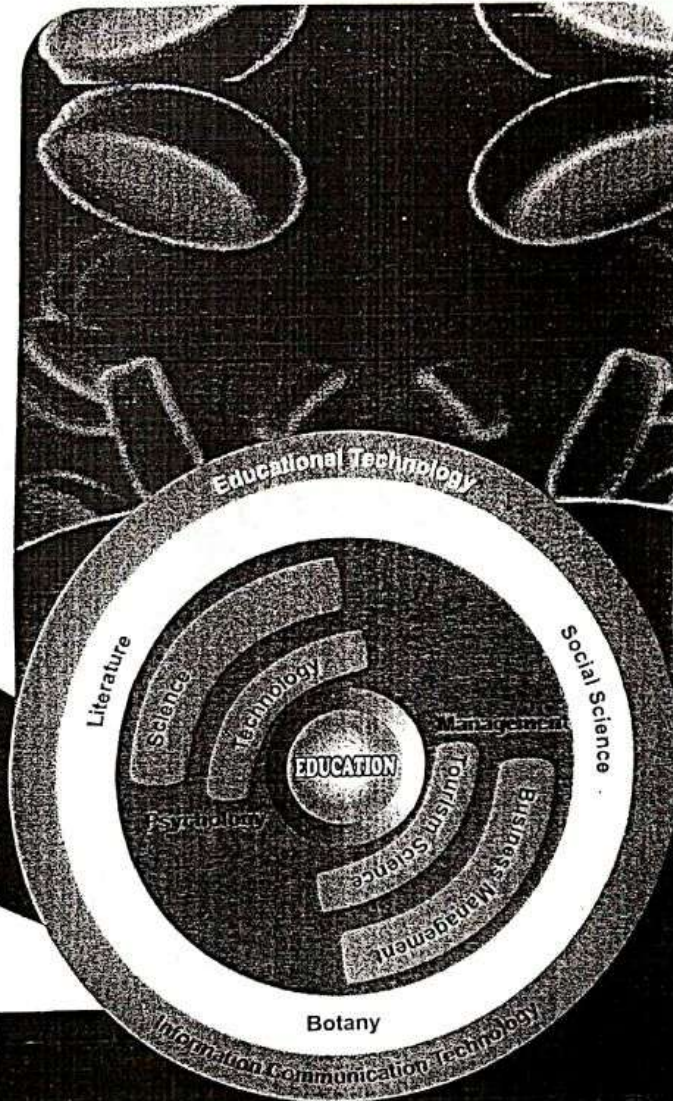


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HORTICULTURE MARKETING SCENARIO IN MAHARASHTRA

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Introduction

Horticulture in India is Recognized as one of the fastest growing sectors in the world. Maharashtra is one of the leading states in the country in horticulture development. Horticulture sector comprising fruits, vegetables, floriculture, medicinal and aromatic crops, mushroom, spices and plantation crops, has witnessed phenomenal growth in production and productivity during the last two decades. The diverse agro-climatic conditions of the state are very congenial for cultivation of various horticultural crops. Maharashtra is the third largest producer of horticulture crops and large exporter as well. The area under fruit crops which was 2.42 lakh hectares in 1990 has gone up to 6.13 lakh hectares in 2011. Similarly, the area under various vegetables, spice crops and floriculture has also increased substantially. Marketing of horticulture commodities, differ as they are highly perishable seasonal and high in volume. Horticultural product has faced the marketing problems due to seasonality of production and high perishability of produce.

Objective of study:

1. To Study The Importance Of Horticultural Commodities.
2. To Study The Current Marketing Scenario Of Horticulture Crops.
3. To Study The Problems Of Horticultural Marketing.

Methodology: This study is based on secondary data. The data is collected from reference books, articles, newspaper and websites

Importance of Horticultural Crops : India is one among the many important fruits and vegetables producing countries of the world. It ranks third after, china and U.S.A. in production of horticultural crops. It is the world largest producer of mangoes and occupies second place among the banana and onion producing countries of the world. Horticultural crops, i.e. fruits and vegetables assume more importance as a protective food as they provide much needed health supporting vitamins, minerals and also in improving the protein value in foods. Besides their value in human consumption, horticultural crops play an important role in commerce, particularly in export trade and processing industry. Employment opportunities offered by this sector are plenty to the farm population engaged in production, transportation, processing and marketing operations in addition to the entrepreneurs seeking self employment keeping in view of its importance much emphasis has been given to augment the production of horticultural crops in our national plans. India's share in the global market is insignificant it accounts for only 11 percent of the global trade in vegetables and 0.5 percent in fruits. India is the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables contributing 10 percent and 14 percent respectively in the world fruit and vegetable.

