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Consumption Pattern of Different Edible Oils in West Bengal

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Executive Summary

Background

Edible oils are a vital component of Indian cuisine and a crucial source of dietary fats. India, being one of the world's largest producers and consumers of vegetable oil, faces a significant disparity between oilseed production and domestic demand, leading to substantial imports. The government has implemented various measures to boost production, including modernizing the National Food Security Mission (NFSM) and promoting the cultivation of oil palm. Despite these efforts, agricultural productivity remains low compared to that of the other developing economies; however, the demand for edible oils continues to rise due to population growth and changing dietary habits. Addressing this demand-supply imbalance is essential for achieving self-sufficiency in edible oils and ensuring food security in India. This study focuses on West Bengal, a state that has shown commendable growth in the area and production of oilseeds, yet faces challenges in enhancing yield rates. Understanding both the demand and supply side scenarios of edible oil in West Bengal is crucial for effective planning and production strategies.

Objectives of the Study

With the aforementioned background this study has been taken up to understand the consumption pattern of different edible oils and simultaneously aimed to examine the scenario of oilseed production in the different regions of West Bengal. The specific objectives of the present study are

1. To compare rural and urban preferences and consumption levels of the different types of edible oil in West Bengal
2. To understand the preferences and consumption level of the different types of edible oil with respect to the socio-economic status of the households in West Bengal
3. To analyze the trends in the consumption pattern of different edible oils in West Bengal
4. To examine the present scenario regarding the production of oilseed in West Bengal

Study Design

This study focuses on the edible oil sector of West Bengal, employing a mixed-method approach that integrates primary and secondary data to provide comprehensive insights. The research investigates both consumption patterns and production dynamics, with a targeted survey of 500 households distributed across five representative districts—Darjeeling, Dakshin Dinajpur, Nadia,

Paschim Barddhaman, and Purba Medinipur. These districts were strategically selected to ensure coverage of the state's diverse agro-climatic zones and socio-economic status. The multistage random sampling framework encompassing six stages, ensuring a robust representation of rural and urban populations, has been concidered. One district was randomly selected from each of West Bengal's five administrative divisions, with further subdivision sampling tailored to each district's structure. Blocks and municipalities were chosen to distinguish rural and urban settlements, reflecting their population shares. Gram Panchayats, villages, and households were selected one after another randomly to achieve a balanced representation, of all possible variations in the units selected. Each district contributed an equal number of households (100), proportionally divided into rural and urban samples based on the demographic data.

Major Findings of the Study

- Edible Oil Consumption Patterns
    - Mustard oil dominates household preferences, and the other oils, viz., soybean, sunflower, and rice-bran oil follow. Urban areas generally consume more edible oil than rural regions.
    - Socioeconomic factors such as family size, income, and educational status influence consumption preferences.
    - District-specific variations exist, with Darjeeling leading in annual per capita consumption and Paschim Medinipur excelling in rice-bran oil adoption.
- Oilseed Production Trends
    - West Bengal has outperformed the national average in oilseed area and production growth, but yield rates remain a concern.
    - Murshidabad, Nadia, and Paschim Medinipur are prominent contributors to oilseed cultivation, while Purba Medinipur leads in yield.
    - Rapeseed & mustard dominate production, but groundnut offers the highest yield per hectare.
    - The Gangetic Alluvial Zone contributes the largest share to oilseed cultivation but struggles with yield rates.
    - Specific districts and agroclimatic zones excel in certain crops, highlighting the need for tailored regional strategies.

Policy Recommendation

- Addressing Consumption Inequalities
    - Launch educational campaigns and collaborate with NGOs to promote diverse and healthier oil consumption.
    - Enhance rural distribution networks and introduce subsidized pricing mechanisms for low-income households.
- Strengthening Agricultural Productivity
    - Invest in crop research for high-yield, drought-resistant varieties.
    - Provide financial incentives such as subsidies for eco-friendly inputs and crop insurance schemes.
- Optimizing Production and Supply Chains
    - Develop infrastructure for oilseed processing and storage to reduce post-harvest losses.
    - Facilitate market integration and adopt advanced technologies like AI for supply chain efficiency.
- Sustainable Agricultural Practices
    - Promote crop rotation, organic farming, and agroforestry to enhance soil health and build climate resilience.
    - Expand cultivation in underutilized high-potential zones, ensuring sustainable practices.
- Institutional Reforms
    - Foster public-private partnerships and strengthen farmer cooperatives.
    - Implement regulatory measures like Minimum Support Prices (MSP) and import controls to stabilize markets.

Conclusion

This study underscores the importance of a holistic, integrated approach to addressing challenges in edible oil consumption and production. By implementing these recommendations, West Bengal can enhance its agricultural efficiency, empower rural communities, and establish itself as a major contributor to the edible oil sector of India.