



Problems and prospects of pomegranate growing in Barmer district of Rajasthan

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In India, it is reported that 2.3 lakh ha area is under Pomegranate cultivation and major states contributing to this area are Maharashtra (1.13 lakh ha), Karnataka (0.2 lakh ha), Gujarat (0.18 lakh ha) and Rajasthan (0.16 lakh ha).

Rajasthan, with a mixed terrain of hills and plains intercepted by large number of rivers and streams, is nature's unique gift for production of large number horticultural crops, Rajasthan has a geographical area of 3,32,239 sq.kms with a population of 22.9 lakh as per 2001 census. The land is less fertile to rich fertile and has a variety of agro-climatic conditions. While the western plain lands of Rajasthan are well suited for pomegranate production. The major pomegranate grown Barmer, Jalore, Sirohi Jodhpur districts of Rajasthan. According to Directorate of Horticulture, the area under pomegranate cultivation during the year 2018-19 was 0.8 lakh hectares.

Pomegranate production provides employment and generates income for large number of people in rural areas.

Majority of the people of Rajasthan are unemployed and live in poor condition. Thus, from the View point of employment and income, fruit growing can play a very important role in the State's economy For the promotion of healthy growth of horticulture in Rajasthan, it is essential to develop horticultural marketing and improve transport system as the present low level of production is due to perishable nature of the products coupled with improper marketing facilities.

Problems of pomegranate production: The various problems inhibiting the growth of horticultural development are as under.

Poor socio-economic condition: The marginalization of farmers is a dominant factor adversely affecting household income. Over 60.27 per cent of the operational holdings are below 1.0 ha and 22.18 per cent of the holdings are in the farm size group of 1-2 ha. Such small holdings are uneconomical resulting in under - investment in agriculture leading to low input use and low production.

Table 1: District wise area and production of pomegranate in 2018-19

District	Area (ha)	Prod (MT)	District	Area (ha)	Prod (MT)
Ajmer	45	139	Jaipur	36	169
Alwar	12	48	Jaisalmer	232	500
Banswara	2	15	Jalore	3328	5039
Baran	17	40	Jhalawar	0	0
Barmer	2545	1997	Jhunjhunu	6	61
Bharatpur	0	0	Jodhpur	247	381
Bhilwara	112	217	Karauli	0	0
Bikaner	211	208	Kota	5	80
Bundi	27	193	Nagaur	96	277
Chittor	128	1939	Pali	44	44
Churu	47	155	Rajsamand	61	183
Dausa	7	95	S. modhpur	2	6
Dholpur	0	2	Sikar	15	25
Dungarpur	2	6	Sirohi	180	1002
Srigangangar	26	220	Tonk	30	39
Hanumangarh	3	6	Udaipur	8	35

Source : www.agriculture.rajasthan.gov.in > content > Directorate-of-Horticulture-dep (2018-19)

Poor cultivation practices: The per unit area production figures of almost far below the India average and the poor yield is mostly due to neglect and absence of scientific cultivation practices. In pomegranate, against an all India average of about 15.5 tonnes per hectare, the average in Rajasthan- is about 7.4 tonnes per hectare. Poor productivity of most of the pomegranate is due to use of inferior crop varieties and faulty agronomic practices. It may not be unfair to say that there is perhaps no concept of modern orcharding in the entire region of Rajasthan and whatever produce is Obtained comes mostly as nature's gift.

Poor transport facility: Transportation is one of the major problems faced by the pomegranate growers of Rajasthan since the farms and orchards are located in remote and interior areas in the absence of good and reliable roads. A good percentage of money is being spent by the farmers on transportation, There by, denying the worth profit to be gained by the cultivators.

Lack of marketing facilities: The most challenging task faced by the farmers in Rajasthan is that of marketing. The poor returns .available to the growers are largely due to the lack of organized marketing structure that may lift the surplus produce from the growers at a reasonable price. The short post harvest life of most of the produce and lack of cold storage facility to store these perishable fruits compel the growers to sell their produce to the middle 'men at uneconomically low prices. Estimates made at different times show that, in general, a fruit orchardist receives only 10-15 per cent of the consumer price and only in a few selected pockets adjacent to cities ,townships or retail markets the growers can expect about 60-80 per cent of the consumer price.

