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**A SWOT ANALYSIS OF FLORICULTURE INDUSTRY IN
KASHMIR**

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades, the global demand for flowers has grown considerably. This growth in market demand and its diversification value has attracted increasing numbers of developing countries to the global fresh flower trade. Floriculture is a fast emerging and a highly competitive industry in India. It has emerged as a lucrative profession with higher potential for returns compared to other agricultural crops. Flowers today are grown under controlled conditions and with the help of technology; the production has maximized resulting in quality produce for consumer acceptability, thus fetching a better price. In this paper we will provide an introduction about floriculture industry and make a review of the global and Indian scenario of floriculture, then we will provide an overview of the scenario of floriculture in Kashmir. Finally, we will present a SWOT analysis of this industry in Kashmir and try to provide some suggestions for improvement of floriculture. The paper is an attempt to study the present position and future potential in floriculture cultivation and exports in Kashmir taking into consideration the measures needed to promote this lucrative industry.

Keywords: Cut Flowers; Floriculture; Technology; Fresh Flower Trade

INTRODUCTION

Floriculture has been well defined as an area of horticulture concerned with the farming of flowers and ornamental plants for parks, gardens and floristry, which together consist of the floral industry (Getu, 2009). Cut flower cultivation has gained importance in the world since early 20th century, particularly after World War II. Lot of changes have occurred in this industry from the stage of production to storage, classification and marketing the same to the end consumers. New and modern technologies and techniques are being used in the cut flower industry from production to consumption. (Ozkan et al., 1997; Sayin, 2003; Boran, 2008). This has resulted in floriculture becoming one of the high value agricultural industries around the world. International trade in this industry is growing at a rapid rate with an estimated annual growth rate of about 25%. The international trade for this industry stood at around US\$ 11 billion approximately and cut flowers have contributed 60% to that trade in this industry. The global exports in this industry have increased by over ten folds from about 0.5 billion in 1990 to 10 billion in the year 2010 and if it grows at this rate its expected double by 2025 (Singh et al., 2010). Floriculture industry can be used as a solution to achieve rapid economic growth by those countries that have geographic advantage (Frank and Cruz, 2001). The state of Jammu and Kashmir is blessed with climatic and geographic conditions that are conducive for producing world class flowers

and its in this regard that this state is attempting to increase its export base to cater to new markets that would help in creating employment opportunities for the unemployed youth of the state. Since the quality and variety of flowers available in Kashmir are in demand worldwide, a substantial number of growers have started investing in this area.

Indian Scenario and Trade

The floriculture industry in India is mostly carried out in small scale and is unorganized in nature. In various parts of the country, mostly marginal farmers are involved in farming and production of floricultural products. These small and marginal farmers are unaware and have very less technical knowledge about effective ways of cultivation of flowers that lead to production to quality products. Recently private players have started showing interest in the production and export of flowers in large scale and in a systematized way. But more such initiatives are required from both Government as well private entrepreneurs. In order to endure in an extremely competitive international market and in order to increase the market share of the production of the floriculture products necessary efforts needs to be taken to ensure increase in quantity of flowers produced as well as ensure quality of international standards.

According to the horticultural board of India, 232.74 thousand hectares of land was under floriculture cultivation in the country during 2012-13 with the production of 1.729 million tonnes loose flowers and 76.73 million tonnes of cut flowers in 2012-13. Flowers are cultivated in open land and also under protected cultivation in green houses. Various kinds of flowers are now increasingly being produced for both export and for sale in national market. The country has exported about 22,485.21 MT of floriculture products for the net worth of about Rs.460 crore in 2013-14 to countries around the world mostly to The Netherlands, American continent, Europe and Middle East.

Status of Floriculture In Kashmir

Jammu and Kashmir is the most colourful State of the country. Jammu and Kashmir has varied climatic conditions and the average temperature varies within the three regions with Jammu having an average temperature of 24.5⁰C, Kashmir having an average temperature of 13.3⁰C & 5⁰C in Ladakh region. The region of Kashmir Valley is gifted with natural resources, climatic condition and rich natural flora enabling the production of a wide range of flowers. The congenial climatic conditions present Kashmir are not even found in countries that are dominating the world trade in floriculture. The presence of fertile soil, cheap and skilled man power provide ample scope for the development of floriculture industry.

