
SUMMARIES OF GROUP DISCUSSION

Subject I

Transforming Horticulture for Sustainable Growth in India *

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Our country has seen a big demand, and in the post-reconstruction phase of the 1950s and 1960s, we have emerged as a prominent supplier, especially in horticultural commodities. The country has been very proactive towards the sustainable development of its horticultural sector. Several schemes and development programs have been launched that have led horticulture to make rapid progress on many fronts, including area expansion, improvement in resource use and technical efficiencies, and enhancement of surpluses. Horticulture is a crucial sector emerging as a significant driver of Indian agriculture, contributing over 32 per cent to the gross value of produce and has raised farm income by 16 per cent. It leads the global production of vegetables and fruits and earns appreciable earnings from exports to other nations. Despite good facts, the horticultural sector of the country is associated with several challenges, including expected ramifications of climate change & its manifestations, environmental concerns, global competition and market failure, etc. Inclusive, integrated approaches are required to create an enabling ecosystem for the long-term productivity gains and sustainability of this sector. With a vision to get viable options to overcome these challenges and leverage its competitive advantages in global markets, ISAE invited contributions from learned scholars across the country under a specialized theme entitled "Transformation for Sustainable Growth in Horticulture in India" under fourteen indicative sub-themes.

The response to this call was rich and appreciable. The society received 79 papers covering a few specialized issues and activities relating to the horticultural sector, though a few aspects have not been fully addressed. Of the received contributions, only 75 papers were selected for presentation/discussion at the 84th Annual Conference of the Indian Society of Agricultural Economics held at Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru College of Agriculture and Research Institute, Karaikal, Puducherry during November 11-13, 2024. For better articulation of ideas, these papers were divided into six categories as follows:

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TABLE 1. PAPERS RECEIVED UNDER VARIOUS SUB-CATEGORIES OF THE THEME

S. No.	Category	Number of papers received
1	Economic viability & resource-use efficiency in horticulture	15
2	Growth and demand for horticultural products	14
3	Technological intervention in horticulture	8
4	Sustainability issues in horticultural crops	7
5	Value chain integration and price distortion	26
6	Horticulture & climate change and others	9

Distinguished speakers, learned researchers, & ambitious students contributed and interacted immensely during the session on this theme. This technical session discussed horticulture within the frame of diversification, sustainability, climate change, circular economy, price shocks, export potential, niche-based fruits, etc.

Based on the various deliberations & interactions, the session came up with a few recommendations.

- Without productive resources like land, the argument for planning for sustainability models for the horticultural sector would possibly die. Without any lag, strict prohibitions must be imposed on the unproductive & undesirable shift of productive land, and the available legislation needs to be strictly implemented.
- We need to capitalise upon our unique advantages for which produce has to be identified and prioritized to create market opportunities.
- There is a need to integrate various aspects of the value chain for territorial market expansion. Towards this direction, private players need to be incentivized for the creation of business and export ecosystems.
- We must invoke an integrated system approach towards the inclusive development of each crop. We must think of crop-based programmes like the “Mango Development Program”, wherein every issue associated with this crop needs to be addressed holistically rather than addressing one with the expectation that few more may erupt.
- Networking and collectivization for encouraging the participation of smallholders in marketing and connecting with industries for developing and strengthening backward & forward linkages are immensely required.
- A robust marketing information system needs to be implemented for guided decisions in the choice of markets to achieve scale & utility economies. This would help us implement regulatory measures to ensure fair prices & their stability.
- It is crucial and imperative to use sustainable measures in crop revitalization. It should involve conducting comprehensive crop suitability assessments,

promoting region-specific crops, and implementing integrated cropping systems.

- All the above options cannot be translated into outcomes without the policy support & flow of resources to research for enabling the creation of location-specific agri-tech provisions.

Future thrust

Although the contributors have covered all the possible areas related to the theme, a few sub-themes have received poor responses. Emphasis on research focusing on the economic aspect of innovative institutions, input supply chains & exotic horticultural crops may be prioritized. Further, the following areas may be prioritized for future research and development:

- Evaluation of existing policy environment, including schemes/missions, etc.
- Horticultural development within ecological concerns.
- Niche-based crops, novel food & viability of exotic fruits/vegetables.
- System and multi-pronged approaches to development.
- Safe horticulture-based food and premium receipts.
- Priority setting for research and future funding, etc.