

CONSUMER KNOWLEDGE AND MARKET OF LETTUCE IN DHAKA CITY

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Bangladesh is an agro-based country and now the agriculture is not only confined in production. In our country, agriculture has become commercialized. Continuous production and a sufficient supply of raw materials are essential for establishing business in agriculture. The availability of raw materials, along with price and quality, is the prime concern for this sector, as mentioned by Connor et al. 1985. For this reason, different vegetables are produced for commercial purpose. Among them lettuce (*Lactuca sativa* L.) is very popular. The yield of lettuce is 10887 kg per hectare and the gross margin is Tk. 205284 per hectare (Afroj et al., 2013). Day by day the consumption of lettuce is increasing specially in urban areas. Though the demand of lettuce is increasing but the produced lettuce is not properly reached to the urban areas for the lack of proper marketing channel. Now the farmers produce it in huge quantity and it is usually grown in winter season but it can be grown round the year. Lettuce is a fat free, low calorie food and is good for a well balanced diet. It contains huge amount of vitamin A and folic acid which is very beneficiary for health. Considering the above facts, the present study was undertaken (i) to know about consumer attitude and knowledge about lettuce, (ii) to know about the present market situation of lettuce and (iii) identify the opportunities and constraints of the market expansion process of lettuce.

Gulshan and Banani areas in Dhaka were selected as in these areas where fast food shops are flourished and lettuce leaves consumption more in these areas. Interviews of the retailers at Kawranbazar, Gulshan, New market vegetable Bazaar and middlemen in Savar, Dhaka were also taken. Purposive sampling technique was adopted for data collection (Table1). The technique is widely adopted in market research for qualitative assessment. The information is collected based on long informal interviews with the actors, physical visits to their work places and group

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discussions. Also, adopt snowballing technique to track the trail of the product in the value chain and understand the vertical and horizontal relationships, the constraints and the opportunities. The study was mainly based on primary data collected through face to face interview during the month of January to March, 2014. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data.

Table 1. Respondents in the Primary Survey

	Actors	Number of Respondents
	Middleman	05
	Whole sale and Retailers	91
Traders	Fast Food Shop and Chinese restaurants	193
	Star hotels	21
	Importers	05
Consumers	Consume the produce	250
Total		565

The findings of summary showed that majority (78.70 %) of the respondents were of young ages. Among the respondents educational status has good about 73.3 % achieved higher education or more. In terms of occupation 44 % respondents were job holder and other respondents were businessman or related to other occupation (Table 2)

Table 2. Socio-economic characteristics of respondents

Characteristics	Categories	Percentage
Age	Young (Up to 35 years)	78.7
	Middle age (36-50 years)	18.5
	Old (51 and above)	2.80
Level of literacy	Illiterate (0)	6.20
	Primary literacy (I-V)	1.50
	Secondary literacy (VI-X)	19.00
	Higher Secondary literacy (XI and above)	73.30
Occupation	Businessman	17.00
	Job holder	44.00
	Others	39.00

Our field survey revealed that 96% vegetable sellers know about lettuce and out of them 97% sold lettuce in the market. From table 3, it showed that, 86% percent sellers sold lettuce at Taka 50-100 , while 9 and 5% sold at Taka101-150 and Taka 151-300, respectively . Besides, 250 g lettuce is sold in the market with 68% while 250 g to 500g lettuce is sold with 18% and the lowest amount is sold at 750 to 1000 g with only 5%.

Considering availability of lettuce leave all the year round, 65% sellers considered that lettuce may be collected from vegetable market while 24% and 11% sellers collected from regional producers and import companies (Table 3).

Table 3. Selling price, amount and collection of lettuce

Price of lettuce (Taka)	Percentage of seller
50-100	86
101-150	9
151-300	5
Amount of lettuce sold	
Amount	Percentage
0-250 g	68
250-500 g	18
500-750 g	9
750-1000g	5
Collection of lettuce by the sellers	
Source	Percentage
Vegetable market	65
Regional producers	24
Import companies	11

There is limited number of star hotels in our country, but they need continuous supply of lettuce all the year round but due to scarcity they meet up their demand through importing lettuce from foreign countries. Our field survey revealed that the star hotels import lettuce from mainly Thailand and China. It was also found that about 86% star hotels get supply of lettuce all the year round and more than 90% star hotels buy more than 2 kg lettuce per day. They usually buy leafy, iceberg and romaine type's lettuce (Table 4).

Table 4. Compares between Star Hotels and Fast food Shop in this sector

Characteristics	Star hotel	Fast food Shop
Source	Local Supply, Imported	Mainly local supply
Consumer	Upper class, Foreigner	Mainly fast food lover
Types	Leafy, Iceberg, Romaine	Leafy lettuce
Purpose	lettuce	
Demand	With salad & for decoration	With fast food like burger
	All the year round	All the year round
Amount	Large amount	Small amount
Quality	Ensure good quality always	Quality is not maintained always

About 62% consumers belong to fast food lover and upper class, 21% foreigner and rest 17% others. About 77% lettuce used as salad and with fast food in the star hotels and rest amount used as decorative purpose. From market survey it was found that about ninety 98% fast food shop and restaurant buy lettuce. Among them about 86% fast food shop and Chinese restaurant meet up their lettuce demand from vegetable market and rest of them buy from supplier or other source like producer.

