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Fruit cultivation in apple state of India: Opportunities and challenges

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Increased urbanization and changing lifestyle have changed the demand for food consumption from food grains to non-food grains. Horticulture development has emerged as one of the major thrust area in agriculture sector. The importance of these crops compounds in hilly and undulating terrains, like the North-East region of India, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and Uttaranchal where traditional agricultural activities catering to field crops are not economically remunerative and sustainable, while the climate in general is suitable for growing temperate and subtropical fruits. This suitability of Himachal has resulted in shifting of land use pattern from agriculture to fruit crops in the past few decades and the state is known as 'fruit bowl of nation'. There has been a phenomenal increase in the area and production of fruits, particularly apple, in the state due to which the state has deservedly earned a place of pride as 'The Apple State of India'. Many farm families are depending on apple cultivation. The cultivation of apple in Himachal is more remunerative than the other field crops. Apple determines the income and purchasing power of the farmers and has a positive impact in term of people's living standard in the state. Excluding apple growers who are depending directly, the processes of grading, picking, packing and transportation provides employment to many persons. The area and production of apple in Himachal Pradesh have been increasing over the years. But the productivity has been low in terms of global standard and in fact it has been declining. Many factors and problems are responsible for the low productivity like socio-economic, agro-climatic, infrastructure, market, policy issues etc. Many of the problems of apple growers are beyond the control of apple growers themselves. Net return from apple cultivation can further be enhanced with the efficient marketing/investment support from the state and central governments. Local markets should be developed which would provide somewhat better bargaining position and may also reduce transport costs. There should be availability of cold stores in nearby market or village/block/tehsil so farmers can sell their crop at time of decent price or fair price.

Biography

Kalpna Negi is presently a PhD Research Scholar at School of Economics, University of Hyderabad. She has completed her Master's in Philosophy from the same University. Her research area is broadly on Agricultural Economics. She has participated in academic workshops, seminars, conferences.

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