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AGRICULTURE FORMS THE BACKBONE OF THE INDIAN ECONOMY

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Abstract:-Agriculture forms the backbone of the Indian economy and despite concerted towards industrialization for about five decades agriculture still continues to occupy a place of pride. Being the largest industry in the country, agriculture is a source of livelihood for 67.8 per cent of the population in the country. In India, it is not only the main source of livelihood but also an art, tradition and the common way of life. It provides food, raw materials and employment opportunities to a very large portion of the population. Through exporting agricultural commodities, India earns valuable foreign exchange which can be used for importing capital, technical know-how etc. which can assist in the establishment of industry and infrastructural facilities. In India, the development of industrial sector depends upon the development of agricultural sector and vice-versa.

Keywords:Agriculture, Indian economy, exporting agricultural, raw materials, employment opportunities.

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural products are classified fundamentally in various categories as foodgrain, oilseeds, pulse crops, fruits and flowers (horticultural crops). Horticultural crops are also classified by the Standard International Trade Classification Categories. In the Indian context, horticultural products include fruits, vegetables, floriculture and spices. India is a major producer of horticultural produce in the world. India's variatal agro-climatic conditions, moderate temperature, tropical and sub tropical climate is suitable to produce a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. India is a largest producer of fruits and the second largest producer of vegetables in the world. Besides India is a largest producer of mangoes and bananas and is among the first ten in the production of apples, papaya, oranges, grapes and pineapples. In vegetable category, India is a world's largest producer of cauliflower, second largest producer of onions and among the first ten producers of cabbage, green peas, potatoes and tomatoes. India produces about 70 different varieties of leafy, fruity and starchy tuber varieties of vegetables.

The area and production of fruit in India was 33.57 lakh/ha and 415.07 lakh/MT in 1995-96 and 53.35 lakh/ha and 715.74 lakh/MT of vegetables during the same period. In the case of fruit productivity it was 12.36 MT/ha and that of vegetables it was 13.42 MT/ha in the year 1995-96. Maharashtra is second largest producer of fruits in India (9.26 per cent) in 1995-96. The state also produces 4.05 per cent of India's vegetables during the same period.

India produces fruit and vegetable for local and export marketing purposes. The present world trade in fresh and preserved fruits and vegetables is estimated at around 8 billion, with the India's share of 772.48 cores of fruits and vegetables. Indian fruits and vegetables are exported in

various countries of the world. The quality and value of exported fruits and vegetables is given in Table No. 1

Table No. 1
India's Export of Fruits and Vegetables (1997-98)
(Q = MT, V – cores)

Sr. No.	Export commodity	Quantity	Value	Percentage
Fruits				
1	Bananas	7017	12.68	1.64
2	Mangoes	42895	73.60	9.53
3	Citrus	21204	17.05	2.21
4	Grapes	23680	64.52	8.35
5	Apples	11094	11.46	1.48
6	Pomegranate	5600	8.61	1.11
7	Cashew nuts	10729	193.02	24.99
8	Walnuts	3880	56.31	7.29
9	Other fruits	23875	27.46	3.56
	Total fruits	149974	464.71	60.16
Vegetables				
1	Potatoes	20884	9.04	1.17
2	Tomatoes	863	0.41	0.05
3	Onion	333549	202.46	26.21
4	Garlic	2437	2.20	0.28
5	Cucumber & Gherkins	10766	17.84	2.31
6	Peas	135	0.20	0.03
7	Beans	121	0.27	0.03
8	Green chili	869	1.20	0.16
9	Mushrooms	5711	20.13	2.61
10	Mixed vegetables	17957	19.23	2.49
11	Other vegetables	31628	34.79	4.50
	Total vegetables	424920	307.77	39.84
	Fruits & Vegetables	574894	772.48	100.00

Source : Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics.

Recent Data For India's Export Of Fresh Fruites And Vegetable 2007-2008.
(Q=MT, V – Lakhs)

Sr.No.	Product	Quantity	Value
1	Fresh Onions	1008606.48	103577.89
2	Other fresh vegetables	350235.47	48949.01
3	Dried nuts	6716.48	16207.80
4	Fresh Mangoes	54350.80	12741.76
5	Fresh Grapes	96963.57	31782.51
6	Other fresh Fruits	207700.78	30452.60
	Total	1724573.58	243711.57

Source :-DGCIS annual data. For Year 2007-2008

Table No. 1 shows the details of India's fruit and vegetable export in quantity, value and in percentage to the total export of India for year 1997-98. Total fruit and vegetable export was 574894 MT with value of 772.48 crores. The share of fruit export was 60 per cent and that of vegetables was

40 per cent in 1997-98. Recently Table No. 1.1 (A) shows that (2007-2008) India exported 1724573.58 MT Fruit and vegetable with value of 243711.57 lakhs.

