bad debt up to 50 lakhs.

The following are the biggest losses incurred by the company as a result of the pandemic:

- Every year, a large number of tourists as well as regular walking clients visit the company, and their hospitality services create a fair amount of profit, but the company suffered significant losses during the lockdown period.
- During the shutdown, factory sales dropped by 60%.
- Stop the unit sales process.
- It has a direct impact on the production and marketing divisions.
- The company's web marketing suffered a significant setback.

Even though the company did not stop paying its employees in such a dire scenario, they attempted to pay their employees according to their convenience. They permitted half of the staff to work in two shifts once the lockdown was lifted, as long as they followed the covid-19 guidelines and precautions. The company is also dealing with issues such as finances, marketing, a lower number of tourists, a lack of demand for their goods in the market, and a low level of bad debt recovery.

The cost of raw materials, packing materials, and transportation costs have all increased as a result of the pandemic crisis, and the entire cost of MRP has increased by 25 to 20%. Industry, on the other hand, is unable to increase its manufacturing costs.

They were able to find a solution to their problems and are now ready to resume their Pure Berry's business. Mustafa Mala, the company's director, devised a strategy and put it into action, allowing him to run his business effectively in any situation. However, the sector intends to hike product prices in the next years.

Pure Berry is a fully food processing agro-based industry, and almost all farmers rely on it. As a result, company director Mr. Mustafa Mala has decided not to lose the farmers' jobs, because farmers can't stop their farming activities during the lockdown, and the company can't afford to lose the farmers' income.

CONCLUSION:

We discovered that during COVID-19 in India, farmers' capacity to sell their crops and dairy products was harmed, and their revenue was reduced, as well as negative effects on agro-based industries' production, sales, and income. There was a significant decline in production during the early days of the lockdown due to a shortage of crucial inputs and a labor shortage. This unique corona virus pandemic will have long-term and limited long-term effects on our global and national economies. The total operations of agro-based industries have these implications as well, which have a significant impact on pricing strategies for agro-based food goods as well as export policies.

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