

## Concerns in Horticulture Promotion Policies

### Why in news?

\n\n

Official estimates indicate that the output of horticulture has outstripped that of foodgrains for the sixth year in a row.

\n\n

### What is the horticulture production status in India?

\n\n

\n

- The agriculture ministry's latest crop estimates for 2017-18, which indicate that the output of horticulture has outstripped that of foodgrains for the sixth year in a row.

\n

- While the food grain harvest has been oscillating, dipping markedly during the back-to-back drought years of 2014 and 2015, horticulture production has maintained a steady uptrend, regardless of the monsoon's performance.

\n

- The area under vegetables, fruit and other horticultural products, such as spices, herbs, flowers and plantation crops, has also been expanding.

\n

\n\n

### What is the significance of increased horticulture production?

\n\n

\n

- Agriculture has begun to diversify with farmers and farm land shifting gradually to relatively lucrative and quick cash-yielding fruit and vegetable farming.

\n

- Horticulture, together with livestock husbandry and fisheries, comprises the high-value segment of agriculture, which, if prompted to grow to its potential, can mitigate farm distress.

\n

- This trend assumes significance also because it has come about without much official backing.

\n

\n\n

### **What are few concerns which needs to be addressed?**

\n\n

\n

- At present, India's share in the global bazaar of fresh and processed fruit and vegetables is meagre though even today the country is the world's second-largest producer of these items.

\n

- Admittedly, priority to foodgrains was justified in the past to combat widespread hunger, this goal has, more or less, been achieved.

\n

- In 2017-18, too, the output of Tomato, Onion and Potato registered a decline, bucking the overall uptrend in horticulture production.

\n

- The absence of stable import-export policies concerning these rapidly decaying products is partly to blame for their price volatility.

\n

- Though a price stabilisation fund for perishable farm produce exists for years, it serves little purpose because of its meagre corpus and shoddy administration.

\n

- Unfortunately, none of the fruit or vegetables figures in the present list of over 20 farm commodities for which the minimum support prices are routinely announced by the government.

\n

\n\n

### **What measures needs to be taken?**

\n\n

\n

- Emphasis should now shift to augmenting the availability of relatively nutritious fruit and vegetables to alleviate malnutrition, which still persists.

\n

- Assured marketing at remunerative prices for horticultural produce needs to be provided in the way it is proposed for many other crops.

\n

- Equally important is to facilitate the development of post-harvest value chain

of cold stores, refrigerated transportation and processing of perishable horticultural products.

\n

- Promoting organised retail with backward linkages with growers can also help provide assured marketing at reasonable prices.

\n

- It is imperative to include in MSP list some key fruit and vegetables, notably the three main mass-consumed kitchen staples tomato, onion and potato.

\n

- Government need to realise the need to create a prudent and longer-lasting policy environment to let the output of key vegetables and fruit move in tandem with their demand in the domestic and export markets.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: Business Standard**

\n

