
Proceedings of the Regional Seminar on Perspectives of Horti-Business in Development of North Eastern Region: A Brief Report

A two-day Regional Seminar on “Perspectives of Horti-Business in Development of North Eastern Region” was organised during February 24-25, 2020 under the auspices of College of Horticulture and Forestry, Central Agricultural University (Imphal), Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh, Co-organised by NABARD - Itanagar and in association with Indian Society of Agricultural Economics (ISAE), Mumbai, ICAR-ATARI-Guwahati (Zone-VI) and Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar. Prof. M. Premjit Singh, Hon’ble Vice Chancellor, Central Agricultural University, Imphal was the Chief Patron of this seminar. Prof. Saket Kushwaha, Hon’ble Vice Chancellor of Rajiv Gandhi University, Itanagar was the Chief Guest of the inaugural occasion of the seminar. Dr. Gopa Kumaran Nair, General Manager, NABARD, Itanagar graced the occasion as Guest of Honour. Prof. B.N. Hazarika, Dean and Chairman, Dr. Ram Singh, Dr. Lakshmi Dhar Hatai was the Organising Secretary and Dr. S.K. Pattanaik was the convener of the seminar. Prof. Saket Kushwaha in his key note address emphasised on the need for organising such events in academic institutions, emphasised on enterprise combination of all the desired inputs to increase cropping intensity of horticultural crops in the region. He also stressed on value addition and marketing strategy of organic horticultural produce and their linkages for increasing income of farmers. Dr. Nair, Guest of Honour and GM of NABARD spoke about diversification of agricultural crops, cropping pattern and technology adoption and role of NABARD towards various schemes in boosting farmers’ income in the Northeast during the inaugural programme.

Seven lead papers were delivered by eminent agricultural economists and horticulturists during the two-day seminar. The Seminar was attended by researchers from the North-Eastern Region. About 50 delegates including professors, scientists, research scholars and post graduate students delivered their research findings in three themes during technical sessions. It is hoped that valuable recommendations that emerged out the discussions during the seminar, would be proposed to the government(s) subsequently for formulating policy decisions concerning horti-business development in the NE region.

Prof. Ashok Kumar, Honb’le Vice Chancellor of Apex Professional University, Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh graced the valedictory function as the Chief Guest. He was optimistic that this seminar being an appropriate platform to the students, scholars, social scientists and management experts to make scientific interactions and come out with concrete recommendations for the benefit of the growers as well as stakeholders engaged in the horticultural sector in the North Eastern Region. Guest

of Honour, Prof. Dibakar Naik, Ex-Prof. Agriculture Economics, Central Agriculture University (Imphal) and Ex-DR OUAT and Dean, College of Agriculture, OUAT, Bhubaneswar, Prof. V.T. Raju, Ex-Dean, CPGAS, CAU, Umiam, Meghalaya and Prof. B.N. Hazarika, Dean and Chairman discussed on the prospects of sustainable horticultural production, from seed to market, providing a strategic framework for value addition and profitability for the horticultural sector of this North East Region. It was also expressed that in the recent past, the region has made commendable progress towards production of quality oranges, pineapple, banana and an array of vegetables including under-utilised and lesser known vegetables. For enhancing the growth in horticulture sector in the region quality seed and disease free transplants are indispensable. Presently the whole region is as one of the suitable niches for organic production to a number of fruits, vegetable and flowers ready to fetch premium price in national and international markets. In this context, well planned research strategies are needed to standardise the organic protocols for production of high feathered fruits, vegetables and flowers.

Horti-business plays a pivotal role in fostering and sustaining the tempo of rural development in the North Eastern Region. Efficient Horti-business is a pre-requisite in the development process of the economy of north eastern states. Adoption of horti-business technology and sustainable utilisation of resources can help the horticultural farmers in minimising the cost of production. New paradigm and challenges are needed for horticultural farmers of north eastern states in solving the problems like recurrent price fluctuations, high marketing, storage and transportation cost, non-availability of adequate storage facilities, post-harvest losses and lack of competitive marketing system of horticultural produce. Horti-business signifies sustainable resource management, enhanced income generations and enlarged employment opportunities from a long term prospective. The North Eastern Region has immense scope for horticultural business in the process of agricultural development. Horticulture is the main economic activity in NE region. This region is abundant in horti-crops like banana, pineapple, cashew nut, orange, khasi mandarin, citrus, passion fruits, kiwi, plums, pears, peaches, ginger and turmeric etc. which have high commercial value. Passion fruit cultivation is of special importance to Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur and Sikkim which has good potential for exports. Kiwi fruit is being cultivated in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Meghalaya and hills of Manipur. North-eastern region is blessed by nature with tremendous biodiversity and extremely congenial climate for growing various kinds of ornamental crops (anthurium, gerbera, roses, heliconia, carnations, liliams and orchids etc.). It is estimated that high-value horticultural crops such as, fruits, vegetables, condiments and spices occupy as much as 15 per cent of the region's gross cropped area. For instance, the growing demand for horticultural products especially burgeoning market for processed fruits, vegetables and spices as well as booming floriculture market is an evidence of the scope for accelerating horticultural growth in NE states. Horticulture has become a sustainable and viable commercial venture for the marginal and small farmers of this

region. For integrated development of horticultural sector, which focused on area coverage, quality production, creation of post-harvest facilities, value addition and horti-business potential in NER. Still markets are unorganised and value chain has ample scope to get rid of unorganised intermediaries to enhance the due share in consumers' rupee. Therefore, there is ample scope for triggering agricultural development through horticultural interventions in north eastern region. Horticultural business is the fastest growing sector contributing towards improving farm incomes, enhancing food and nutritional security, reducing rural poverty and accelerating the overall economic growth of the NEH region.

The following three broad subjects were discussed (Oral Presentation) during the two-day regional seminar.

1. Problems and prospects of horticultural production and marketing.
2. Horticulture for sustainable development and livelihood security.
3. Value chain and marketing strategy of agri-horti based products towards entrepreneurial development of NE region

As highlighted earlier, eminent agricultural economists, policy planners, government officials, civil society groups, research scholars across the north eastern region and country participated in the seminar. Hence, the proceedings is an outcome of the seminar may be is helpful for the policy makers, planners, different stakeholder like intermediaries, researchers, scholars involved into value chain of fruits, vegetables, spices and other horticultural produce for further course of action in a systematic manner.

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SEMINAR

- Farm diversification and intensification can be the major objectives of the production systems approach to improve the socio-economic conditions and quality of life of individual farm families by increasing the productivity and net income of their farming.
- Agri-business/marketing centres should be setup at block level to provide actual and timely marketing information and to link and small-agri processing units with big food companies.
- For sustainability of horticultural production in North East the production system need to be strengthening by increasing productivity and establishment of horticultural producers organisation at the cluster level.
- For developing the horticulture marketing the export market need to be identified and State Governments may establish Horticultural Marketing Board.
- Technological intervention is a must for increasing productivity of horticultural crops.

- It is necessary to bring agriculture, health and nutrition together in a triangular relationship through partnerships.
- To increase the North-East's share in trade and employment generation, the need of the hour is to boost the production of high value crops and link the production with value chain management through processing and value addition.