



An Overview of Pomegranate Farming in Rahata Tehsil, Dist.Ahmednagar (M.S.) India

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Abstract

Pomegranate is one of the important tropical crops being cultivated in the mid-western part of Maharashtra. The tehsil of Rahata located in this area is one of the pomegranate producing tehsils. Accordingly, an attempt has been made in this paper to have an overview of pomegranate cultivation in the tehsil. The present study is based on the primary sources e.g. personal discussions and questionnaires as well as secondary sources of data like government publications. Major findings and suggestions are given to improve the status of pomegranate cultivation in the study area. The study reveals that there is a scope for improvement in pomegranate cultivation in the tehsil.

Key Words: Overview, Pomegranate, Farming, Rahata, Tehsil,

Introduction:

India is one of the leading pomegranate producing countries in the world. Over the last one decade, the country has registered sizeable increase in area and production, respectively. The export of pomegranate from India has upsurged by 3.5 times during this period. There has been marked shift towards the consumption of pomegranate worldwide owing to its several nutritive, nutraceutical and medicinal properties. Although, pomegranate can be grown under varied climatic conditions of the country, it performs better in semi-arid and arid regions. In India, pomegranate is commercially cultivated in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan (ICAR, 2015). Ahmednagar is one of the major pomegranate producing districts of Maharashtra. The semi arid climate and shallow soils in the district play a crucial role in pomegranate production of the district. The area under cultivation of this crop in the district is increasing significantly since last two decades. With this background an attempt has been made in this paper to study the pomegranate production as one of the major agricultural produce in the Rahata Tehsil of the district.

**Study Area:**

Rahata tehsil of Ahmednagar district in Maharashtra is selected for the present study. With its 608.56 sq. km. geographical area, the tehsil is located in the northern part of the district. Rahata is located at 19° 71' N latitude and 74° 48' E longitude, 521 mt. a.s.l. Climate of the tehsil is generally hot and dry, characterized as semiarid type. On an average the tehsil receives 515.52 mm rainfall in a year. The tehsil receives about 87% of its annual rainfall during south west monsoon season i.e. the period from June to September. The nature of rainfall in the study area is erratic and the rainfall is distributed unevenly. The month of May records the highest i.e. 42°C while January records the lowest average temperature i.e. 21°C. Soils in the study area are mostly shallow; however, they are medium deep in the areas lying near rivers. According to the District Census, Ahmednagar (GoI, 2011), Rahta tehsil has 2,62,146 population. Agriculture is the main occupation of people. In all 71,624 hectares area is cultivable in the tehsil (GoM, 2014).

Objectives:

1. To know the present situation of pomegranate cultivation.
2. To study the impact of pomegranate cultivation on general status of farmers in the study area.

Database and Methodology

The present study is based on both the primary and secondary sources of data. Discussions with the farmers, personal observations and interview of ninety five farmers with questionnaires are the primary sources of data, while government publications like socio-economic review and district statistical abstract of Ahmednagar district are used as secondary sources of data.

Pomegranate Cultivation

The tehsil of Rahata with agriculture as a main occupation of people is characterized by low and erratic rainfall with availability of canal irrigation facility. The study conducted on pomegranate cultivation in the tehsil shows that, 97% of the farmers use drip irrigation system to enhance the water use efficiency. In all 52% farmers do mulching to reduce the evaporative losses of the water from soil. It is found that, 95% of the farmers are saffron colored ration card holders. It indicates their middle class status. Twenty percent of the farmers have their own tractor. Since the cultivation of pomegranate, 33% farmers have built pukka house, 14% farmers have purchased heavy vehicle like tractor or truck, 4% have purchased land, 13%



farmers have purchased gold while 16% of the farmers have their own farm ponds to irrigate pomegranate plantation. Children of 31% farmers are having their education in private English medium schools. The above statistics indicates that, the pomegranate farming have positive impact on the general status of farmers in the study area.

Major findings

1. Climate and soil in the study area are suitable for Pomegranate cultivation.
2. As a low water demanding crop, Pomegranate is the appropriate crop for the drought prone area like Rahata tehsil.
3. There are many success stories of pomegranate cultivation in the study area.
4. Farmers in the study area are eager and enthusiastic to grow pomegranate.
5. Nearness of big cities viz. Mumbai, Pune, Aurangabad and Nashik is advantageous from the marketing of pomegranate point of view.
6. The study area is well connected with different parts of the country through road and railway.
7. There is no other low water demanding fruit crop for the competition with pomegranate in the study area.
8. Pomegranate farming has considerably contributed in the economic development of the farmers.
9. Majority of the farmers use chemical fertilizers instead of organic manure.
10. Intercropping of onion, horse gram and ground nut with pomegranate is in practice

Suggestions

1. Speedy transportation facilities like airways must be used for export of the pomegranate fruits. Shirdi airport can serve this purpose.
2. Fluctuations in pomegranate prices are the common problem. Thus, low cost cold storage facilities must be made available to the farmers so that, they can store their produce till they get proper market prices.
3. Diseases, cracking of fruits and plant protection are the major issues, farmers facing in the study area. Utmost care must be taken on this front.
4. Research must be strengthened in relation to fruit processing and value addition.
5. Use of drip irrigation must be compulsory for the farmers.
6. Training on pomegranate cultivation should be given to the farmers.



7. Farmers should not use excessive pesticides and insecticides so that, the quality of fruits is sustained.
8. Farmers should invest their earnings in productive activities.
9. Care must be taken to enhance the quality of fruits in terms of their size and contents.
10. Farmers should adopt the practice of mulching to reduce the loss of soil water due to evaporation.
11. Easy access to market should be provided to the pomegranate growers.
12. Subsidy should be increased on the purchase of drip irrigation set, tractor, cultivator and construction of farm pond.
13. Fruits of pomegranate have a great medicinal value. Thus, pomegranate based medicine production may be started in the study area.
14. Financial support to the farmers should be provided through funding agencies.
15. Research on Pomegranate cultivation must be strengthened.

Conclusion

Pomegranate is one of the important cash crops of Rahata tehsil where climate and soil conditions are suitable for it. Good transportation facilities, willingness of farmers to cultivate pomegranate are the favorable factors to the farming of pomegranate in the study area. Nearness of big cities like Mumbai, Pune, Aurangabad and Nashik provide good market facilities to the pomegranate fruits. Establishment of pomegranate processing industries, grading and export of fruits may boost the economic condition of the farmers.

References

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