

RECOMMENDATIONS

Prof. Dr. Aman Ullah Malik*, Dr. Muhammad Azam
Institute of Horticultural Sciences, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad
Punjab 38040, Pakistan
Email: malikaman1@uaf.edu.pk (A.U.M)

In our agro-based economy the horticultural sub sector deserves special attentions. A vast natural diversity in the soils and climate of Pakistan is suitable for the cultivation of numerous fruits and vegetables. Promotion of fruits and vegetable cultivation will not only help greatly enhance the availability for local consumptions but would also generate sizeable exportable surplus. The shift of emphasis to horticultural crops would be justifiable on more than one count. Horticultural crops have great potential for increasing income of people. They produce more yields per unit area and give much higher returns as compared to other farm crops. Fruits, vegetable and flowers are in big demand in foreign countries. The current era might turn-out to be the horticulture era.

With the natural resources and comparative advantages, the country can cater to diverse market niches and satisfy the demand and aesthetic tastes of consumers, in the emerging global trade context. To underpin economic development of the country, sustainable trade development remains the cherished goal.

To this end, one need to exploit, to national advantage, all export possibilities by unfolding the inherent potential of different sub-sectors of economy. Such an initiative warrants capitalizing on the strength and managing weaknesses of these sectors. One of such promising sub-sectors is that of horticulture, which like livestock and fisheries, has enough in store terms of future trade prospects.

The soil, climate conditions and water resources allow cultivation of all major tropical, subtropical and temperate fruits and vegetables in Pakistan. Tropical and subtropical fruits are very important in central and southern Punjab and lower Sindh area. For Instance, mango, banana, papaya, date palm, guava and chiku in plains. Balochistan is famous for raising excellent quality apples, grapes, almonds, date, cherries and pomegranates. NWFP produces citrus fruits stone fruits and strawberry in northern areas and in Peshawar valley. Azad Jammu and Kashmir grows apples and other deciduous fruits of excellent quality. Northern areas (Gilgit Baltistan) are famous for apricot, peach and plum. Potatoes, tomatoes, onions, cauliflower, okra, brinjal, peas, chilies, lettuce, carrot, turnips and radish are widely grown throughout the country.

Within horticulture sub-sector mango and date palm industries, like citrus, have great potential. Mango and Date palm rank 2nd and 3rd respectively, in terms of production in our fruit industry and are also extremely important for the economy of country by sharing almost half of our foreign exchange earnings through fruit export. Dates have always been held in very high esteem in almost all cultures and religions in the world. Moreover, when we see the production trends of mango and date palm over

the years, it is obvious that although, from time to time, there has been increase in the cultivation area under these fruit crops, however per hectare yield has been almost stagnant. There are problems regarding propagation, management, disease and insect pest control. This situation is of great concern and needs attention. It is imperative to find out the cause of static production unit yield per unit area of these fruits. As production yields by the sum of all the factors and practices, starting right from nursery, therefore all the areas of crop production including propagation, cultural practices, plant protection measures, harvesting techniques and postharvest procedures are needed be addressed. Research in the field of breeding is also need of time, particularly considering biotic and abiotic stress and market demand.

With the rapid technological advancements in the areas of communication logistics and post-harvest management, the international trade of fruits and vegetable have increased manifold and the demand is ever increasing in all parts of the world. Postharvest losses in these crops, especially in developing countries are quite high thereby making the industries unsustainable. Some of the important factor causing high losses other than infrastructure are improper harvesting, postharvest management and distribution techniques which also lower the price of these commodities in the market.

Keeping in view the above-mentioned problems and limitations, it deemed desirable to hold a conference to address the challenges about horticulture crops. Such objectives were the topics of equal interest to scientists, growers, processors exporters and other organizations involved in the supply chain of horticulture crops. This conference provided one platform to discuss the issues and scientific developments to update the knowledge about extremely important horticulture crops. Here are some recommendations made for the development of horticulture industry and in the improvement of livelihood of farmers.

- Nursey business should be regulated to provide true to type and disease-free plants.
- Use of best practices and management of horticulture crops
- Strengthening of academic research and extension services
- Use of IPM approach to control pest and disease management
- Diversification of germplasm for sustainable growth and development in fruits and vegetables production
- Use of mulches to control the weeds from orchards and vegetables
- Need of high yield and good quality varieties for table use and processing
- Use of biotechnology tools for the development of new cultivars
- Regular pruning of fruit trees for good health of orchards and better-quality production.
- Recommended dose of fertilizer should be used for good production
- High efficient irrigation system should be adopted at farms in future due to less water availability in future
- FAO standards should be observed during pre- and postharvest application of chemicals to fruits and vegetables
- Government should promote the introduction of modern tools and machinery in agriculture
- Processing unit should be established at the main producing areas for easy access of farmers
- Cool chain needs to be promoted in public-private partnership mode.

- International standard should be adapted regarding packaging, storage and transportation to destined markets
- Maturity is major issue and must be addressed along with effort for exploration of new export market