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## Assessment of The Problems of Date Palm Growers and Their Possible Solutions at Khairpur

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**Abstract** The survey of Taluka Kot Diji Khairpur was conducted to assess the problems of date palm growers. A questionnaire was developed and 60 farmers of Kot Diji were interviewed. The results were analyzed by total number of respondents divided by total number of farmers that interviewed. The date palm growers are facing many problem like no proper credit facilities, no support price of date palm given by the government, no demonstration of improved production technologies, no market exploitation for date palm export, no access to recent research findings, pre and post harvest aspects of date palm, no Govt processing Industry, no cold storage facility, no guidance on effective and timely control of insects, pests and diseases, shortage of irrigation water, no proper soil and water testing facility, no trainings facilities to farmers and no proper Agriculture extension services to growers and no government support if crop damaged by monsoon rains. The 91.67% farmers suggested the announcement of support price by the government, 73.33% suggested effective dissemination of improved production technologies to growers and 68.33% suggested formation of facilitated extension office for the farmers to get their problems solved. However, among other suggestions came from the growers for Government, Improvement in extension service, monthly coordination meeting with scientists, weekly visit of extension officers, crop monitoring by the extension workers, launching training of grower's, establishment of storage facilities, training for export quality fruit production and announcement of awards for growers producing good quality fruit of date palm. Facilitate growers with crop inputs for improvement of their socio-economic status, Put Date Palm development on National priority.

**Keywords:** Extension services, Date palm, Khairpur

### Introduction

Agriculture is the mainstay of Pakistan Economy having about one-fourth share in total GDP and 44% of total employment is generated by agriculture. The 71% of the country population living in rural areas, who are depending upon agriculture directly or indirectly for their livelihood. The Economic development of the country largely depends on the progress and growth of Agriculture Sector. The irrigated agriculture is the basic requirement of good production and progressive development of agro based industry in Pakistan. Date Palm is one of the major cash fruit crops of the

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country. Date palm plays a key role in the fruit industry of Pakistan and grown in four provinces of the country. The area under cultivation of date palm is 93.3 thousands hectares with total production 6.80 thousand tons (FAO, 2008). The date fruit is nutritionally a good source of potassium, iron and vitamins (carpenter and Elmer, 1978). Dates are mostly eaten fresh and dried as well as are processed into a lot of by-products. Dates are exported to several countries and are a good source of foreign exchange earning which adds to national income of the country. The date palm in Sindh is mainly concentrated with district Khairpur and it is the biodiversity centre for the date palm having more than 300 varieties (Markhand and Abul Soad, 2007). Date Palm plays major role in the socio economic stability of the areas, where ever it grows in the country.

Agricultural extension services are mainly responsible for the dissemination of information and its adoption/diffusion. Extension services provide the basis for management of crop and its products. In this connection heavy responsibilities lie on the shoulders of Agricultural Extension Department to pass on the necessary information to cope with the present situation as well as forthcoming challenges of different world pacts and decisions (Agunga and Sing, 2000). It is need of the day to increase the dates production as well as its export. The production and export goals can be achieved through education of local grower by exposing him to adopt modern technology in date palm plantation and management, which may include selection of high yielding varieties, proper use of fertilizer and irrigation, proper time and method of pollination, harvesting, drying, grading, storing, transporting and marketing of produce (Khan *et al*, 2004). The object of this research was to highlight the problems of date palm and make recommendations for their solutions.

## **Materials and methods**

A survey was conducted in the date palm growing areas of Sindh, particularly in Taluka Kot Diji, Khairpur. A questioner was prepared and was completed by personal interviews. The 60 growers were selected randomly representing the date palm growing area of the Khairpur which is the major date producing district of Pakistan. Information about the cultivation and pre and post harvest practices of date palm were included in the questioner. The information was collected on planting, application of inputs, orchard management, harvesting, drying, storage, post harvest, processing, packaging etc. The results were analyzed by total number of respondents divided by total number of farmers that interviewed

## **Results and discussion**

### ***Problems Faced By Date Palm Growers in the Study Area***

The results revealed that Date Palm growers are facing many problems. The data presented in Table 1 showed that the top most problems as highlighted by all the interviewed persons (100%) are (i) mature crop at risk due to monsoon rain and (ii) shortage of irrigation water. The 96.67% of the respondents informed about poor Agriculture extension services. While 85% were of the opinion that (a) There is no credit facility from the Financial Institutes or Government and (b) Uncertainty of date palm price and no support price from Government. As per recorded information 83.33% showed concern over no training of growers in date palm crop management followed by 80% saying market experts for date palm exports. Whereas 71.67% said there is no demonstration of improved production technology and no guidance on effective and timely control of different insects, pests and pathogens. Whereas 21.67%, 35% 45% and 63.33% reported that there is no adequate research on various production, protection and post harvest aspects of date palm, no proper access to recent research findings, no government support on crop damaged and no proper facility of soil and water testing respectively. The investigations were in agreement with the results of Hussain *et al.*, 2010 who reported that 100% of the respondents were unaware the problem related to mango industry as the growers of Khairpur about Date pam.