Planting materials: The use of desirable plant type alone contributes very significantly in the future performance of pomegranate plantations very little attention has been paid on such vital issues like large scale propagation of selected and desirable plant types and their distribution to the growers. Most of the nurseries are manned by non-professionals. The quality of the plants multiplied at various nurseries is not good and almost no care is taken in certifying the mother plant for its clonal purity as well for its freeness from transmissible diseases.

Insufficient extension activities: Dirth of insufficient number of trained staff, poor staffing pattern for horticultural development work and low priority of horticulture in the development plans of the state are some of the factors responsible for ineffective extension programmes. Research information that have been made

available from the various research centres of ICAR, CSIR, CAU etc. could hardly be transferred to the desired extent to the farmers' fields and the extension programmes could not be organized on sound technical lines.

Problems of processing: For a region like Rajasthan the success of pomegranate growing' is closely linked with the success of fruit processing units. The positive demand pulled by the processing industry can only help in sorting out the problem of proper disposal of perishable commodities like fruits. Only a few processing units have been established in Rajasthan and the present position of these fruit processing units is not good and some of the units are already closed due to heavy loss.

Slow pace in adoption of technology: The current progress of the industry is encouraging but the expected rapid growth has not taken place. The primary reason for such a slow growth is because of low awareness level amongst the people about application of new technology. Although within the country the research groups have put a lot of efforts in standardizing protocols for several fruits crops. The benefits have not been sufficiently demonstrated to the farmers at the field level. Therefore, technology is not so popular at the gross root level.

High capital investment: Since pomegranate crops have two year gestation period and initial cost of establishment of orchard is high, it becomes almost impossible for the poor and marginal farmers to go for such ventures of their own.

Improper functioning of grower, co-operatives: Due to improper functioning of the growers, co-operatives, the growers' body cannot deal effectively with marketing problems of agricultural commodities. Latest information on market price and other market information cannot be disseminated from time to time to safeguard the interest of both the growers and the consumers against the exploitation of the market by un-scrupulous traders.

Prospects of pomegranate growing:

Commercialization of pomegranate crops: Rajasthan has vast potential for commercial plantation pomegranate At present, many of such processed fruits are imported to Rajasthan from other States and neighbouring countries through Myanmar. But, it has opened a vast opportunity for developing food processing industries in Rajasthan with the establishment of various processing units like exotic juice.

Development of fruit processing industries: Food processing industry is a major thrust area in the State as it plays a significant supportive role in the diversification and commercialization with value addition of agro-

horticultural products. Blessed with suitable agro-climatic conditions, Rajasthan abounds in varieties of raw material resources for food processing industries. The State has tremendous potential for further development of food processing industries based on locally available materials of pomegranate.

Future strategies:

- Development of agro-techniques and improved varieties to increase productivity.
- Evaluation of high yielding varieties of pomegranate for Rajasthan condition and identification of resistant rootstocks.
- Gradual expansion of area under recommended varieties using cultivable waste land.
- Sequential replanting of unproductive orchard through participatory approach.
- Popularization of technology like high density planting, mulching, drip and sprinkler irrigation systems etc.
- Research and extension on different models of fruit based cropping system for the state.
- Research and demonstration on integrated nutrient management, integrated pest and disease management in horticulture based cropping system.
- Development of basic infrastructure like transport, pre-cooling and grading unit, storage, pack house, refrigerated containers etc.
- Development of community based fruit processing industries.
- Strengthening of effective linkage between State Government and ICAR along with CAU and other organizations like NGOs, NHB, NABARD and other

funding agencies.

- Strategic advertising by using print, electronic and web media for marketing and export promotion of pomegranate crops with registered trademarks.

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