

Why India is Putting Impetus on Horticulture Crop then the Food Crops ?

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Horticultural crops have emerged as the best options not only to provide required nutrients but also to enhance access to food through enhanced farm profitability. Changing food patterns i.e. from predominantly cereal based diets to a richer mix of vegetables, fruits, eggs and meat due to increased incomes and greater nutritional awareness are steadily increasing the importance of horticultural production and trade. Total horticulture production in the year 2023-24 is 355.25 million tonnes and area are 28.77 million hectares according to Press Information Bureau Report Delhi. The sector has enormous potential to address Goal 2 of the Sustainable Development agenda, which seeks to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition, and to double agricultural productivity by 2030. Horticulture provides a wider choice for farmers and also complements the food sector, i.e. with potato, tuber crops, banana and vegetables.

According to GOI: A new paradigm shift in farming in the recent past has been towards horticulture-based farming systems to ensure greening, environmental services and to provide nutritious food while enhancing farm profitability. Apart from ensuring nutritional security of the nation, it provides alternate rural employment opportunities, diversification in farm activities, and enhanced income to farmers. India is currently producing about 320.48 million tons of horticulture produce which has surpassed the food grain production, that too from much less area (25.66 Mha. for horticulture against 127.6 Mha. for food grains). Productivity of horticulture crops is much higher compared to productivity of food grains (12.49 tones/ha against 2.23 tones/ha.). Most important among govt initiatives for strengthening the F&V sector is announcement of Second Phase of Green Revolution shift to Horticulture, which was announced in Union Budget (2014-2015).

Process adopted to putting impetus on horticultural crops than the food crops

1. **1970s:** Horticulture was identified by the Govt of India (GOI) as a promising sector for agricultural diversification to enhance profitability. This led to a structural change in Indian agriculture such as farmers

diversified their crop by growing of variety of fruits and vegetables alongside or instead of traditional cereal crops like wheat and rice.

2. **1984:** GOI established the National Horticulture Board (NHB), which initiated various innovative programs/schemes to promote large-scale adoption of modern package of practices and processing/value addition in horticultural crops. With significant increase in budget allocation many developmental activities like micro-irrigation, schemes on fruits, vegetables, flowers etc., were taken up.
3. **1998:** A Technology Mission on Integrated Development of Horticulture for North-East region (TMNE), including Sikkim, was launched. Later, it was renamed as Horticulture Mission for North East and other Himalayan States (HMNEH) with focus on end-to-end approach i.e. from production to consumption.
4. **2005:** The National Horticulture Mission (NHM) was launched with thrust on area-based, regionally differentiated cluster approach for development of horticulture crops. These initiatives led to the “Golden Revolution” in horticultural production, providing opportunity for enhancing farm income, employment (especially for youth and women), schemes which contributed immensely to market information service and technology awareness, soft loans and credit linked back-end subsidy for commercial production, postharvest management, processing and cold storages.
5. **2014-15:** Ministry of Agriculture & Farmer Welfare (MoA & FW) is operating an overarching centrally sponsored scheme ‘Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), subsuming ongoing missions/schemes. Major factors contributing to the horticulture sector’s progress include expansion of area, crops diversification and technological interventions for production and post-harvest management. Thus, convergence between policy changes, horticulture missions, research institutions and entrepreneurship have resulted in a significant increase in horticulture sectors’ contribution to Indian agriculture.

Intentions of Government for shifting the farmer from agriculture to horticulture.

1. The main intentions of govt are shifting the farmer from agriculture to horticulture is to increase the farmers income and the horticulture crops have higher prices in local and export markets as compared to staple food like grains.
2. The Horticulture can be substantiated (proved) by its benefit like high per unit area yield, high returns per unit area, best utilization of wasteland, provision of raw materials for industries, whole engagement by a

grower/laborer, production of more food energy per unit area than that of field crops. (Ravichandra, N. G., & Ravichandra, N. G. (2014).

3. Horticultural crops have more demand in international markets Govt have various types of exports and trading policies such as Agriculture Trade policy (100% Foreign Direct investment FDI is allowed for horticulture and cultivation of vegetables acc. to Deptt. Of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare India). Horticultural production is primarily involved in the intensive use of resources, such as land, water, labour and inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides. The use of such resources in a concentrated space and time has the potential to negatively impact on the local environment and worker welfare. In addition, the transport of horticultural produce over long distances, particularly by air transport is known to have an impact on the global environment. (Lillywhite, R (2014))
4. Horticulture crops are more resilient to climate variability and extreme weather conditions as compared to the traditional field crops. Govt also promotes the cultivation of various drought tolerant or climate resilient varieties as part of climate change adaptation strategies.

Mechanism of India moving from agriculture (food crops) to horticulture (fruits, vegetables, flowers etc.)

1. **Productivity and Value:** Horticultural crops basically have higher value per unit area compared to food grains, making them more profitable for farmers. They also contribute significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) while using a smaller portion of the gross cropped area. Horticulture crops have a higher productivity per hectare compared to food grains leading to a sharp rebound in production and acreage.
2. **Employment and Economic Contribution:** The horticulture sector provides a large employment through various types of activities such as nurseries management, crop maintenance, post-harvest management such as sorting grading waxing etc. and transportation.
3. **Market Demand:** Rapidly growing demand of horticultural commodities, products especially processed fruits and vegetables which is responsible for higher horticulture growth in India.
4. **Policy Measures:** The India Government introduced various types of policies such as Land Lease policy (the landlord can legally lease the land with mutual consent for agriculture and allied activities. In this act/policy it has been taken care that in any circumstances the leased holders' claims on land will not be valid.) and others such as crop insurance policies (i.e. PMFBY for annual Horticultural crops and the maximum premium is 5%)



5. **Post- Harvest Infrastructure:** The India has introduced so many post-harvest infrastructure policies i.e. development of cold storage, mobile cold chains, linkage based on road and ports, new marketing initiatives like Mega food Park, Retail Chain etc. (ISTIP Policy Bulletin No. 15, December 2015) to reduce post-harvest losses, and promotes better transportation and distribution networks.

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