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Major constraints and utilization pattern of groundnut under rainfed conditions in Punjab

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ABSTRACT

The groundnut cultivation has almost disappeared from the irrigated areas of the Punjab state over the years and is now largely confined to sub mountainous region adjoining Himachal Pradesh. The groundnut is mostly grown as rainfed crop by majority of the farmers in the *Kandi area* of Punjab. The present study was undertaken to identify various abiotic constraints confronted by groundnut growers and to analyze the production and utilization pattern of the produce. Drought, lack of quality seeds, poor irrigation facilities, price variability, storage losses due to rodent attack and shortage of labour were the major abiotic constraints. Incidences of diseases and insect-pests attack were the major problems. The marketed surplus was 88.85, per cent. out of which 84.8 per cent was sold immediately after digging in the local market at the price of Rs. 15.28 per kg and 3.68 per cent was sold in future at the price of Rs. 17.61 per kg. There is an urgent need to develop necessary infrastructure for storage so that farmers can sell their produce in future at remunerative prices. Quality seed should be made available along with development of irrigation facilities. In order to stop distress sale and price variability government agencies should come forward to ensure good returns to the growers. The researchers should develop high yielding varieties resistant to drought, diseases and insect pests.

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INTRODUCTION

Punjab is known as the food basket of the country because of presence of considerable area under paddy-wheat crop rotation which owes to the availability of assured irrigation facilities and good marketing infrastructure in the state. In pre-Green Revolution era, there was considerable area under oilseeds and pulses in the state. The area under these crops declined over time due to better productivity and assured marketing/ price support for rice and wheat crops. Farming in Punjab had reached at a critical juncture due to the monoculture practices of paddy-wheat cropping system resulting in various ecological, hydrological, environmental problems and micronutrient soil deficiencies. But still there are some areas in Punjab which are lacking in assured irrigation facilities due to its topography. This area falls in Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar and Ropar districts of Punjab locally known as *Kandi Belt* of Punjab where large area is rainfed and in *Kharif* season maize, groundnut, pulses and fodder crops are grown.

Owing to various biotic and abiotic constraints, the groundnut cultivation has almost disappeared from the cropping scene of the state over the years. The area under groundnut that was as large as 222 thousands hectares in the beginning year of green revolution *i.e.* 1967-68, reduced to only 83 thousand hectares in 1980-81. It faced another drastic decline to merely 11 thousand hectares in 1990-91 and during the last about one and a half decade; the groundnut cultivation has touched its flooring level of 3.2 thousand hectares in 2007-08 (Anonymous, 2008).

Oilseeds are generally grown as rainfed crops and the proportion of irrigated area under these crops is very low. Main constraints in oilseed production were lack of high yielding varieties for dry land conditions, risk of crop failure due to erratic rainfall, lack of institutional credit facilities, less remunerative prices and lack of institutional mechanism for integrating production, processing and marketing of oilseeds. These constraints were