

Quality pomegranates from thar desert

The climatic conditions of western Rajasthan are highly suitable for production of quality pomegranates. Moreover, recent buyer-driven introduction of Bhagwa variety under ferti-drip system and further research support has revolutionized pomegranate cultivation in region. On an average, fruit yield of 12-15 tonnes/ha is being harvested from a well-maintained orchard (fourth years onward) with a net return of ₹ 3.50-4.0 lakh/ha per annum. Undoubtedly, the region has shown substantial growth both in area and production but productivity with export quality fruits is varying within region. The adoption of improved technologies helps further in achieving higher productivity with competitive quality. Pomegranate growers need to be secured against risk across various aspects from production to marketing through technological and policy support.

POMEGRANATE is an important commercial fruit crop grown in the dry regions of India. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan are primarily pomegranate growing states, of which the first three contribute about 85% of total production. About five fold increase in export of this fruit crop has been recorded during last decade in value term. Moreover, recent export trends depict a high amenability in supply-demand of Indian pomegranate in international market with higher price. Consequently production is expected to increase by 10 folds and export by nearly seven folds in years to come. These ambience provide opportunities to stretch area of pomegranate from its traditional belt viz. Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu to non-traditional areas like Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Pomegranate in Rajasthan

Since, pomegranate can be cultivated successfully on saline or sodic lands of marginal and sub-marginal drylands, a large tract of slightly degraded land available in Rajasthan could be brought under its cultivation. Moreover, the recent buyer driven introduction of Bhagwa variety under ferti-drip system and further research support has revolutionized its cultivation and increased acreage expansion from 793 ha during 2010-11 to >6000 ha during 2015-16.

It is mainly cultivated in Barmer, Jalore, Bhilwara, Sriganganagar, Chittor, Jodhpur etc. Barmer district is the leading district in the cultivation of pomegranate, contributing 44% to the state production. Jalore has the second largest acreage under pomegranate, followed by Bhilwara, Sriganganagar, Chittor and Jodhpur. Majority of the orchards developed with Bhagwa variety under ferti-drip system.

Undoubtedly, region has shown substantial growth both in area and production but productivity with export quality fruits is major concern which is quite low and varies within region. Over utilization of chemical fertilizers and irrigation water leads to unwanted excessive vegetative growth on expense of poor canopy architecture. Because of high canopy growth, there are too much of flowers set fruit but converted into sub grade fruit <350g. Heavy infestation of nematode is a general problem throughout its growing area. Growers of the region are following 30-35 sprays of various pesticides which is not only redundant but also increase the cost of cultivation and may be impediment to become export commodity from



Heavy infestation of nematode



Infestation of bacterial blight



Fruit cracking



Sun scald