

Date palm: an ideal fruit for health and wealth

Among arid fruits, date palm is highly nutritious because of rich source of carbohydrates, minerals, vitamins and anti-oxidants. The tree is hardy to prevailing hot and dry climate, frost, drought and salinity in the arid region. Its fruit is used as fresh and for making value-added products, viz. dry date (*chuhara*), soft date (*pind*), jam, beverages, wine, etc. Seed is also used for animal, fish and poultry feed, besides oil extraction. Its fruit has religious as well as nutritive significance and is used as energy food across the world. All plant parts are used in various ways for making handicraft items. In semi-arid and arid parts, the area under its cultivation has increased to 20,000 ha. Its productivity is about 9.4 tonnes/ha. It has export potential. The proper marketing and popularization of value-added products will help to fetch more income to farmers in arid region.

DATE PALM (*Phoenix dactylifera*) also known as *khajoor* and *kharek*, is an ancient cultivated fruit tree of semi-arid and arid regions. It grows well under poor desertic soils due to its hardy plant characteristics and deep root system. It is one of the most suitable fruit trees for saline water irrigations. It requires dry hot climate for growth and development of fruits. It can be grown successfully at such places where adequate irrigation facility is available

besides dry hot climatic conditions.

Fruits of date cultivars, Halawy, Khalas, Khuneizi, Chip chap, Braim and Barhee are eaten as fresh (*doka* stage) because of its sweet taste. Besides, several value-added products such as dry date (*chuhara*), soft date (*pind khajoor*), beverages, jam, paste, chutney, wine, etc are prepared from fruits. Cultivar Medjool is highly suitable for dry date (*chuhara*) preparation as it is late-maturing,

Bearing tree of date palm

