

Floriculture- A Viable Alternative to Low Income Farmers

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Flowers are high value commodities used for decoration purposes in various ways such as fresh cut flowers, loose flowers and dry flowers; and for extraction of essential oils and natural dye, etc. The cultivation of flowers provides opportunity to farmers to earn a better profit and being labor intensive, it has a potential of generating additional employment for rural livelihood. In India at present about 1,91,000 ha area is under floriculture producing 10,31,000 MT of loose flowers and 69,027 lakh cut-flowers annually (2010-11). Among different states, Tamil Nadu top-ranks in area followed by Karnataka, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. Production of cut-flowers is highest in Maharashtra (7914 lakh numbers) and loose flowers in Tamil Nadu (247.3 lakh MT). The overall exports of floricultural produce from India reached Rs.294.4 crore by the end of 2009-10 from a meager level of Rs.18.83 crore during 1993-94. The production of cut-flowers increased over the period to attain a production of 6,902 million flowers during 2010-11 from 615 million cut-flowers during the end of 1996-97

The total area dedicated to flower crops in our country exceeds one lakh hectares, India's share in the global flower trade remains less than one percent. In India particularly Haryana due to the low labor costs, diverse agro-climatic conditions, and abundant native floriculture is an extremely viable alternative for low-income farmers to increase their productivity and overall net worth of their agriculture produce. The farmers find the difficulty in floriculture related to its appropriate irrigation to the crop and controlled conditions necessary for floriculture. To overcome these difficulties farmers can make a choice for cut flowers because of its demand in both domestic and international markets. Farmers can diversify their income streams by incorporating flower farming into their traditional farming practices.

The use of drip irrigation and the implementation of rainwater harvesting systems is still not a viable option for low-income farmers. The low-income farmers may opt for subsidy granted to these irrigation systems under various schemes of the

government like The Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare implemented the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) of Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) in the Country from the year 2015-16 to 2021-22 as a component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY). Financial Assistance @ 55% for Small & Marginal farmers and @ 45% for other farmers is provided by the Government for installation of Micro Irrigation under the Scheme. In addition, some States provide additional incentives/top up subsidy for encouraging farmers to adopt Micro Irrigation.

Further, 25% higher unit cost is taken into consideration for calculation of subsidy for the North Eastern and Himalayan states and 15% higher for States with low penetration of Micro Irrigation for larger adoption of Micro Irrigation systems by the farmers under the PDMC scheme. An area of 83.46 lakh hectare has been covered under Micro Irrigation in the Country under PDMC from 2015-16 to 2023-24(till date). State-wise details and percentage of coverage is given in table 1.

Table 1. State-wise area covered under Micro Irrigation through PDMC from 2015-16 to 2023-24 (till date) and percentage

S. No.	State/UT	Area covered under Micro Irrigation in hectares [2015-16 to 2023-24(till date)]	% to total coverage in the Country [2015-16 to 2023-24 (till date)]
1	Andhra Pradesh	919780	11.02
2	Bihar	28258	0.34
3	Chhattisgarh	148146	1.78
4	Goa	875	0.01
5	Gujarat	1087039	13.02
6	Haryana	168336	2.02
7	Himachal Pradesh	12235	0.15
8	Jharkhand	34675	0.42
9	Jammu & Kashmir	1104	0.01

10	Karnataka	1801629	21.59
11	Kerala	5608	0.07
12	Madhya Pradesh	356091	4.27
13	Maharashtra	938089	11.24
14	Odisha	95475	1.14
15	Punjab	15173	0.18
16	Rajasthan	708193	8.49
17	Tamil Nadu	1097910	13.16
18	Telangana	326338	3.91
19	Uttarakhand	32257	0.39
20	Uttar Pradesh	355116	4.26
21	West Bengal	95964	1.15
22	Arunachal Pradesh	12442	0.15
23	Assam	44356	0.53
24	Manipur	15894	0.19
25	Mizoram	8559	0.10
26	Nagaland	19180	0.23
27	Sikkim	12971	0.16
28	Tripura	4145	0.05
29	Ladakh	3	0.000036
	Total	8345840	

However besides above following are the major concerned for floriculture to popularize in India.

1. Technological back up for the existing and anticipated flower cultivation in terms of new and improved varieties, production technology for open field and hi-tech production systems, plant protection and post-harvest management for domestic and export markets.
2. Breeding for exportable varieties including designer flowers and tolerance/resistance to

biotic and abiotic stresses using molecular breeding and advanced techniques.

3. Devising value addition protocols for essential oils, dry flowers, pigments and natural dyes for venturing in to these areas.
4. Laying focus on ornamental plant nurseries, consultancy for landscaping, eco-tourism and pot plant business
5. Identification, domestication and commercialization of native flowers for creating niche markets.
6. Greenhouse designs for different regions and their construction with cheaper alternatives.
7. Market intelligence for providing information on demand, supply and price (domestic and international markets) of various flower commodities.

Conclusions

In India low-income farmers facing tremendous mental, financial trauma due to lack of encouragement for floriculture farming particularly to their cultural and regional interest. More encouragement goes to ornamental flowers and cut flower which is out of bound for low-income farmers. Government schemes are not giving appropriate subsidy to these farmers due to low land ratios as compared to coverage area of crop. Precision agriculture and green house technology still not subsided up to the extent of advantage to low-income farmers.

References

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