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## Date Palm Cultivation in Arid Ecosystem

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### Introduction

Date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera* L.; Family- Arecaceae) also known as *Khajoor*, *Kharek* is an ancient important fruit tree of semi-arid and arid regions of the world. It grows well under poor desertic soils due to its hardy plant characteristics and deep root system. It is also suitable fruit trees for growing under saline irrigation conditions. It is well known fact for date palm that its feet in the water and its head in sun. It requires dry hot climate for growth and development of fruits. In arid region, crop production is risky proposition, where date palm cultivation contributes in achieving food security, high nutritive value food, crop diversification, desertification control, higher income generation and foreign exchange earnings. It can be grown at such places where adequate irrigation facility is available besides other dry hot climate conditions (Chandra *et al.*, 1992; Singh and Dhandar, 2007). Better returns from date plantation can be achieved through good management practices besides adequate marketing of produce. The quality produce and its marketing will help to increase the income from date palm cultivation.

Date fruit is a highly nutritious and favorite fruit throughout the world. Fruits of date cultivars viz. Halawy, Khalas, Khuneizi, Chip chap, Braim and Barhee are eaten as fresh (*doka* stage). Besides fresh consumption, several value added products dry date, pind, beverages, jam, paste, chutney, etc are prepared from fruits. The date-palm fruits have been recognized for high nutritive and energy food. It is known to produce more well mineralized, highly flavored and nutritious food per hectare than any other fruit of even temperate zone. The mineral content of dates amounts to about 2 per cent of cured fruits on weight basis. It is a good source of iron, potassium and fair source of calcium but a poor source of phosphorus (Nixon, 1966).