Although the flowers are being cultivated in the Valley since ages but the potential this industry as a commercial activity has not yet been exploited properly despite the huge demand for the floriculture products from Kashmir. During last decade people especially the youth have started to show interest in floriculture industry and a number of growers from all the districts of the valley have started cultivating and selling various floriculture products outside the State. Moreover a number of flower nurseries are coming up in the Valley cultivating landscape plants, pot plants, cut flowers and flower bulbs. The main reasons that have contributed to the importance being given to floriculture in Kashmir have been identified as:

1. The aesthetic value of flowers from Kashmir fetch them high prices
2. Increased use of flowers in social events such as marriages, social gathering as also in religious rituals.
3. Due to the ever increasing demand of flowers from Kashmir and also the shortage of cut flowers in other parts of country fetch premium prices in International and National market.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To present a brief picture of state floriculture as it exists in Kashmir.
2. To study the scope of floriculture in Kashmir.
3. To document the production and marketing problems encountered by floriculture units in Kashmir

Swot Analysis

Strengths

Climate conditions in Kashmir the temperature profile, humidity and abundant sunlight are best suitable for the production of quality flowers.

Tulips as a competitive advantage: Not only is the quality of tulips among best in the world but also Kashmir is among the very few places in the world that is suitable for production of tulips providing Kashmir with a unique competitive advantage. Also the presence of Asia's largest tulip garden has brought Kashmir on the world map as a destination of flowers in the world.

Availability of labour: Floriculture industry is basically a labour-intensive industry since the plants require 24 hours-a-day care and attention, there is no dearth of unskilled labour in India especially in the rural areas.

Technical and financial support provided by the Department of Floriculture Kashmir in terms of :

- Transfer of Technology
- Training for Protected Cultivation under Hi-tech Poly Houses, Fan & Pad Hi-Tech Poly Houses, Shade Net Houses and Establishment of Nurseries.

Weakness

1. High cost of adoption of modern technology.
2. Lack of Cold Storage facilities.
3. Lack of sale and export promotion activities.
4. Unavailability of any floriculture park within the state.
5. Exorbitant Air freight cost and Poor airfreight capacity.
6. Less area under cultivation.

Opportunities

- A growing market for flowers at domestic, national and international level in which demand exceeds the supply, and the world demand is estimated to grow anywhere between 15 and 25 % per annum.
- The high production costs in developed countries provide opportunity as they rely largely on imports to meet their domestic demand.
- Most major flower producing countries at present are industrialised countries and are small in area. The acquisition cost of land is therefore very high and this makes it unattractive to set up floriculture units in these countries thus Kashmir has a great opportunity bank upon floriculture.

Threats

- Production is largely restricted to summer months due to extreme winters

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- Unavailability of a logistic partner poses a major threat since flowers are highly perishable.
- High rate of import duty on Indian Cut Flowers
- High Cost of Finance and high cost of production during winters
- Unavailability cold storage units at Airports
- Unstable political conditions

SUGGESTIONS

- Setting up of an export promotion council for export of floricultural products.
- Increase in production of value added products like dry flowers, seeds, potted plants and micro propagated plants
- Organization for appropriate training for personnel involved in production and export of floricultural products.
- To make the producers and exporters aware about effective quality control measures
- Establishment of appropriate marketing and distribution channels.
- Setting up of a floriculture park within Kashmir with required infrastructural support.

CONCLUSION

The products from Kashmir have garnered attention from international markets. The favourable climatic conditions for floriculture in the Valley, the availability of fertile land and trained labour, proximity to markets, high returns for floriculture products have encouraged people to invest in floriculture but if we have to record significant presence in International market and in places like Europe, USA and Middle East we need to cultivate flowers that meet the stringent quality norms that most of the countries have and also cultivate quality value-added products which remain in high demand in the international markets. In order to make the presence felt in international markets a lot needs to be done in terms of improving infrastructure, providing technical knowledge, having a quality control mechanism in place, sale and export promotion centres, access to bank loans easily and establishment of a floriculture park in Kashmir.

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