

Walnut Farming in Kashmir a Better Option for Livelihood

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Abstract

Walnut industry in Jammu and Kashmir, being age old, having its legacy in Hindu mythology is at the verge of extinction. The industry is having immense potential in terms of economic sustainability. The topography of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, being, on favourable for the production and cultivation of walnut. However, lack of infrastructure whether physical, financial, logistics; planning, execution have been a cause of concern. Research in the past had focused on walnut industry of Jammu and Kashmir, in general. However, the current study would explore special case of walnut sector in particular in Kashmir. The study is based on secondary data.

Keywords: Walnut Industry, employment opportunities, challenges, GDP

1. Introduction

Being organic in nature, as no fertilisers or sprays are still used on walnut plants and its yield, and high in nutrients with immense health benefits, Kashmiri walnut has seen growing demand and acceptability in the domestic and international market. However, production is decreasing day-by-day. Walnuts are an excellent source of anti-inflammatory omega-3 essential fatty acids, in the form of alpha-linolenic acid (ALA). Walnuts are also rich in antioxidants, including being a very good source of manganese and copper, she said. Meanwhile, India exported 2,665.87 MT of walnuts worth Rs 136.45 crores during the year 2014-15, according to figures from the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA). Jammu and Kashmir, being at a strategic geographic position and climate is the highest temperate fruit producing State of India (Farm-to-Fork, 2010). The agro climate of Jammu and Kashmir is divided in to four zones as below:

Table 1: Zone wise distribution and production of fruits in Jammu and Kashmir

S. No.	Zone	Areas	Fruits
1	Temperate	Kashmir, parts of Poonch, Doda, Kishtwar, Rajauri, Reasi, Rambhan, Uthampur and Kathau	Apple, pear, cherry, walnut, almond, chestnut, strawberry, grapes, prunes and kiwi etc
2	Sub-Temperate		Peach, plum, apricot, pears, peacun nut, olive, kiwi etc.
3	Sub-Tropical		Mango, citrus, lichi, guava, grapes, beraonla etc.
4	Arid Temperate		Grapes, prunes, apricot, walnut, currant etc.

Source: Farm-to-Fork, 2010.

The total fruit production during 2008-2009 in Jammu and Kashmir was 16.91 lakh metric tones (15.30 tonnes fresh fruit and 1.61 lakh metric tones of dry fruit). The export of fruit outside State was 11.61 lakh metric tones (Digest of Statistics, 2008-09)

2. Objectives of the Study

To analyze the economic potential and sustainability of walnut industry.

To highlight the challenges in walnut industry of Jammu and Kashmir

3. Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

The data collection for the present study was done from secondary sources like reports of directorate of horticulture, directorate of economics and statistical planning, entrepreneurship development institute, field survey data available.

4. Walnut Production

Horticulture industry is the main stay and backbone of Kashmir valley, plays an important role in the state economy by contributing almost 10 percent to State's GSDP. Walnuts are drought tolerant plant species belong to family of *Juglandaceae*. Walnuts belong to Iran, having great shelf life and easily transportable and easy to store. The harvesting season of walnuts is from August to September and marketed as nuts or kernels in the months of November to January. Walnuts contain a good source of vitamin B especially vitamin B6. Walnuts are used in the preparations of bakery products, ice creams, oils etc. Walnut shells are used in glue, plastics, solutions of cleaning and polishing surfaces. The upper layer/cover of walnut are used as source of fuel and after burning the ash can be used as a rich source of manure.

The production of walnut production in Kashmir valley in 2001-02 is more than Jammu region the reason being the area under walnut cultivation for the year (2001-2016) was much higher in Kashmir as depicted below in table 2:

Table 2: Area under Walnut Cultivation in Jammu and Kashmir

Region	Land in Hectares 2001-02	Land in Hectares 2016-17
Kashmir	35233	50960
Jammu	26486	38318
Ladakh	63	64
Total J & K	61782	89339

Source: Directorate of Horticulture, J& K.

Walnuts are produced in almost all the three region of the state of Jammu & Kashmir but leader in production being Kashmir due to its favourable topography and climate. Over the reference period the production of walnut in the state has increased from 86263-266280 metric tonnes which fetch a great amount of income to the natizen of the state and helps in living a healthy and decent life as shown in table 3.

Table 3: Walnut Production in Jammu and Kashmir (In metric tonnes)

Year	Production
2001-02	86263
2011-12	208738
2012-13	209051
2013-14	220509
2016-17	266280

Source: Digest of Statistics 2010, J& K.

Walnut industry being an age old industry provided sustenance to a huge chunk of population in the state. Many families are involved with the trade of walnuts. Either domestically or to the international borders as well. Walnut is rich source of Vitamin B and is help in preparation of medicines as well. Walnuts has been an important source of income to the people of Jammu and Kashmir as shown in table 4.

Table 4: Generation of income from walnut production for the Year- 2016-17

Income	Percentage of families
25000-30000	60
15000-20000	25
10000-15000	10
5000-10000	5

5. Walnut produce and market available

Jammu and Kashmir supplies 98 percent (35000 metric tones) of walnut produce to the rest of country and about 95 percent of walnut produce comes from Kashmir (the major producing areas include the districts of Kupwara, Pulwama, Anantnag, Ganderbal, Budgam) and rest 5 percent comes from districts of Doda and Kishtwar. The walnut requirement in the near future will increase in India from 35000 metric tones to 75000 metric tonnes by 2020 (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority, India). 20 percent market share in European countries is captured by Indian walnut. Locally consumption of both for kernels and shells is very low as 10-15 percent while as major portion 85-90 percent is exported to the rest of world.

6. Challenges

The state of J&K is famous for its horticultural produce. The best known horticultural items from the state are apple, walnut, apricot, pear, peach, cherry, almond etc. Walnut industry is source of livelihood for thousands of families. Both the growers and traders associated with this industry are worried due to sharp slump in prices. Traders are of the opinion that the present decrease in prices is due to the import of walnuts from United States and other countries. As a result, the prices and demand of Kashmiri walnuts reduced by half. One more challenge faced by industry is availability of uninterrupted power supply. There is lack of infrastructure like transport, power supply, roads, mandis and packaging and processing facilities. Similarly, there is shortage of quality planting, poor orchard management and long gestation period. The harvesting and the post-harvest methods used by the farmers are primitive, resulting in reduced productivity and quality of the crop. Lack of export oriented policies of the government, the exports have not grown much.

7. Recommendations

The study highlights growth, challenges and determinants of Indian walnut. There has been a remarkable increase in area under walnut at an annual growth rate of 1.70 per cent and this coupled with growth in yield levels especially in Kashmir region has led to the increase in its production. The main trading partners of walnut are United Kingdom, Egypt, Germany, Spain, and Netherlands. This industry is providing livelihood to 40 per cent of population directly and 70 percent of the population is gaining livelihood through this venture in Kashmir. Keeping in view the above, following policy suggestions follow;

- By laying new orchards over marginal/wastelands, and lying orchard on the pattern of Apple will increase the productivity in walnut intern would generate enough surplus for export.
- New varieties of walnut should be grafted and cultivated on scientific lines.
- Relations with trade partners should be made trade friendly, so that more foreign exchange can be gained.
- Training/orientation to youth in this venture can prove beneficial in reducing the unemployment menace in the state.

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