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## MARKETING OF HORTICULTURAL CROPS: FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

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The marketing of horticultural crops is complicated because of perishability, seasonality, and bulkiness. In recent years, there has been much concern about the efficiency with which fruits and vegetables are marketed in India. Poor marketing channel efficiency and inadequate marketing infrastructure are thought to be the causes of high and volatile consumer pricing, with little of the consumer rupee reaching the farmer. (Kaul 1997, Ashturker and Deole 1985). In the marketing of fruits and vegetables, Indian farmers often rely significantly on middlemen. Producers and consumers frequently get a bad deal, and middlemen control the market while adding little value. There is also huge waste, the decline in quality, and a frequent mismatch between demand and supply, both spatially and over time. (Subbanarasiah 1991, Singh *et.al.* 1985).

Fruits and vegetables are traditionally a vital element of the daily diet in India, and they are in high demand throughout the year from most segments of the population. The commercial worth of fruits and vegetables in terms of direct consumption, processing, and commerce has increased significantly in recent years. Their economic significance has grown, and the high labor intensity of most fruits and vegetables production makes them vital from an employment standpoint as well (Sharma 1991).

### Overview of the Fruit and Vegetable Economy of India

India produced 107.10 million metric tonnes of fruits and 204.61 million metric tonnes of vegetables between 2021 and 2022. In 2021–2022, there were 7.09 million hectares of land under cultivation for fruits, compared to 11.28 million hectares for vegetables. Along

with banana, papaya, mango, and guava, India also tops the globe in the production of ginger and okra (IBEF.2022).

### **Fruits and Vegetables Production in India**

India was the world's second-largest producer of fruits and vegetables, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. The largest states for fruit production in India are Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Gujarat. States that produce the most vegetables include Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Gujarat, Odisha, and Maharashtra. 97.97 million tonnes of fruit were produced in India in 2018–19, and 107.10 million tonnes were produced in 2021–22, representing a 3.0% CAGR (Compound annual growth rate). The production of vegetables increased by 3.8% CAGR to 204.61 million tonnes over this time, as well. (IBEF.2022).

### **Fruit and Vegetable Marketing**

Due to the bulkiness, seasonal production, and perishable character of horticulture products, marketing them is quite risky and complex. Due to their high perishability, fruit and vegetables can have very poor or even negative returns if they are not sold quickly after harvest. Therefore, it is important to plan ahead for the selling of fruits and vegetables before the produce is harvested. A quality product must be produced in order to successfully market horticultural produce. Post-harvest treatment must also be carefully attended to in order to preserve quality, nutritional value, economic value, and food safety.

Currently, the majority of the fruit and vegetable trade is unorganized and is conducted through commission agents of wholesale markets under state government regulation. Growers willingly consign their goods to commission agents who auction it off on their behalf while only keeping the legally required commission. The majority of regulated markets have designated specific hues for farmers. Additionally, Apni Mandies have been set up in a few towns that are close to the areas of production, allowing farmers to bring their own food and sell it directly to customers. In our country, the transition from unstructured to organized fruit and vegetable marketing is still in its infancy. In this situation, farmers can sell their goods directly to customers through a variety of NGO's and public limited businesses, such as Mother Dairy etc.

## **Why Marketing is Important?**

Post-harvest losses in fruits and vegetables are currently estimated to be approximately 30%, which can be due to inadequate post-harvest and marketing procedures. These techniques include sorting, grading, packaging, delivery, and so on, as well as multi-stage marketing, which causes delays in getting fruits and vegetables to the end user. This delay reduces the value even further. Efficient and effective post-harvest handling and well-planned marketing of fresh fruits and vegetables have a direct favorable impact on fruit and vegetable ultimate realization (IGNOU. Govt. of India).

## **Different Marketing Channels**

It is the route that things take to get from the producer to the consumer. The following types of marketing channels are available:

1. Producer-trader-wholesaler-retailer-consumer.
2. Producer-trader-retailer-consumer.
3. Producer-trader-consumer.
4. Producer-consumer.

## **An Efficient Marketing System Can**

1. Lower post-harvest losses.
2. Increase farmers' awareness.
3. Lower consumer prices.
4. Promote food safety and grading practices.
5. Implement demand-driven production.
6. Allow for greater value addition
7. Export should be made easier.

## **Conclusion**

Horticulture crops are particularly significant in the global economy for the high nutritional value supply of human life. It plays a unique function in the Indian economy by increasing rural income. These crops need a lot of labour to cultivate, thus they provide a lot of job opportunities for the rural population. Fruits and vegetables are normally an important part of the daily diet in India, and they are in high demand throughout the year from various segments of the population. In recent years, the commercial value of fruits and vegetables has

increased significantly in terms of direct consumption, processing, and trade. Due to poverty, a large portion of rural residents are unable to consume fruits and vegetables. The emphasis on high-quality goods must be combined with effective post-harvest crop management for the horticulture industry to flourish holistically. To strengthen the physical infrastructure, information sharing, and services needed for supply chain quality improvement, the government and private operators must work together.

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