The Asian Journal of Horticulture, Vol. 3 No. 2 : 446-448 (December-2008)

A Case Study :

Improved technology of saffron (*Crocus sativus* L.) cultivation in Kashmir

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Accepted : *October, 2008*

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Key words : Saffron, Crocus, Technology, Cultivation, Kashmir.

Saffron is an important cash crop of Jammu and Kashmir State. Saffron is cultivated by farming communities of Kashmir, contributing significantly overall economy of the state. The productivity of saffron in the state is very low about 2 kilograms per hectare as compared to other saffron growing countries. The sustainability in saffron crop is the most vital aspect to improve the status of the crop and the economy of the saffron growers. Despite the fact that saffron growers can be effectively exploited, the growers often met with poor management of saffron crop which does not allow them to increase the productivity. Saffron growers require technical assistance in scientific cultivation, sprinkle irrigation methods, and manure / fertilizer management practices. They need scientific as well as economic assistance to adopt the recommended technologies. Improved technology regarding cultivation is the need of the day, so as to increase the productivity of saffron.

Saffron (*Crocus sativus* L) is a bulbous perennial herbaceous plant treasured for its golden coloured, pungent stigmas, which are dried and commercially important for its medicinal, flavouring, colouring and perfumery properties. Saffron is propagated vegetatively through its corms. Saffron corms are globular, 2 to 5 cm in diameter and produce radical, thread like dark green leaves surrounded in the lower region by 4 or 5 scales at the base. The perianth is mauve coloured forming a cylindrical tube 7 to 8 cm long. The three stigmas along with style constitute in the dry state, the pure saffron for commercial importance.

Saffron is cultivated in Spain, Italy, Iran, Greece and India. In India, the dominant saffron cultivation activities has been taken extensively only in district Pulwama of south Kashmir spreading over an area of 2.5 thousand hectares. The productivity of saffron in the state is very low about 2 kilograms per hectare as compared to other saffron growing countries like Italy (10 kg / h), Spain (8 kg / h) and Iran (5 kg / h).

The reasons for low productivity in the state is poor management of saffron cultivation, as it involves specialized operations from selection of land, planting techniques of corms, application of fertilizers and manures, intercultural operations, sprinkle irrigation, picking, sorting and drying. Its cultivation is highly labour intensive. We can not expect that that all the technologies generated by research system would reach all the saffron growers, even with the functioning of well established development departments engaged in the transfer of such technologies. Though it is a cash crop, saffron growers do not get the potential yield since they are not fully aware of scientific technologies, do not posses the technical skill, expected knowledge and convinced to adopt the improved technologies in their fields. It is worth to study the improved technology of saffron cultivation in Kashmir, so that those who are concerned, with saffron like researchers, development workers, policy makers, planners etc can appropriately work for the development of saffron growers, by minimizing the gap between poor management of saffron cultivation that prevails at present.

Improved technology :

Soil and climate :

Sandy loam to loamy soils rich in well decomposed organic matter is very ideal for saffron cultivation. Its cultivation is