It was revealed from survey that the price of lettuce varies from season to season. In winter season the price remains low but in other season the price becomes high. From figure 1 it showed that the price of iceberg lettuce is relatively higher than leafy lettuce. On the other hand in winter season the price is relatively lower than the other season. About 65% lettuce buy by fast food shop and Chinese restaurant whereas less than Taka 50.00 in winter season whereas others buy more than Taka 50.00 in same season. It showed that 84.42% buy lettuce by fast food shop and Chinese restaurant whereas more than 70% buy lettuce at two days interval. From figure 2 it observed that about 42% fast food and restaurant buy 250 gm lettuce per day whereas 13.3% more than 1 kg per day only one restaurant situated in Gulshan-1, Dhaka and they buy lettuce about 10-12 kg per day.

From field survey it was found that about 86% fast food shop keepers and Chinese restaurants considered that demand of lettuce exists all the year round as they use lettuce with fast food (81%) as salad and both salad and decorative purpose in restaurant. In Bangladesh 100% star hotels have showed interest to buy lettuce if ensure quality.

To preserve lettuce for long time is quite difficult. The market survey revealed that 90% vegetable sellers can preserve lettuce up to 36 hours after applying water time to time while 10% can store up to 8-12 hours. In case of refrigerator, preservation time may be extended up to 5-7 days (66%), 3-4 days (32%) and 1-2

days (2%). In our country labor cost is relatively cheaper and available so lettuce can be grow with low investment. But highest cost was incurred for human labor in case of lettuce cultivation which indicates that lettuce is a labor intensive crop (Afroj et al., 2013)

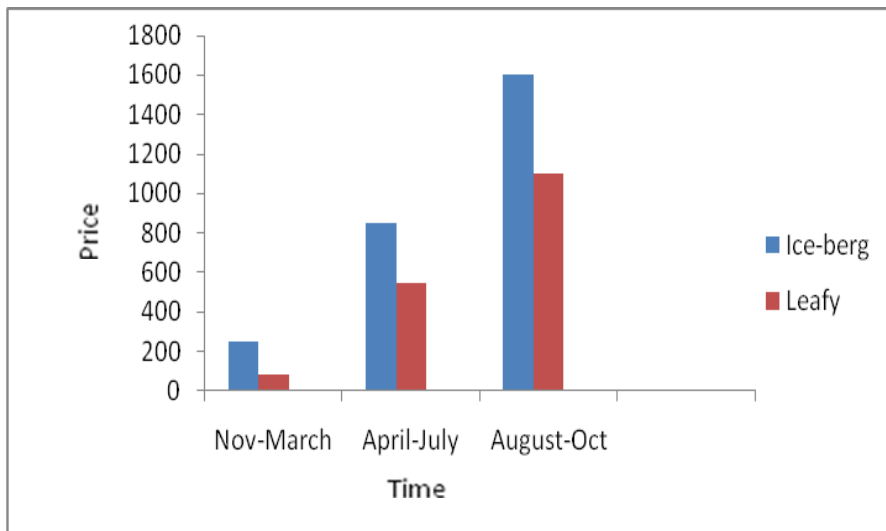


Figure 1. Market price of lettuce

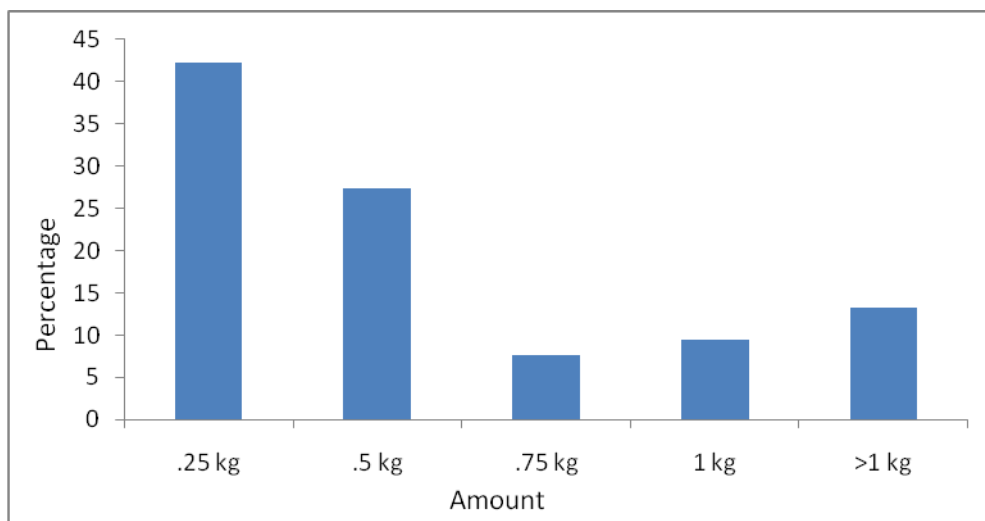


Figure 2. Buying percentage of lettuce at different amount

Maximum consumers were agreed that this sector has a great future in Bangladesh. Lettuce is the only leafy vegetables that can be consumed as main component of salad. There are some leaves such as coriander, pudina but not consumed as a main component, but only leaves add value in salad.

The study indicated that lettuce has higher demand among the customers especially among the city dwellers. So there is also a bright prospect for expanding lettuce cultivation because of its nutritional value and high income generating potentials. This study has identified the market of lettuce and its price. The study identified some major problems and constraints which were faced by the marketers and as well as showed some opportunities of lettuce. The policy makers should, therefore, take necessary steps and measures to solve the existing problems of the lettuce marketing and they should take some policy to improve its marketing.

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