

Importance of Horticulture in Economy

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SUMMARY

Horticulture, a vital component of agriculture, plays a crucial role in the global economy. Its importance extends beyond the provision of fruits, vegetables, ornamental plants, and other horticultural products for consumption and aesthetic purposes. Horticulture significantly contributes to the economy through various channels. Horticulture is a substantial source of employment and income generation. It provides livelihoods to a diverse range of individuals, from farmers to traders, processors, and marketers. Especially in developing countries, horticulture serves as a means to alleviate poverty and uplift the socio-economic conditions of rural communities. The horticultural industry supports extensive trade and export activities. Many nations engage in international trade of fresh fruits, vegetables, flowers, and ornamental plants, contributing to foreign exchange earnings. The global demand for exotic fruits and specialty crops also fuels horticultural export markets. Furthermore, horticulture boosts tourism and hospitality industries by enhancing the appeal of regions through beautifully landscaped gardens, parks, and green spaces. These attractions draw tourists and contribute to revenue generation and economic growth. Additionally, horticulture aligns with sustainability goals by promoting environmental conservation, biodiversity, and eco-friendly practices. Urban greening initiatives and community gardens also foster a sense of well-being and enhance property values, positively impacting local economies. Horticulture significantly influences the economic landscape by fostering employment, facilitating trade, boosting tourism, and aligning with sustainability objectives, making it an indispensable sector in the global economy.

INTRODUCTION

Horticulture encompasses a broad spectrum of practices including the growth of fruits, vegetables, flowers, medicinal and aromatic plants, mushrooms, plantation, and forestry. In contrast to agriculture, horticulture does not encompass animal husbandry. It stands as a sub-division of agriculture. The importance of horticulture is paramount in ensuring both nutritional and financial security for numerous individuals in India.

What is Horticulture?

Horticulture, a significant sector within agriculture, focuses on the cultivation of plants and vegetables, catering to various purposes like food, medicine, and more. It encompasses a wide range of activities, from cultivating flowers and vegetables in a small home garden to managing large-scale crop production. Horticulture involves a comprehensive study of plants, encompassing their growth, development, and their interactions with the surrounding environment. Horticulture stands as a distinctive area of study, integrating aspects of botany, agronomy, soil science, and various facets of plant biology. The primary objective of horticulture is to guarantee the production of top-tier, nourishing, and visually appealing plants, fruits, and vegetables.

Importance of Horticulture:

- The presence of horticultural crops is pivotal in ensuring food and nutrition security for the populace of India, particularly benefiting rural and tribal communities. Fruits and vegetables serve as significant contributors of essential vitamins and minerals in the Indian diet.
- Horticulture serves as a significant income-generating avenue for farmers, enabling them to broaden their revenue streams. Additionally, it holds substantial importance as a primary source of raw materials for the food processing industry. In India, a considerable portion of the raw materials utilized in food processing is sourced from horticulture. Fruit farming, for instance, supplies raw materials for diverse agro-based industries such as canning and preservation (fresh fruits), coir industries (coconut husk), pharmaceutical industry (Aonla, Papaya, Jamun), and transportation and packaging industries.

- Horticulture's significance extends to its environmental role as well. The growth of trees and plants aids in carbon dioxide absorption, mitigating air pollution, and preserving soil fertility. Moreover, it contributes to water conservation and energy efficiency.
- Horticulture holds significance in fostering rural economic growth by creating avenues for income and employment in rural regions. Consequently, it plays a role in poverty alleviation and enhances the quality of life for rural communities.
- Waste and unproductive lands are effectively utilized for cultivation. While many fruit crops necessitate consistent irrigation and fertile soil for optimal growth, several hardy fruit crops like Mango, Ber, Cashew, Custard apple, Aonla, Phalsa, and Jamun thrive in challenging conditions, including poor, shallow, and uneven soils that are typically deemed inadequate for cereal or agronomic crops.
- Horticulture is a significant source of employment in India, especially for women and underprivileged segments of the population.
- The advancement of horticulture in India has resulted in the establishment of numerous value-added offerings and amenities, including processing and packaging units, ultimately boosting the sector's competitive edge.
- Horticulture also plays a vital role in contributing to India's foreign exchange, as a notable share of the nation's horticultural yield is exported to various countries. Numerous countries import fresh fruits, processed products, and spices, resulting in a substantial foreign exchange earnings.
- Fruit crops typically yield more produce per unit of land compared to agronomic crops. On average, Papaya, Banana, and Grapes yield 10 to 15 times more than agronomic crops.
- While the initial investment for setting up an orchard is substantial, it is balanced by the greater net profit resulting from increased productivity or the higher value of the produce.
- Effective resource utilization is practiced in fruit cultivation. Due to the perennial nature of fruits, farmers can stay occupied year-round with farming operations, making full use of resources such as machinery, labor, land, and water for production purposes throughout the year, unlike in agronomic crops.
- The Indian government has put forth several policies and initiatives to encourage the progress and advancement of the horticulture sector, which encompass the National Horticulture Mission and Horticulture Development Programs.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, horticulture stands as a multifaceted cornerstone of the economy. Beyond its role in sustenance and aesthetics, it fuels employment, generates income, and propels international trade. Moreover, by beautifying landscapes and fostering sustainable practices, horticulture enhances tourism and contributes to environmental preservation. Its impact extends far and wide, underscoring its critical importance in economic development and overall societal well-being.

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