**Table 1.** Problems faced by Date Palm growers.

S.No	Problem	Respondents out of 60	Percentage%
1	No effective extension services from the extension department	58	96.67
2	No Demonstration of improved production technology	43	71.67
3	No market Exploitation for date palm exports	48	80.00
4	No findings of research on various production, protection and post harvest aspects of date palm	13	21.67
5	Shortage of irrigation water	60	100.00
6	No proper facility of soil and water testing	38	63.33
7	No Guidance on effective and timely control of insects, pests and disease	43	71.67
8	No training of growers in date palm production, protection, and post harvest aspects	50	83.33
9	Inputs are costly	28	46.67
10	Mature crops at risk due to monsoon rains	60	100.00
11	No Government support on crop damaged	27	45.00
12	No proper credit facility from the banks/Govt: on date palm plantation	51	85.00
13	Uncertainty of date palm price	51	85.00
14	No support price of date palm by Government	51	85.00
15	No access to recent research findings	21	35.00

### ***Suggestions of Date Palm Growers to Improve the Situation of Date Palm Crop***

It is necessary to have sufficient awareness and know how information regarding the various uses of inputs to improve the date palms production. It should be kept in mind that date production is a long term project and generates real income from 7 to 8 years of orchard planting, then income goes on up to 50-55 years of plant age. The data presented in Table 2 showed the suggestions of date palm growers for the solution of various problems. The 100% of respondents suggested crop insurance policy and

credit facility may be ensured on damaged date palm crop by monsoon rains followed by 91.67%, 73.33%, 68.33%, 65%, 55%, 55% and 51.67% suggested the announcement of support price of dates by Government, effective dissemination of improved production technologies among growers, provide facilities to growers to reach extension office, improvement of extension services to solve the problems of growers, weekly visits of the Extension Officers or Extension workers to monitor the practices of growers in the field, special awards for high yielding and quality produced dates orchard owners and arrangement of special trainings for growers for modern post harvest technology respectively. Whereas 36.67%, 36.67%, 41.67%, 46.67%, 48.33% and 48.33% suggested that monthly coordination meeting of extensionists with growers, suitable recommended cultivars by the government, provide special trainings to growers to enhance dates standard for export, cold storage facility, Researchers should handover modern production technology of date palm to growers and active role of district government to help the growers respectively.

**Table 2.** Suggestions of date palm growers to improve the crop situation.

S.No	Suggestions	Respondents	Percentage%
1	Extension service should be improved	39	65
2	Monthly coordination meeting of Extensionists, Researchers and growers may be conducted	22	36.67
3	Modern production technology of date palm may be demonstration on experimental date palm.	29	48.33
4	Dissemination of improved package of production technologies may be ensured	44	73.33
5	Extension officers should ensure their personal visits at growers at least weekly.	33	55.00
6	Extension workers should monitor the practices of growers on date palm	33	55.00
7	The growers should be facilitated to reach extension office to get solution of their problems.	41	68.33
8	The Government should launch campaigns in the area to grow recommended cultivars.	22	36.67

9	The Government must announce the support price for the date palm crop.	55	91.67
10	Insurance policy may be devised to support the date palm growers on crop damaged due to monsoon rain.	60	100.00
11	The District Government should play its role and should help the growers in solution of problems.	29	48.33
12	Special trainings of growers should be arranged in post harvest practices.	31	51.67
13	Cold storage facility should be developed and export quality crop should be encouraged.	28	46.67
14	The growers should be given training in products standard for export of quality date.	25	41.67
15	Special award for date palm growers may be announced on high production and quality produced dates.	33	55.00
16	The credit facilities for the date palm growers may be ensured for application of recommended inputs.	60	100.00

## Conclusion and recommendations

The results indicated that date palm growers were faced the multiple and diverse problems, which was significantly affected on date production in the Khairpur region. In order to improve the date production in the area, the planning and execution of improved agricultural practices are required. This would help in tackling the problems of Date Palm. The team of DPRI made following suggestions to the date palm growers. Researchers and Government sector would improve the poor scenario of date palm in the region. It is suggested to growers to perform all the recommended practices i.e. fertilizer application, timely irrigation, plant protection measures and other cultural practices timely so as to get maximum production. Also, it is suggested to researchers that to focus research on mechanization of date harvesting process, to explore early ripening Domestic and International cultivars to avoid monsoon rains and to improve the production technologies by using both indigenous and scientific strategies for date palm crop. Meanwhile, the government sectors would be suggested to facilitate growers with crop inputs for improvement of their socio- economic status,

to train Agricultural Extensionists to disseminate latest production techniques and to put Date Palm development on National priority.

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