

Role of Underutilizing Fruit Crops in Health and Nutrition

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SUMMARY

India being the 2nd largest producer of fruits in the world, many tropical and subtropical fruits are grown under large scale in our country. But, the area under cultivation of underutilized fruit crops is decreasing day by day. Lack of attention are adapted to grow underutilized fruits in marginal lands, with little need for irrigation. Yet the lack of attention by mainstream towards underutilized fruit crops exploited them commercially.

INTRODUCTION

India holds a prominent position in horticulture and has emerged as the second largest producer of fruits in the world (Anon, 2019). India is a home to many fruit crops. Many of them were supported and improved by villagers, growers and horticulturist for wide adoption due to their acceptable flavour and delicious taste (Bharadwaj and Pandey, 2011). On the other hand, underutilized fruits are not so extensively cultivated and their consumption and trade tend to be more limited, geographically and quantitatively than those of the major fruits (Sauco, 2013) despite being highly nutritive with medicinal attributes and also their ability to grow under adverse climatic conditions. But these so-called underutilized fruits remain uncared and confined mainly natural wild, semi-wild and semi domesticated conditions albeit with large ever increasing genetic diversity (Krishna *et al.*, 2019).

Scope and Importance of Underutilized Fruits

In arid and semi-arid regions, the large part of land is considered as marginal land, which are unfit for cultivation of high input demanding nature crops. Such lands can easily be put to use for growing low input requiring crops like underutilized fruits in order to diversify the present day horticulture (Krishna *et al.*, 2019).

Nutritive Value of the Underutilized Fruit Crops

There are quite a large number of indigenous and underutilized fruit crops which are being used by the local inhabitants. In fact for people living in villages, these underutilized fruits are the only source of protective food to meet their vitamins and minerals requirements in their poor diet. Being tolerant to biotic and abiotic stresses, these fruit species are suitable for growing in the disaster and drought-prone areas (Mitra *et al.*, 2010).



Nutritional Benefits of Underutilized Fruits

Most of the underutilized fruits are cheap and highly nutritious. They have known for medicinal and therapeutic properties and are used by the local tribes to cure various diseases. Many of the fruits, seeds, leaves of the plants are used as curative foods in the traditional Indian medicine for ex- Amla is used for treating diabetes, bael fruit for beating the heat, ber and Phalsa being highly rich in vitamin C are used in cases of vitamin c deficiency, as well as at household level ex- Ber, Matira. Pickles made by lasora (Vino *et al.*, 2016).

Underutilized Fruit Crops

The term underutilized has been used several descriptions including “minor”, “new crops” and “neglected” to represent crops that have potential but fallen to disuse due to various reasons (Padulosi *et al.*, 2004). Some underutilized fruits are Wood apple, Garcinia, lasoda, dragon fruit, Ber, Tamarind, Aonla, Chironji, Khirni, Pilu, Mahua, Jamun, Phalsa, Mulberry.

Table 01. Nutritive Value of Underutilized Fruit Crops

Sr. No.	Fruit	Carbohydrates (g)	Proteins (mg)	Fat (g)	Energy (kcal)
1	Bael	31.8	1.80	0.20	1.37
2	Jamun	18.70	0.55	0.10	83
3	Karonda	2.90	1.10	2.90	42
4	Aonla	15.0	0.50	0.19	65
5	Chironji	12.10	19.00	59.10	46
6	Ker	20.87	5.90	1.23	100
7	Lasoda	12.20	1.8-2.0	1.00	65
8	Pilu	76	6.00	2.00	70
9	Mulberry	8 - 9	0.4-1.50	0.4-0.5	84
10	Khirni	27.74	0.48	2.42	56

CONCLUSION

Exploitation of underutilized fruit crops can become a solution to the problem of health and nutrition of the people. Consumption of underutilized fruit crops can provide better nutrition as underutilized fruits are a rich source of carbohydrates, fats, proteins, energy, vitamins, minerals and dietary fiber. As a result, the cultivation of underutilized fruit crops can increase and it will also increase in the farmers income.

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