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Approaches for Improving Productivity and Profitability in Arid Horticulture

P.L. Saroj and M.K. Jatav

Introduction

In Indian agriculture, horticulture sector has made considerable progress after independence and as a result, horticulture has emerged as one of the major drivers of growth in the agricultural and allied sector. The horticulture sector includes large number of crops *viz.*, fruits, vegetables, ornamental crops, spices, tuber crops, plantation crops, medicinal and aromatic crops, mushroom and their post harvest management. On the production and productivity front, the horticulture sector outperformed conventional food crops. Between 2004-05 and 2014-15, horticultural output achieved an annual growth of about 7 per cent as compared to around 3 per cent growth in food grain production. This increase in production has come from an increase in acreage and even larger increase in productivity. Over the last decade, the area under horticulture grew by about 3% per annum and annual production increased by 5.4%. Thereby, India has maintained its second rank in the global production of fruits and vegetables, next only to China. India's fruit productivity is better than that of China, though China is the largest fruit producing country.

The country is currently producing 295.2 million tonnes of horticulture produce from an area of 24.9 million hectares, which has surpassed the estimated food grain production of 275.68 million tonnes (2016-17). Though the production of food grains and horticultural produce are not meaningfully comparable due to fundamental differences in resource requirements, their farming practices, characteristics of produce and most importantly, their nutritional and medicinal properties as well as energy value. The special attention was given to the this sector, especially after the introduction of the Horticulture Mission for North East and Himalayan States (HMNEH) and the National Horticulture Mission