

DRYLAND HORTICULTURE: A WAY TO IMPROVE RURAL LIVELIHOOD

A.P. SIVAMURUGAN, S. NANTHAKUMAR, A.SUGANTHI AND S.JOSHUA DAVIDSON

Krishi Vigyan Kendra (T.N.A.U.), VIRINJIPURAM (T.N.) INDIA

Dryland Horticulture encompasses growing of fruits under arid and semiarid environment, mostly under rainfed conditions. Production system under the fragile arid environment faces several bio-physical constraints viz.,



poor soil condition, extremely high temperature, hot winds, high solar radiation ,very low rainfall etc. which lead to high

atmospheric vapour pressure deficit, high potential evapotranspiration and moisture index values as low as – 65 to –69. There is immense scope to develop horticulture in the arid regions, which will help to increase the production of fruits and improve the economic condition of the people of these regions. The drylands offer good scope for the development of horticulture, agro forestry, social forestry, Horti-Sylvi-pasture and such other similar systems, which will not only supply food, fuel to the village people and fodder to the cattle but also forms a suitable vegetative cover for ecological maintenance. Experiments conducted in different agro- climatic regions of India proved that some fruit crops are very promising under dry farming situations, which are as follows:



Fruit crops for drylands:

- Amla (*Embilica officinalis*)
- Bael (*Aegle marmelos*)
- Ber (*Zyzyphus mauritiana*)
- Pomegranate (*Punica granatum*)
- Custard apple (*Annona squamosa*)
- Phalsa (*Grewia asiatica*)
- West Indian cherry (*Malpighia punicifolia*)
- Karonda(*Carissa carandas*)
- Jamun (*Syzygium cuminii*)
- Manila tamarind (*Pithecellobium dulce*)
- Wood apple (*Feronia limonia*)
- Tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*)

Uncertainty in rainfall, poor soil fertility, and low level of management has made annual cropping of field crops

a non-remunerative enterprise in many pockets of drylands. In certain areas, cropping has been given up altogether, lands remain fallow and become wasteland overgrown with unwanted vegetation. To overcome this problem and to bring back the land under economically useful vegetation, alternate land use systems such as horticulture, pastures and agro forestry are

recommended. Growing of fruit crops is one of the ways of crop diversification in drylands, which provide higher and stable income to the farmers besides utilizing the off-season precipitation.

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