

Securing livelihood through ber-based cropping system

Livelihood security in hot arid region is a major challenge due to fundamental environmental constraints such as scanty and erratic rainfall, recurrent drought, extreme temperatures, high wind velocity and poor soil conditions. Monocropping is often risky with meagre crop yields and unstable income from existing crop is hardly sufficient to sustain the farmers' family. Therefore, to mitigate the risk and uncertainty of the income from conventional cropping, there is a need to enhance the productivity through integration of various components in the production programme that yield regular and evenly distributed income. Horticulture based farming system has a vital scope in diversification, productivity enhancement and employment generation on long term basis. Ber-based cropping system offers considerable scope for increasing production and productivity per unit area, time and inputs by more efficient utilization of resources like sunlight, soil, water and labour. This system is ideally suited and economically viable for small and marginal farmers of hot arid zone.

Integration of perennial fruit trees make proper use of soil moisture and nutrients as an overstorey component in association with groundstorey crops. Among various fruit trees suggested for farming system under rainfed condition, ber is a preferred species because of hardiness and its ability for profitable production under harsh

climatic conditions of hot arid zone. Ber has potential to be grown as overstorey crop. The tree grows naturally even in areas with average annual rainfall of only 125mm, can survive temperatures as high as 50° C and flourishes in high pH as well. It is a perennial hardy fruit tree ideally suited for Indian deserts which gives income from

Field ready for intercropping

