

KASHMIRI SAFFRON GOT GI TAG

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Kashmir valley is famous for its beauty, spices, handicraft and the most important rejuvenator' Kashmiri saffron' which recently got geographical indicator certificate [GI] from the central government on 11th August 2020. Because of its aroma it is expected that due to this achievement price of the saffron will increase in international market. Saffron is introduced by central Asia around 1st century BCE. In Sanskrit saffron is referred to as 'Bhakum'. The unique characteristics of Kashmiri saffron are its longer and thicker stigma, natural deep red colour and high aroma. Saffron is called "KESAR" in Hindi & Gujarati, "KONG" in Kashmiri, "JAFRAN" in Bengali "ZAFRAN" in Punjabi, "KUMKUMA, ASRA, ASRIKA and ARUNA" in Sanskrit

What is Geographical Indication [GI]?

It is the mark given to a certain products like natural products or manufactured products. Those products that are unique, of amazing quality and are from a particular region like country and state. No one is permitted to use this tag other than the region to which this tag is given. In India geographical indication of goods act of the year 1999 and the tag is given by geographical indicator registry under the department of industry promotion and internal trade.

Kashmiri Saffron is nowhere similar to the saffron found in other countries; it is very different from them. It is very different from them. It is better in quality because of its dark colour, high aroma and thick thread. Because of possessing all these qualities, it has high medical value. There are three types of saffron produced in Kashmir i.e. "LACHHA saffron" with stigma just separated from the flower and dried without processing. "MONGRA saffron" in which stigma is detached from the flower and dried in the sun and "GUCHHI saffron" in which stigma just separated from the flower are loosely packed in an airtight container after that make a bundle of stigma and tied with cotton thread.

India rank third in the world saffron production. Iran is the larger producer of saffron. Kashmiri saffron is of superior quality because of high concentration of crocin (a carotenoid) that imparts colour to the saffron and medical value. Its crocin content is 8.72% as compared to the Iranian saffron i.e. 6.82%. Saffron cultivation in India is nearby 7.3 % of the world saffron production. In Kashmir Pulwama, Budgam and Srinagar are the major saffron growing areas.

Saffron is grown in loamy and sandy soil. Clayey soil is not suitable for the cultivation of saffron. It prefers acidic soil. It can be grown in soil up to 15 to 20 cm deep with an inter-plant spacing of around 10 cm. Saffron is ready to harvest after 3 to 4 months of planting. Cultivation of saffron can be practised in both dry and sunken area. It needs photoperiods of 12 hours which gives a lot of benefits and also makes the flowering process sluggish.

Saffron is normally grown from August till 15th September. Flowers of saffron are harvested in October and November. After harvesting flowers are dried in sun for 5 days after that pack the dried saffron in airy container. So that the quality of the saffron does not get hamper. One kilogram saffron contains one lakh sixty thousand to one lakh seventy thousand tiny flowers. It needs extreme heat & dryness in summer and extreme cold during winter. Its water requirement is low, irrigation upto 2 - 3 times in a span of 15 days till flowering is enough. Rains boost the production of new corms. After plucking of flowering in first year of cultivation, the saffron field are being left untouched upto the advent of new spring.

In Kashmir saffron is grown by using indigenous techniques. To improve the productivity and yield there is a need of the latest technologies.

Conclusion

Kashmiri saffron has a rich cultural heritage and is globally very famous now. It holds great importance in cosmetics, perfumery, textile and dye producing industry. Due to GI tag now it is expected that Kashmiri saffron will make its own place in international market. Because of its aroma, colour and quality it is used in royal dishes to add flavour and provide colour. Cultivation of saffron is very expensive therefore its price is also increasing day by day. It is also called as Red Gold. Government should take necessary steps for increasing the production of saffron. This can also boost cultivators to put more land under the cultivation this Golden crop.