

Marketing of Flowers in Seraj Valley, Himachal Pradesh

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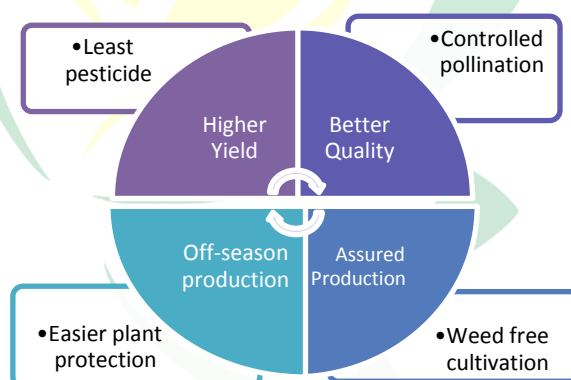
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Introduction

With the improvement in the agricultural technology the production of the various agricultural and Horticultural crops has increased. Protected cultivation is the one of the means which helped the farmers to grow horticultural produce under the controlled environmental conditions like temperature, humidity, light and such other factors. Many flowers and ornamental plants are grown in the country for the domestic use and export market as well. They are used as raw material in the manufacturing of essence, medicines, perfumes and confectionaries. A strong increase in the demand for cut and loose flowers has made floriculture as one of the important commercial trades in India. The returns per unit are more in flowers compared to other agricultural and horticultural crops.

Need for protected cultivation



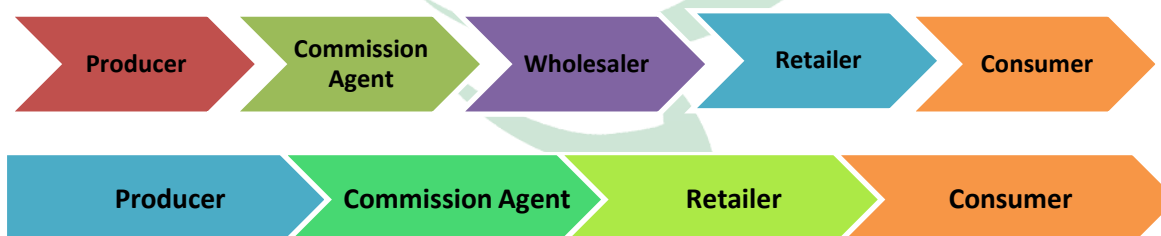
Himachal Pradesh is agrarian state with varied agro-climatic conditions ranging from subtropical to temperate, serving as an off-season hub for cultivation of various horticultural crops. This has further led to the increase in the income of the farmers. In Himachal Pradesh there are excellent opportunities for the development of floriculture to serve the internal markets and export as well. Floriculture is being viewed as highly remunerative and profitable venture of horticulture owing to a steady increase in demand of flowers on account

of increase in per capita income, change in life-styles and social values of the people. The missions like Horticultural technology Mission (HTM) and Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) had led to growth in the cultivation of the flowers in the states along with the other horticultural crops.

The area under flowers in India is 283.27 thousand ha and production of the loose flowers is 2295.07 thousand tonne and cut flowers is 833.16 thousand tones. Likewise the area under total flowers in Himachal Pradesh is 0.37 thousand hectares and the production of the loose and cut flowers are 1.30 and 10.46 thousand tonne respectively. Protected cultivation plays a major role in the cultivation of the flowers in Himachal Pradesh especially in the Seraj Valley of Mandi District here the farmers grow flowers in the poly houses. Until last few decades the growing and Selling of the flowers was confined to a few families. The situation however has been changed as now. The farmers have started growing flowers in the open fields and polyhouses. They grow flowers like gladiolus, carnation, Angelonia, roses etc. Seraj valley has a wide potential for the cultivation of the horticultural crops.

Since the flowers are perishable in nature so due care is needed for their management. After harvesting the produce the farmers make the bouquet of the flowers using the PP bags/ pouch material. They spray water on the flowers to keep it fresh till marketing.

The farmers market their produce in the Delhi market. They harvest the flowers from the poly houses and then send it through the public transport to the Delhi flower market. They sometimes use their own means of transport to take their produce to the Delhi flower market. The commission agents then sell the produce in the markets. The cost of the bouquet ranges from Rs. 300-500. The different marketing channels followed by the farmers are:



The involvement of the commission agent in the marketing of the flower in this area revealed the lack of proper market for flowers. The individual; farmers is sending the flowers to the market which adds more cost to them. The involvement of the commission agents can

be removed this channel with the formation of the farmer Producers Organization (FPO) for the collection and marketing of the flowers.

