

# IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HORTICULTURE

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**H**orticulture is the study or practice of growing flowers, fruits and vegetables. Horticultural crops are very nutritious. Particularly, fruits and vegetables provide higher amount of vitamins and minerals to us. In our daily life, we eat different fruits and vegetables. Growing horticultural crops is very suitable for small and marginal farmers

## History of horticulture in India

**H**orticulture has improved the economic status of farmers in India. Seasonal availability of fruits and vegetables throughout the year has increased the per capita consumption from 40 to 85 grams and 95 to 175 grams of fruits and vegetables, respectively. It has also played a significant role in women endowment, providing employment opportunities to them in mushroom cultivation, floriculture and vegetable seed production etc. The annual growth rate during the period was more than 6.5 percent. Thus, horticulture sector constitutes more than 24.5 percent

from mere 8.5 percent of area to the gross domestic product (GDP) of agriculture.

India is blessed with various types of soils and varied agro-climatic conditions as a result of which the country has the advantages of growing a variety of horticultural crops. Horticulture includes a wide range of crops viz., fruits, vegetables, tuber crops, flowers, plantation crops, medicinal and aromatic plants. These crops are being grown in varied agro-climatic conditions i.e temperate, tropical, subtropical and arid zones. India has made a fairly good progress on the horticultural map of the world with a total production touching over 152.2MT during 2000 – 2001. Presently, India is the largest producer of fruits and second largest of vegetables in the world after China. India ranks third after China and U.S.A, in the production of horticultural crops. India is world's largest producer of mangoes and second largest producer of banana and onion. The recent breakthrough in technology coupled with concerted and sustained efforts to augment the food production has transformed India in achieving self-sufficiency in food grains production. However, the problem of malnutrition needs to be overcome





# “World Horticultural Industry in peril due to COVID - 19 lockdown”

COVID - 19/ Corona virus is a respiratory illness which has infected more than 200 countries and has killed more than 6 lakh people globally. As countries across the world increased their actions to contain the spread of COVID - 19, the implications are beginning to be felt across the horticultural and agricultural products supply chains. Horticulture industries across the world are severally affected. Ornamental growers across Europe are suffering from reduced demand. In Britain, the closure of more than 3,000 garden centers and nurseries mean makers of what's fresh food supply is being threatened by COVID - 19. Fresh fruits and vegetables became increasingly scarce in Europe and United states. African countries like Kenya, which is a major supplier of green beans and peas to Europe, half of the workers in the sectors have been sent home on mandatory leave because of the industry's inability to ship orders, even as demands from European retailers surge.

## Effects of COVID - 19 on Indian Horticulture sector

Due to COVID - 19 pandemic a nationwide lockdown has been imposed across the country to contain the spread of this deadly virus. This lockdown has severely affected the various economic sectors of India and so horticulture sector too. Farmers/growers across the country have faced many problems due to the nationwide lockdown. For examples in Southern states of India like Andhra Pradesh and Telangana this lockdown has dealt a blow

to the horticultural sector at the time when crops like banana, watermelon, musk melon, sweet lime, grapes, pomegranate and papaya were ready for harvesting. With the shutdown of agriculture markets, state governments have instructed the farmers not to bring their produce to the markets. State governments ensured the farmers that all their produce would be procured by the government itself.

There is a great demand for labour in agriculture sector but “no one is coming out due to lockdown.” There is no transportation facility to procure labour from nearby villages. Banana planted in 4,000 hectare and sweet lemons harvested from 600 hectare area got damaged. The horticultural crops have got a huge hit by the nationwide lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic. With the transport coming to complete halt, farmers are unable to take vegetables and fruits to the markets in the towns. Banana, sweet lemon, watermelon, tomato and chili farmers in Andhra Pradesh are affected too are badly by this situation. There are no cold storage units to store bananas. The entire crops are wasted due to many reasons like there are no buyers. We may see a situation where farmers will dump the bananas like what we have seen earlier with onions and tomatoes in the past.

The lockdown has affected much more to the horticulture industry. Few days ago, ETCFO spoke with INI Farms Finance Head, Sushil Parikh. INI farms are an integrated horticulture start - up, which was set up in 2009. It is working with more than 2,500 farmers across Maharashtra, Gujarat,

Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. It exports pomegranates and bananas to over 35 countries. The peak season for exports is from January to May and the lockdown was imposed during this export season & it severely affected the activities of INI Farms and many more other businesses too. The Indian horticulture sector has suffered the losses of up to 70% during the lockdown period.

## Problems

Meanwhile, the main problem is the shortage of labour. At every step i.e from sowing, weeding, harvesting, sorting, packing, loading, transportation and upto processing labour is required. Due to scarcity of labour supply chains are also disrupted. There are so many farmer who did not got the genuine price for their produce, they sold their produce at very low price. Due to the increased cost of harvesting & transportation, fall in rate & demand and closure of majority of markets, the horticulture industry has suffered severe monetary losses worth thousands of crores.

## Studies says

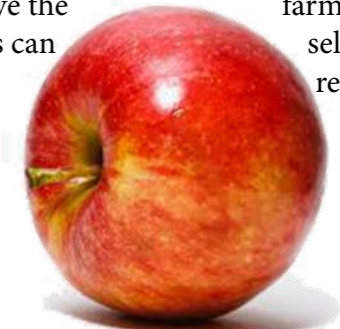
Bhagal 1994 conducted a study in Nainital district of Uttarakhand and his study revealed that 66.66 percent of the apple growers were facing problems due to the non - availability of cold storage facilities, 64.00 percent of the apple growers were facing

problems due high marketing cost and 51.39 percent of growers were facing problems due to the lack of transport facilities.

Kumar S 1996 in his study on management of mango gardens by farmers in Krishnagiri taluk of Dharmapuri district revealed that majority of the respondents i.e 80.93 percent leased out their mango gardens, nearly fifty percent of respondents sold their produce at different market places and only 9.17 percent of the respondents auctioned their produce.

Venkatarman and Gowda S, 1996 studied the economics of tomato production in Kolar district of Karnataka. They worked out the per acre total cost of production and the marketing costs which was Rs. 15,648.26 and. 18,406.77, respectively. Out of total cost of production 37.55 percent was incurred on labour, 21.55 percent was on manures and fertilizers and 13.64 percent on plant protection chemicals.

The government needs to immediately step in to improve the farming system so that farmers can sell their produce on time at reasonable price.





## WAYS OUT

### Solutions for packing:

It's very difficult to protect the produce from mechanical injuries during transportation. Some horticultural crops when packed in wooden cartons then there is an increased risk of the mechanical injuries to the commodities. So, there should be some innovative packing technologies so that these losses can be reduced.

### Solution for cold storage:

As we know horticultural commodities are very perishable in nature. Thus, government should avail the cold storage facilities for the horticultural crops at fare price so that farmers can afford and adopt these practices very easily.

### Solution for transportation:

The horticultural crops are mostly transported by road. So, to ensure the proper transportation of the horticultural commodities better road facilities should be there in the country.

### Solution for proper weighting:

There should be a proper system for weighting of the horticultural commodities so that seller can know & get the exact quantity and exact price.

