

Title Litchi Industry in Pakistan: Potential and Prospects
Author Ishtiaq Ahmad, Aman Ullah Malik and Raheel Anwar
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Abstract

‘Litchi’ the queen of fruit is an emerging fruit crop of Pakistan. It was introduced in early 1950’s from India and remained an exotic plant until 1960’s when commercial production started from few orchards located near Lahore (Shiekhupura, Sialkot, Begum Kot and Multan) of Punjab province. Owing to its good fruit quality and profitability in early seventies large scale plantations expanded to (Taxilla, Harri Pur and Khan Pur) North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and later to (Nawab Shah, Moro) Sindh province. At present it is grown on an area of around 2350 hectares with annual production of about 2.1 thousand metric tons. The main cultivars are “Bedana”, “Calcutti”, “Dera Duni/Gola”, “Bobbay”, “Chinese” and “Madras”. Gola and Calcutti are two widely grown commercial cultivars, the former is consistent bearer while later shows alternate bearing habit. Nursery plants are propagated asexually through pot layering with 80% success. System of irrigation is surface flooding. Over 95% orchards are marketed through pre-harvest contractors. Fruits are mostly commercialized using mulberry baskets with 30-40g net weight. Harvesting season is well distributed and starts from May (Sindh) through June (Punjab) to July (NWFP province). Over 90% fruit is domestically consumed as fresh with little processing and negligible exports. Fruit skin cracking is the biggest issue in Punjab during harvesting season due to hot dry weather. Main constraints for litchi production are: lack of quality nursery plants, long non-bearing period (7~8 years), inadequate technologies for nutrition, shortage of irrigation water and high postharvest losses. Potential of litchi remains underutilized so far, better production infra-structure and postharvest facilities are needed to boost industry for quality production and exports. This paper gives comprehensive information on litchi industry in Pakistan, along with the potential and future prospects.