Maharashtra has emerged as a major horticulture state in the country with the area under fruit cultivation going up to four times from 0.24 million hectares in 1995 to 1.03 million hectares in 1998, because the state is bestowed with varieties of agro-climatic conditions, suitable for growing all varieties of fruits and vegetables. Varying edaphic and climatic conditions in the state has geographically created fruit growing pockets of particular crops in the state i. e. Mango in Konkan, Orange in Vidarbha, Pomegranate and ber in dry area like Solapur, Nagpur, Sangli and some other districts in Marathwada. Therefore, Maharashtra plays a major role in India's horticulture produce with 12 per cent of the fruits and 10 per cent of vegetables of the country's total production. The export contribution of Maharashtra for fresh fruits and vegetables was 30 per cent in India's export basket. For example, Maharashtra produces 18 per cent of mango and 85 per cent of export of the Alphanso mango in India. Around 85 per cent of pomegranate produced by Maharashtra, 39 per cent of banana, 78 per cent of grape, 48 per cent of mandarin orange and 58 per cent of onion is produced in Maharashtra.

NEED OF COMMODITY WISE STUDY

Horticulture is an important branch of agriculture. Now-a-days horticultural crops constitute a part of human survival because of vital nutritional ingredients naturally available in fruits and vegetables, which are essential for human health and diet. Fruits and vegetables occupy prime position not only in human diet but also in our economy as well, because growing of horticultural crops is much more remunerative than cereals and offer greater employment opportunities in farm and non-farm activities (Jugale, 2002).

As we have seen in the introduction Maharashtra state plays an important role in India's horticulture at every level i. e. area, production and export of horticultural produce. Kolhe Committee in Maharashtra (1991) has rightly pointed out the importance of horticultural crops, which is growing throughout the world because of the following factors.

1. Horticultural crops play an important role in human nutrition.
2. Horticultural crops improve the economic status of the farmers.
3. They help to generate employment potentials in farm and non-farm activities in rural area.
4. They help in conserving soil and environment.
5. They are best suited for agro-forestry, social forestry and watershed development programmes.

MAJOR COMMODITIES IN FRUIT CROPS

Fruits are undoubtedly human's oldest food. When human being took to organise agriculture they begin to cultivate grain crops, but undoubtedly they grew some fruits in backyards. The techniques of fruit culture and fruit utilisation also received an attention of human being at a very early stage. In India, also the cultivation of fruits, dates back to ancient times. Fruits have figured prominently in the life of India. Mango, Banana, Phalsa, Jackfruit, Bael, Anola and some Citrus fruits like Lemons and Citrus seems to be indigenous to India. Moreover, rest of fruits introduce from other part of the world. Our literature in Sanskrit like Sushruta Samhita mention about fruit culture in India viz. Anola, Bael, Citrus, Wild dates, Wild fig, Grapes, hog plum, Jackfruit, Monkey Jack, Jaman, Ber, Karonda, Khirni, lemon, Lime, Mango, Mulberry, Orange, Sour-Orange, Phalsa, Banana, Pomegranate, Walnut, Almond, Pistachio nut and Wood-Apple. Most of the fruit culture in India is confined to the sub-mountain areas along the Himalayas and South Bombay and Hyderabad except for the cultivation of Mandarin Orange in few districts around Nagpur. The central part of India does not have much of a fruit industry

PROBLEMS OF EXPORT MARKETING OF FRUITS

Export market for horticultural crops is favourable if it is handled with care, i. e. applying proper market oriented pre and post harvest techniques. However, farmers of India and also Maharashtra state have many problems in export marketing of fruits.

Infrastructure is the main constraint in achieving higher export performance. It means post-harvest

techniques are not properly used by the exporter i. e. lack of adequate storage, packaging, transportation facilities, pre-cooling and cold storage facilities and grading, etc. It leads to heavy losses in post harvest treatments accounting to 30 to 40 per cent. The loss of 17000 crores in post-harvest handling is reported by the Ministry of Agriculture during the year 2000-2001.

1. Lack of proper pre-harvesting management awareness among the producers.
2. Lack of awareness about the demand of the particular variety in particular market.
3. Non-availability of efficient marketing information system and non-existence of organisation among the growers.
4. Existence of large number of middlemen in unregulated markets and malpractices by middlemen at every level of horticultural trade.
5. Less share of the producers in the consumer rupee.
6. Inadequate credit facilities for export marketing.
7. Lack of established linkages between production and exports. Low productivity and high prices of raw material makes exports uncompetitive in the global market. Export marketing requires a sound and organised supply mechanism that ensures quality economic price and proper delivery system.
8. Heavy dependence export of selected products, make us vulnerable to change in the international market. The narrow basket of exportable products is unable to widen our base of exports.
9. Internal demand for horticultural produce squeezes its exportable potential.

CONCLUSION:

India's agricultural sector is still very important to the Indian economy, although its share of the economy has decreased over the past 50 years. India has made significant advances in agricultural production in recent decades, including the introduction of high-yield seed varieties, increased use of fertilizers and improved water management systems. Reforms to land distribution, water management and food distribution systems will further enhance productivity and help India meet its growing demand for food. There are different types of farming practiced in India. Some of these practices are subsistence and commercial farming, intensive and extensive farming, plantation farming and mixed farming. The major salient features of Indian agriculture are subsistence agriculture, highly dependent on monsoon and animals, variety of crops and predominance of food crops. Major crops in India can be broadly divided into four categories i.e. food crops, cash crops, plantation crops and fruits. Some of the major challenges faced by Indian agriculture are Stagnation in production, high cost of farm inputs, soil exhaustion, and depletion of fresh ground water, climatic change, globalization and liberalization of economy, food security and farmer's suicide.

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