

# HORTICULTURE AND INDIAN ECONOMY

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Horticulture is not merely a means of diversification, but forms an integral part of food, nutritional security and poverty alleviation, and also an essential ingredient of economic security. India, like many other countries, is very concerned about food security, thus, rural development has become a primary area of focus in the current agricultural and horticultural development scenario.

India is bestowed with diverse soil and agro climatic conditions suitable for growing a wide variety of horticultural crops. These crops form a significant part of total agricultural produce in the country comprising of fruits, vegetables, root and tuber crops, ornamental plants, medicinal and aromatic plants, spices, condiments and plantation crops.

The importance of horticulture can be substantiated by its benefits like high export value, high yield per unit area, high returns per unit area, efficient utilization of wasteland, provision of raw materials for allied industries, better use of undulating lands, and stabilization of women's empowerment by providing employment opportunities through fruit and vegetable processing, floriculture industry, seed production, mushroom cultivation, nursery business, etc.

Horticultural crops play a unique role in India's economy by improving the income of the rural people. Cultivation of these crops is labour intensive and as such, they generate lot of employment opportunities for the rural population. India with more than 28.2 million tonnes of fruits and 66 million tonnes of vegetables, is the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables in the world, next only to Brazil and China. However, per capita consumption of fruits and vegetables in India is only around 46kg and



130g against a minimum of about 92g and 300g respectively recommended by Indian Council of Medical Research and National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad. Fruits and vegetables are also rich source of vitamins, minerals, proteins, carbohydrates etc. which are essential in human nutrition. Hence, these are referred to as protective foods and assume great importance in the nutritional security of the people. Thus, cultivation of horticultural crops plays a vital role in the prosperity of a nation and is directly linked with the health and happiness of the people.

Fruits and vegetables are not only used for domestic consumption and processing into various products (Pickles, preserves sauces, jam, jelly squashes, etc.), but also substantial quantities are exported in fresh and processed form, bringing much-needed foreign exchange for the country. These groups of crops also provide ample scope for achieving bio-diversity and diversification to maintain ecological balance and to create sustainable agriculture and can make an impact on the national economy in the years to come.

India is earning foreign exchange through export of several horticultural produces viz., flowers to America, Netherlands, Germany, Japan, UK, onions to Malaysia, UAE, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh; vegetables to Sri Lanka, United States, UAE, Spain, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, U.K., Kuwait; fresh grapes to UK, Netherlands,





UAE, Bangladesh, Germany; fresh fruits to Bangladesh, UAE, Saudi Arabia, UK and Sri Lanka processed vegetables to Egypt, Sri Lanka, UAE, America and Turkey and Mango pulp to Saudi Arabia, UAE, Netherlands, Kuwait and Germany; pickles and chut-

neys to UK, America, UAE, Spain etc.

The recent emphasis on horticulture in our country consequent to the recognition of the need for attaining nutrition security and for more profitable land use has brought about a significant change in the outlook of the growers. The need for great utilization of available wastelands against the background of dwindling water and energy resources has focused attention to dry land, to arid and semi-arid tracts and

to horticultural crops, which have lesser demands on water and other inputs besides being 3 to 4 times more remunerative than field crops.

It is estimated that India has 240 million acres of cultivable wasteland, which is lying idle, which can be brought under orchard crops without curtailing the area under food crops. The country has abundant sunshine throughout year, a surplus labour and widely varied agro-climatic condition, which offers a high potential for successful and profitable commercial horticulture.

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### ECONOMIC SURVEY 2015-16: HORTICULTURE SCENARIO

**A**ccording to the Economic Survey 2015-16, the scenario of horticulture crops in India has become very encouraging. The percentage share of horticulture output in agriculture is more than 33 per cent. Under the purview of agriculture and allied activities, the share of plan outlay for horticulture, which was 3.9 per cent during Ninth Plan, has increased to 4.6 per cent during the Twelfth Plan.

India has witnessed voluminous increase in horticulture production over the last few years. Significant progress has been made in area expansion, resulting in higher production. Over the last decade, the area under horticulture grew by about 2.7 per cent per annum and annual production increased by 7.0 per cent. During 2013-14, the production of horticulture crops was about 283.5 million tonnes from an area of 24.2 million hectares. Out of the six categories e.g., Fruits, Vegetables, Flowers, Aromatic plants, Spices and Plantation Crops, the highest annual growth of 9.5 per cent is seen in fruit production during 2013-14. The production of vegetables has increased from 58,532 thousand tonnes to 1,67,058 thousand tonnes since 1991-92 to 2014-15(3rd AE).

India witnessed sharper increase in acreage in horticulture crops compared to food grains over the last five years (from 2010-11 to 2014-15) the area under horticulture crops increased around 18 per cent compared to an expansion of area under food grains by 5 per cent during the stipulated period. The production of horticulture crops have outpaced the production of food grain since 2012-13.