

## Role of Exotic Vegetables in Human Diet and Prospects under Indian Conditions

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### Introduction

The agro-climatic conditions prevailing in several parts of India especially Himalayans of Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Kumaon and Garhwal divisions of Utrakhnad are very favourable for growing the exotic vegetables like celery, parsley, leek, globe artichobe, broccoli, lettuce, asparagus etc.

### Role of exotic vegetables in human diet:

These vegetables play an important role in the balanced diet of human beings. Some of the exotic vegetables such as Brussels sprouts are good source of carbohydrates and proteins. Asparagus provides a good amount of vitamin B.

Exotic vegetable can be discussed in the light of their edible portion and nutritive value as:

- **Brussels sprouts:** It is a crop of rather recent development in the cole group. The buds in the axils of this usually petiolate leaves develop into miniature heads, a few centimetre in diameter and these buds are of commercial value. It contains good amount of carbohydrates and protein comparable to cabbage
- **Sprouting broccoli:** It is also a crop of recent introduction in India. It is gaining popularity among farmers as well as consumers. It is being consumed in five star hotels on a large scale. Heads just like of cauliflower are harvested when they are still tight and grown to moderate size. The nutritive value of the crop is much higher than cauliflower when compared for vitamin A and C and minerals iron and calcium.
- **Globe artichobe:** It is used primarily as a luxury vegetable. It may be boiled, steamed, stuffed, fried or marinated. It has been reported to have medicine values including reduction of blood clotting and capillary resistance, neutralization of some toxic substances and amelioration of gastrointestinal process.

- **Lettuce:** Edible part is leaf. It is rich in vitamin A and minerals like calcium and iron. It also contains vitamin C, protein and carbohydrates.
- **Celery:** Celery is a culinary crop grown for its long fleshy leaf stalk and looks somewhat like leafy onion. Leaves of celery are more nutritive than stalks especially in vitamin A, protein and calcium.
- **Asparagus:** It is a herbaceous perennial vegetable. Tender succulent shoots are consumed. Tender shoots or spears are cooked for various vegetable products and soup preparation. It is also eaten raw. A white crystalline substance, asparagines, obtained from the juice of young shoots is considered to be a good diuretic and is used specially in cardiac dropsy and chronic gout.
- **Swiss chard and beet green:** Both the vegetables are very similar in cooked appearance, flavor and food value. Swiss chard provides 87% of the average adult daily requirement of vitamin A and 25% of vitamin C. Leaves of both contain high levels of minerals.
- **New Zealand Spinach:** Food value is excellent, with an average serving providing 72% of the adult daily requirement of vitamin A and 27% of vitamin C. Flavour is like that of spinach but without astringency.
- **Endive:** Food value differs among cultivar types. Curly endive contains 3300 IU of vitamin A and 10 mg of vitamin C. Plain leaf endive (escarole) is much higher, with 14000 IU of vitamin A and vitamin C. All endives contain moderate amounts of minerals.

#### **Prospects of exotic vegetables under Indian conditions:**

The farmers in India have small land holdings and economically less secured. Some innovative growers are ready to take the risk and examples are adoption of sprouting broccoli and lettuce by few growers. Cultivation of these exotic vegetables will provide employment and boost the income of the rural masses, who have small holdings. With the coming up of various Pepsi and Cola projects in various parts of country, these vegetables can be well preserved, canned and converted into culinary products for easy dispatch to exportable markets. Because there is a need for diversity, and moreover, some of these exotic vegetables surpass the vegetables being grown at present, in their nutritive value, awareness should be created about the nutritive value of such vegetables and provisions for up to date package of



practices so that the growers could be encouragement in adoption of these vegetables in their traditional cropping system.

