

# Horticulture and its Impact on Indian Agriculture Sector and Indian Economy

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Horticulture is a sub-discipline of agriculture that includes a wide range of activities such as the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, flowers, medicinal and aromatic plants, mushrooms, plantation, forestry, landscaping, and many others. It is critical to the income security and nutrition of millions of people in India. It ranges from growing flowers and vegetables in home gardens to cultivating crops on a huge scale for sale and corporate interests. Horticulture is the study of plants, their cultivation, growth and development, and interactions with the environment. Horticulture involves elements of other branches like agronomy, botany, soil science, plant pathology and economics for its overall balanced growth. Horticulture plays a very important and crucial role in growth and development of agriculture sector and the overall economy of India. India has emerged as global leader in horticulture with the help of its rich diversity in crops and favorable climatic conditions. Horticulture generates roughly 30 percent of GDP while using just 13 percent of total cultivated land, making the horticulture sector a substantial contributor in the Indian agricultural sector and overall economy. This article explores the impact of horticulture sector on the Indian agriculture sector and overall economy, including contributing factors such as export potential, employment generation, value addition and sustainable practices.

## Importance of Horticulture

Horticulture plays very important role from providing food and nutrition to income and livelihood to farmers, protecting environment, raw material to industries, development of rural economy, employment generation, gaining foreign exchange and many other. Horticulture is the backbone of agriculture just like the agriculture sector as a backbone of Indian economy. Horticulture production in India has even surpassed total food grains production of country, demonstrating the

sector's potential. Horticulture sector not only meets nutritional requirements, but also generates numerous other opportunities such as job creation, income generation, and poverty relief.

## Contribution to agriculture sector

Horticulture sector plays a crucial role in development of Indian agriculture sector by significantly increasing the crop diversity in the country and removing sole dependency of farmers on traditional foodgrain and cereal crops. It also plays a very pivotal and crucial role in ensuring food and nutritional security with increasing fruits and vegetable production, the change in food habits and consumption pattern of people has been on the rise. This diversification also helps farmers in mitigating crop failure risk and also improve resilience against continuous climate change risks and the price volatility.

## Employment generation

The one of major impact of horticulture is significant improvement in employment and income generation in rural areas. Horticulture crops are generally labor-intensive crops and requires substantial labor, which provides a major source of income to farmers and the local labor directly and indirectly. Horticulture is boon for rural people, particularly the small-scale farmers, landless farmers, labor and women, who find employment throughout the year due to multiple crops harvesting of horticultural crops.

## Income generation and poverty alleviation

The horticulture sector has played a very important and transformative role in raising incomes of farmers, labor and women and alleviating poverty in rural areas. The horticultural crops cultivation has proved as more profitable as compared to traditional farming of foodgrains and staples. Horticulture sector has increased the income and ability to pay for basic

amenities like education, health and ultimately improving living standards. This has resulted into reduction in rural-urban migration and revitalizing the rural economies.

### **Export potential and foreign exchange reserves**

Horticulture sector has a great and enormous export potential and very high production of horticultural crops pushes India to tap this export potential. With its diverse range of crops and favorable climate, India has become a major exporter of fruits, vegetables and spices. The export earnings from horticulture contribute significantly to foreign exchange reserves, which strengthens the Indian economy. The export-oriented approach has also encouraged farmers to adopt proper quality standards, packaging and post-harvest handling to meet the stringent requirement of international markets.

### **Value addition and processing**

Horticulture sector has opened up avenues and opportunities for value addition and processing which improves the shelf life of perishable crops and reduces post-harvest losses and ultimately helps farmers in fetching remunerative prices for their produce. The establishment of food processing and packaging industries focuses on canning, freezing, dehydrating and pickling of horticultural crops, resulted into improved market penetration and access and reduced post-harvest losses. Value added products like juices, concentrates, pickles, dried fruits etc., diversifies income options and benefits both farmers and consumers. Several initiatives have been established by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries to enhance the food processing industry, including the development of cold chain infrastructure, agro-processing clusters, backward and forward connections, preservation infrastructure, operation greens, and mega food parks. All of these schemes will offer food processing units with basic facilities of storage, testing labs, and logistics while focusing on stabilizing the supply and prices of

perishable commodities and boosting their value addition to improve their overall utility.

### **Sustainable practices**

Horticulture sector has paved the way for sustainable practices of farming by promoting organic farming through use of organic fertilizers, bio-pesticides and conserving water through use of irrigation techniques like sprinkler, drip irrigation etc. The awareness of consumers towards chemicals and demand of chemical free food makes farmers to move towards organic farming and leave chemical-intensive farming methods which are detrimental to human health and the environment. The sustainable practices such as integrated pest management, precision farming, organic farming have helped in reducing the overall ecological footprint of agriculture.

### **Government Initiatives**

The Indian government has realized the enormous potential of horticulture sector and has taken various initiatives to promote the growth of overall horticulture sector. The initiatives such as National Horticulture Mission (NHM), Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY) and the establishment of cold chain infrastructure, storage and warehouses, food parks and encouraging processing industries are some examples of government-driven efforts to boost development of horticulture sector. The National Horticulture Mission launched in 2005 aimed to increase the production, productivity and the overall quality of horticultural crops while promoting crop diversification. The PMKSY focuses on improving water use efficiency with help of efficient irrigation practices and water management. The establishment of cold chain infrastructure has played a crucial role in reducing post-harvest losses of horticultural crops by improving the utility through storage, transportation and processing facilities. The government initiatives help farmers by providing training, credit, subsidies and infrastructure support resulted into improved competitiveness in farmers and the overall horticulture sector. The Centre's Cluster Development Program by specialization of the

horticulture cluster, the program aims to foster and promote integrated and market-led growth of pre-production, production, post-harvest, logistics, branding, and marketing.

### Conclusion

Horticulture sector has emerged as a crucial game-changer for the Indian agriculture sector and the overall Indian economy. It has brought significant and

positive impact on Indian agriculture sector and the overall Indian economy that is visible through increased crop diversity, employment generation, income upliftment, increased export share, improved value addition and use of sustainable practices. As the world focuses on healthier and sustainable diets, the Indian horticulture sector has potential to continue its growth trajectory, providing a sustainable future for both farmers and the nation.

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