Profile Of Horticulture Product: Maharashtra produces about 17.54 m. MT of horticultural produce from an area of 2.49 m. ha. Accounting for 7.30 percent of horticulture production in the country, major share of production is from fruits (54.24 percent), the main fruits being Sapota, Banana, Citrus, and Grapes. Other fruits grown are Mango, Pomegranate and Guava. The vegetable produce forms about 42.78 percent of the horticultural production in the state. Maharashtra is also a leading producer of Onions, Cut Flowers and Cashew. 25.23 lakh MT of fruits have been traded in organized markets with average price of Rs. 14.92/kg. 56.24 lakh MT of vegetables have been traded in organized markets with average price of Rs. 11.21/kg.

Present Scenario In Horticulture Marketing: The marketing of farm product is a complex process it includes all the function and processes involved in the movement of the farmers to the consumers. Marketing of agricultural produces is different and more challenging than many of the industrial products. The marketing of horticultural products that too of the fruit and vegetable is more challenging because of the perishability, seasonality and bulkiness and consumption habits of the Indian consumers. Indian consumer demands fresh fruit and vegetable. The main stakeholders in marketing chain from growers to consumers are wholesalers, retailers and other middlemen. It is necessary to focus on marketing of fruit and vegetable from the point of all the stakeholders from growers to consumers. The fruit and vegetable marketing system is a link between the farm and consumers. It involves all the functional aspects of market namely pre and post-harvest operations, assembling, sorting, grading, storage, transportation and distribution. There has been concern in recent years regarding the efficiency of marketing of fruit and vegetable. High and fluctuating prices and availability of quality produce are matters of concern from the point

of consumers. Only a small share of consumer rupee reaching the farmers is another major concern in marketing of fruit and vegetable. India has a huge opportunity to become a leading global food supplier, if only it has the right marketing strategies and of course, agile, adaptive and efficient supply chain. The ideal marketing system is one of that maximizes the long run welfare of society. It should operate with maximum physical and allocative efficiency. Marketing of horticultural produce in Maharashtra comprises of organized marketing structure and unorganized marketing structure. In organized structure, the role of co-operatives is significant. The other vertical and horizontal institutional system network in the state is quite helpful and graceful to the co-operative enterprises. Marketing Boards, now-a-days are predominantly doing better for marketing the horticultural produce. The role of A.P.M.C. in some districts is significant and dealing separately from horticultural produce by developing a separate horticultural produce marketing (yards) campuses. Similarly, there is a chain of traders and unorganized agencies dealing in marketing activities of the horticultural produce at different places. Group marketing, now-a days is becoming more popular, affordable and feasible to the growers. marketing channels i.e. from producer to bulk purchasers in organized and unorganized marketing agencies and organizations like APMC. This is called as a terminal market. The other way round marketing begins from wholesalers-retailers to consumers. Most of the horticultural produce is channelized through one way round up to the terminal market i.e. up to the APMCs. There is a need to have a proper co-ordination between the cooperative enterprises and the organized institutions (Government or Semi Government agencies) in various activities relating to marketing of horticulture produce in Maharashtra, the major factors of demand and supply in marketing system do play a very vital role. The market committee provides necessary infrastructural facilities for smooth operations of marketing of the horticultural produce. Some APMCs have developed abstract market campuses for vegetables, fruits and food grains etc.

Constraints In Existing Systems Of Horticulture Marketing: The process of horticultural marketing begins with the farmer and end up with the consumer. In between these two extreme ends one can find many intermediaries like transporters, warehouse owners, commission agents, wholesalers and retailers etc. performing their duties to enable the horticultural marketing process to reach its completion.

- The maximum wastage happens during the transportation of fruit produce from the farm gate to mandis and thereafter.
- The present system of marketing of fruits is full of number of malpractices. It is dominated by middlemen who exploit both the consumers and producers.
- Transportation is another weak link in post-harvest handling of fruits. Since the fruits come from village, large proportion of the produce is transported by road only. Poor quality rural roads create hazards and enhancing the likelihood of damage.
- Non availability of market information .
- Absence of grading and standardization.
- Inadequate credit facilities.
- Poor market technology.

Conclusion: horticultural marketing is an important economic activity. the perishable nature of certain horticultural commodities like fruit and vegetables introduces an element of risk and uncertainty in the economy. Horticultural marketing system in India suffered from severe constraints like high costs, existence of middlemen, storage and transport bottlenecks and lack of market information among the farmers. The study suggested development of market yard, storage, and transport facilities, so that efficient horticultural marketing can be attained. the need for improvement in the marketing system by regulating the marketing operations, establishment of efficient transportation system and co-operative marketing structure

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