A STUDY OF COOPERATIVE MARKETING IN KASHMIR WITH REFERENCE TO MARKETING OF APPLES

The present study entitled "A Study of Cooperative Marketing in Kashmir With Reference to Marketing of Apple" is a modest attempt to analyse the cooperative marketing system of Kashmir in general and apple marketing in particular. Cooperative system has been introduced in almost all major economic activities of the state but at the same time it is depressing to note that the concept of cooperative marketing has not been used in apple marketing in its true spirit. Fruit industry which was the oldest avocation of the people in the past has now become the backbone of the State's economy. Till the dawn of independence, the industry was in doldrums and could not play a significant role in the reconstruction of the State's economy. The reasons that kept the industry away from playing its meaningful role are obvious by the fact that people involved in this venture constituted a group of 'have nots' who lacked all modern inputs for boosting up this industry on scientific lines.

With the achievement of political emancipation an era of planned development was initiated to give
Phillip to the economy of the State and Fruit Industry was no exception. Kashmir apple lived up to its distinguished reputation of being one of the choicest fruit. Though apple is also produced in Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, yet Kashmir continues to be the hub of apple industry of the country. The state has not only an edge over Himachal and Uttar Pradesh in the field of production but also in marketing as Jammu and Kashmir is the largest apple producing and exporting state of the country. It is estimated that there are more than one lakh orchards in the State at present involving about ten lakh people in various horticultural processes. The industry has earned a revenue of 200 crores in the year 1987-88 besides providing job to more than 32 per cent of the working population in State directly and indirectly. This employment and income generating potential has indeed made the apple industry the bulwark of rural economy in the state and there are bright chances to utilise this sector for the overall economic development of the state. But its success largely depends on market structure. An efficient and speedy marketing system is crucial factor for both the modernisation of profits and satisfaction of the consumer.
Temptation of higher returns on one hand and growing competition and the risk involved on the other hand continue to attract the attention of researchers towards this important problem.

It is with this objective that present study demonstrates that cooperative marketing shall be the right weapon for the efficient utilisation of horticulture resources of Jammu and Kashmir in general and apple produce in particular. The present cooperative marketing structure in the state as in vogue depicts a satisfactory state of affairs, though lagging behind in certain vital areas of the state's economy. Hence the scholar feels that positive attempts should be made to streamline the cooperative marketing structure in its totality. It should also cover those important aspects which otherwise remained neglected over the past years. Since apple industry occupies dominant role in reshaping the state economy and efforts therefore, should be made to give more coverage to this sector on priority basis with a view to boosting up the state exchequer. As a matter of fact apple constitutes the hub of the fruit industry, hence
attempt has been made under this study to elucidate and analyse the economics of apple produce with a view to finding out as to which marketing channel should reasonably be adopted by the growers in order to accelerate their earnings.

In the apple industry a host of intermediaries are involved in the distribution system, all adding their margins and profits, making the product more expensive. In this context a detailed study of the present distribution system of apple has been made and analysed. Simultaneously, effort has been made to work out the price spread in various channels resulted in the identification of economical as well as uneconomical channels involved in the distribution of apple.

The market mechanism of apple produce is characterised by the control of a few monopolistic merchants at Delhi who usually work through commission agents at Srinagar. They manage the whole show through a remote control system which assures very little to the real growers for their produce. The factors through which Delhi and Srinagar traders exercise their control
over the growers are organisation, finance, transport, storage, marketing links and vested control of Delhi market. However, there are several other problems which have marred the fruit industry of the State. These problems as discussed in the present study have reduced not only fruit returns to the growers but also limited the scope of fruit cultivation.

The study ends up with a number of suggestions which the scholar expects would go a long way in promoting the cooperative marketing in apple produce in and outside the country.