

## Lac Cultivation as a Risk Coping Strategy for Agriculture in Jharkhand

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Jharkhand is the largest producer of lac in the country, contributing around 44 per cent of the national production and it was 7640 tonnes during 2002-03. The lac-growing regions of the state are characterized by high proportion of tribal population, families living below poverty line and having low literacy percentage. The present paper is based on the analysis of survey data of 500 lac growers (trained and untrained) in the districts of Ranchi and W. Singhbhum during the years 2002-03 and 2003-04. The analysis has revealed that the contribution of the lac was 18.5 per cent in total income and 26.4 per cent in farm income for untrained growers, while it was 24.0 per cent and 32.0 per cent, respectively for trained lac growers. Cost of cultivation and net return per host on *palas* have been calculated as Rs 51 and Rs 98, respectively for untrained and Rs 71 and Rs 163, respectively for trained lac growers. Cost of cultivation and net return per host on ber have been worked out as Rs 93 and Rs 195, respectively for untrained and Rs 159 and Rs 418, respectively for trained lac growers. Cost of cultivation and net return per host on *kusum* have been found to be Rs 688 and Rs 1,628, respectively for untrained and Rs 1,104 and Rs 3,313, respectively for trained lac growers. Break-even production of sticklac and broodlac has been found to range from 1.28 kg to 9.34 kg and 0.22 kg to 5.02 kg, respectively for all the three hosts and both types of growers. Due to very low investment in fixed cost, break-even production has been very low in comparison to the existing production for both untrained and trained lac growers. Similarly, break-even price of sticklac and broodlac has been found from Rs 16.80 to Rs 28.20 and Rs 14.00 to Rs 38.60, respectively for all the three hosts and both types of growers. Low break-even prices show that risk in lac cultivation is very low and it will be a profitable enterprise even at low lac prices. The break-even prices of sticklac and broodlac have been found slightly low in the case of trained than untrained lac growers. Risk-bearing ability has been noticed more in the trained than untrained lac growers.