



GREEN FARMING STRATEGIC VISION : 8

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Quality literacy movement for good agricultural practices

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India has made significant strides over the past several decades in food production and the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables in the world. However, exports of these products are hovering around 1%, which is much lower than the potential that exists in the new era of global trade. The National Horticulture Mission trying to double the production of vegetables and fruits from present 160 million tons to 320 million tons during the next few years.

There are several key issues that require attention for both sound production practices and safe processing and marketing procedures. One of the key factors that determine the export potential of fresh fruits and vegetables sector is maintenance of the quality of the produce and increasing its shelf-life. Exporters are required to comply with the maximum pesticide residue levels for exporting their produce. Japan, Australia and China have in the past banned imports of mangoes and grapes from India on account of presence of certain fruit flies. Australia desires to have complete details about pest management practices in India and a ban can only be lifted after signing of an MoU on mutual recognition of pest management practices. Japan on the other hand desires Vapour Heat Treatment (VHT) of fruits for disinfestations before these can be allowed to enter into that country.

Contamination generally has a negative impact on the quality of the food or feed and may imply a risk to human or animal health. General principles of food hygiene provide the basis for food hygiene and lay a firm foundation for the development of an effective Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) or equivalent system. Besides HACCP, there are various codes of practices like Good Manufacturing Practices (IFS, SQF, BRC), ISO 22000, ISO 14001, Fair-Trade, SA8000, Organic Standards, Intrinsic Food Quality, etc. which ensure favourable conditions for producing safe food. Good Agriculture Practice (GAP) is common-sense farming which cares for the environment and prevents or reduce the risk of hazards and food contamination occurring during production, harvesting, post-harvest handling of agricultural produce. There are different types of GAP standards and certification requirement for food safety and good production practices like GLOBALGAP, a voluntary standard required by many supermarket chains in Europe, ASEANGAP standards currently operating in Asia and IndiaGAP in India under Indian National Program for Good Agricultural Practices. The GAP certification also developed by Japan (JGAP), China (ChinaGAP), Malaysia (SALM) and Thailand (Q GAP). The main challenges related to GAP implementation are record keeping, residue testing, certification, and inadequate access to information and support services. The Codex Alimentarius Commission, created by FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO) develop food standards, guidelines and related texts such as codes of practices under the joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Program. Each farmer, producer or operator must identify the practices that are critical to managing quality and strictly follow Codex alimentarius prescribed for different fruits and vegetables to minimize rejections.

Realizing the highly competitive international markets with stringent quality and safety standards, India, has to move ahead quickly in this sector by mobilizing its regulatory and accreditation agencies to show its presence in the international markets by placing highly competitive and unique products. To strengthen the capabilities of Indian farmers and exporters for sticking to international quality standards, there is an urgent need of launching a Quality Literacy Movement to increase awareness and adherence to *Good Agricultural Practices*.

***Dr. A.K. SINGH** is an eminent Soil Scientist having teaching, research and extension experience. His work as senior Faculty and Scientist for more than ten years and long association with Research Organisation and ICAR Institutes enabled him to study soil fertility, plant nutrition, land management, integrated farming system, and water quality with special reference to arsenic in North Eastern India. He was associated with more than 12 sponsored research projects on integrated nutrient management, water quality with special reference to arsenic, eco-restoration in mined out areas, soil survey and crop planning, homestead/integrated farming system, etc. He has written number of books like Conversion to Organic Agriculture, Production Technology on Bio-organic Farm Inputs, Environmental Soil Science, Good Agricultural Practices, Arsenic Calamity in India, Reclamation of Coal Mined out Land, Organic Farming, Agricultural terminology, Integrated Fish Farming, Resource Support System in Agriculture and Allied Sectors, and a number of research papers in international and national journals of repute.