



## A Case Study

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## Horticulture in north-east India : Strengths and prospects

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**Abstract :** At present the horticulture is recognized as an important sector for potential diversification and value addition in agriculture. The north east region is one of the richest reservoir of genetic variability and diversity of different crops *i.e.* various kinds of fruits, different vegetables, spices, ornamental plants and also medicinal and aromatic plants. The diversity for horticultural crops of this region has mainly been managed by local farmers, often women. Considerable diversity exists among the regional horticultural species including variation in plant type, morphological and physiological characteristics, reactions to diseases and pests, adaptability and distribution. Apart from the nutritional value, many regional horticultural crops are used for medicinal purposes and income generating source in the rural areas. The region offers scope for cultivation of a wide variety of horticultural crops such as fruits, vegetables, flowers, tuber and rhizomatous crops and spices because of its diversities in topography, altitude and climatic conditions. A range of fruit crops varying from highly temperate types like walnut, apple, etc., to subtropical as well as tropical fruits are coming up well in this region. Similarly wide and diverse types of vegetables including indigenous ones are cultivated in the region. Despite of these favourable factors and the scope for cultivation of horticultural crops, the development of horticulture has not picked up momentum as desired. The proposed paper is targeted to examine the existing position of horticulture in NER with a view to ascertain its growth potential by evaluating problems and prospects with a primary objective of suggesting lines of development in future.

**Key words :** Horticulture, Vegetables, Fruits, North-East India, Aromatic plants, Constraints, Prospects, Strategies

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The horticulture which includes a wide variety of crops such as fruits, vegetables, spices, plantation crops, floriculture, medicinal and aromatic plants, cashew etc. is now a day recognized as an important product for potential diversification and value addition in agriculture. Presently, horticultural crops occupy around 13 per cent of India's gross cropped area. The total production of fruits has been estimated at 63.50 million tonnes from an area of 5.34 million hectares and vegetables has been estimated at 125.9 million tonnes from an area of 7.05 million hectares during 2007-2008. Horticultural crops, particularly fruits are now receiving increasing attention in view of its increasing commercial importance accentuated by quick transportation to vast internal market. India accounts for 10 per cent of world production of fruits *i.e.*, mango, banana, citrus, apple, papaya, pineapple and grapes account for the buck of fruit production.

The North Eastern region of India comprising eight states namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim lies between 21°.51' and 29°.5' latitude and 85°.5' and 97°.5' E longitude. It has vast physiographical variations, which have been represented in 6 agro climatic zones. The region has its own unique combination of living species, habitats and eco-systems, which together make up its diversity rich resource. While speaking strictly about plant diversity, two regions of the country are termed as hot spots. These are – Western Ghats and the North Eastern hill regions. The region is one of the richest reservoir of genetic variability and diversity of different crops *i.e.* various kinds of fruits, different vegetables, spices, ornamental plants and also medicinal and aromatic plants. The diversity for horticultural crops of this region has mainly been managed by local farmers, often women. Considerable diversity exists among the regional