

IMPORTANCE AND SCOPE OF FRUIT CROPS

IMPORTANCE

Fruit growing is one of the important and age old practices, practiced in India since ancient times. Cultivation of fruit crops plays an important role in overall status of the mankind and the nation. The standard of living of the people of a country is depending upon the production and per capita consumption of fruits. Fruit growing have following economic and nutritional advantages.

I. Economic importance

High productivity: High yield per unit area: From a unit area of land more yield is realized from fruit crops than any of the agronomic crops. The average yields of Papaya, Banana and Grapes are 10 to 15 times more than that of agronomic crops.

- **High net profit:** Though, the initial cost of establishment of an orchard is high, it is compensated by higher net profit due to higher productivity or high value of produce.
Eg-Wheat/GN/Ragi-3.0-4.0tonnes/ha-25-35,000-00,
Grapes/Mango/Banana-20-40t/ha-1.5-2.5 lakh/ha.
- **Source of raw material for agro based industries:** Fruit farming provides raw materials for various agro based industries- canning and preservation (fresh fruits), coir industries (coconut husk), pharmaceutical industry (Aonla, Papaya, Jamun) transporting and packaging industries etc.
- **Efficient utilization of resources:** Growing of fruits being perennial in nature, enables grower to remain engaged throughout the year in farm operations and to utilize fully the resources & assets like machinery, labour, land water for production purpose throughout the year compared to agronomic crops.
- **Utilization of waste and barren lands for production:** Although, most of the fruits crops require perennial irrigation and good soil for production, there are many fruit crops which are hardy in nature, Mango, Ber, Cashew, Custard apple, Aonla, Phalsa, Jamun etc. which are grown on poor shallow, undulated soils considered unsuitable for growing grain/ agronomical crops.

- Foreign exchange: Many fresh fruits, processed products and spices are exported to several countries earning good amount of foreign exchange.

II. Nutritional importance

- Importance of fruits in human diet is well recognized. Man cannot live on cereals alone.
- Fruits are essential for balanced diet and good health.
- Nutritionist advocates 60-85g of fruits.
- Vegetables per capita per day in addition to cereals, pulses, egg etc.

Fruits are good sources of vitamins and minerals without which human body cannot maintain proper health and develop resistance to disease they also contain pectin, cellulose, fats, proteins etc.

SCOPE OF CULTIVATION OF FRUITS

As far as scope is concerned, the production of fruits increased to a large extent. India is an ideal country as all the important fruits can be produced due to varied soils and climatic conditions.

So to avoid glut in the market, they can be processed, preserved and enjoyed in off season. Different bi-products can be prepared from fruits. By growing fruit, farmers get more income from the field as they are cash crops. There is tremendous production of fruits in a shorter period.

1. Need to Increase Production to Meet Dietary Requirements:

According to ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) the per capita consumption of fruits in India is 120g/day but it is very low (10kg/capita/year) as compared to other countries like USA (202 kg/capita/year). The low consumption of fruits is only due to very small fraction of the total cropped area under fruits. India needs to step up the production of fruits till the country becomes self sufficient and process of fruit fall to the level at which both rich and poor can afford to buy. The prices of fruits are so high, to keep fresh fruits out of reach of large population with more efficient production and marketing, the price could be reduced as to increase consumption of fruits and still provide good profits to the grower.

2. Scope for Increasing Area under Dry Land Fruits:

It is not entirely true that all the fruits enquire perennial irrigation. There are many fruit trees like ber, custard apple, cashewnut, anola etc. which are hardy in nature and can be grown under purely rainfed condition. In India 86 million ha land is available for development of sound technology of rainfed horticulture; there is good scope to put these lands under dry land fruit crops.

3. Increasing Urbanization and Change in Food Habits:

Increasing urbanization due to industrial growth has increased demands for fruits. Change in food habits to organic food is also being noticed due to education and assured income which has also helped in increasing demands for fruits.

3. Increased Transport Facilities:

Most of the fruits are highly perishable, having less storage life and need quick disposal after harvest. Lack of good transportation system was one of the major constraints in expansion of fruits. However, now a day quick transport facilities by roadrail and air are available enabling growers to transport fruits, to long distance markers in good condition in a short period of time.

4. Increasing Cold Storage Facilities and Precooling Centers:

Fruits are highly perishable and have less shelf-life. During the peak harvesting period the market gluts reduce prices of fruits .Cold storage facilities help to regulate market supply and stabilizes the market rate. Similarly, to extend shelf life, precooling after harvest is necessary

5. Scope for Agro-Based Industries:

Even after so much of industrial progress, our country depends on agricultural sectors for employment. Development of agro-based industries to generate employment is a must to keep our economy sound.

6. Development of New Techniques:

Use of growth regulators, in-situ grafting, drip irrigation for water economy, tissue culture special horticultural practices like ringing, girdling, notching, bahar treatment, high density planting etc. have helped to increase productivity and also to bring more lands under cultivation.

7. Evaluation of New High Yielding Varieties and Introduction of New Crops:

Development of high yielding cultivar of fruits like pomegranate (Ganesh, P-23, P-26, G-37), mango (Ratna, Amrapali, Malika, Sindu), grapes (Thompson seedless), guava (Sardar and L-49), etc, which are having specialized feature like disease and pest resistant, high yielding, diverse acclimatization etc, brought more area under fruits. Similarly, introduction of commercial cultivation of some of the new crops like ber anola etc. also indicates scope for area expansion.

8. Government Incentive:

Realizing the need for area expansion of fruit crops, the governments have started a very ambitious programme of fruit development under which it gives 100% subsidy to marginal farmers and farmers from backward communities and 70% subsidy for others on establishment and maintenance of fruit orchard for a period of 3 years. This would increase the area under fruits. It is expected that due to this programme, the area under fruits will increase.

9. Scope for Export of Fruits:

Market surveys in Europe and other markets have revealed that is a good scope or export of grapes, mango, banana, pomegranate, citrus, ber, cashew to gulf and European markets. The availability of these markets would be increase area under these fruits.

10. Employment generation.

Agricultural sector needs more skilled labour forces to conduct the daily activities. The labour supply in India is much cheaper than the other countries, hence providing greater opportunities for maintaining the different activities of the farm.

11. Very high production and suitability of climate for fruits

The productivity of horticultural crops is much more than other crops like cereals, pulses etc from the same piece of land. India is bestowed with diverse climatic condition such as tropical climate, temperate climate and subtropical climate, which are feasible for all most all the fruit crops.