

Title Production technology and post harvest processing of medicinal herbs and spices of socio-economic importance

Author Iqbal M.S. and Ahmad Z.

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Abstract

Medicinal herbs constitute as one of the major group of plants with recognized socio-economic value, which is not only ethno botanically important but also pharmacologically useful. In the international market, opportunities are emerging day by day for the trade of medicinal plants to fetch foreign exchange for the country. India, China, USA, Canada and Brazil are leading producers in this sector earning billions of dollars from their export products. Luckily, Pakistan is also a biodiversity rich country with natural wealth of useful medicinal plants especially medicinal herbs and spices, not only in the mountainous areas but also in the great plains of the Punjab and Sindh. In spite of their use in kitchen, they can also be used against various diseases like cancer, diabetes, heart diseases and liver disorders, e.g. hepatitis and AIDS. At present, our local market is unable to fulfill the required demands of the population. Raw material is therefore also imported from China, India, Afghanistan and European countries. Unavailability of proper production technology and suitable area of cultivation, post-harvest processing, market constraints and low economic returns as compared to major cereal crops, are the main problems in cultivation of these herbs and spices. In this paper the authors have reported their experiences about improved cultural practices, production technology and post-harvest processing techniques for the introduction and domestication of medicinal herbs and spices cultivation on large scale. The production technology and post-harvest processing techniques have been mentioned to improve cultivation and domestication of Gul-e-Baboona (*Matricaria chamomilla*), Coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*), Pudina (*Mentha piperita*), Niazbo (*Ocimum basilicum*), and Kandiari (*Silybum marianum*). Following these practices and proper timing for cultivation, farmers of low land area can earn appreciable income from

their land. Moreover, they can grow these herbs and spices in their homes (indoor and outdoor), kitchen gardens, and on marginal lands as single crop, as intercrop and also as rotational crop with other cereal crops.