

Exploring possibility of strawberry cultivation



Category: Horticulture

Jhalawar is primarily known for the cultivation of field crops specially soybean, wheat, mustard, gram, coriander, garlic, etc. The district is a part of Malwa plateau popularly known as Hadoti region. The soil is underlaid with parched layer of rocks. Of course the district receives annual rainfall of 1200 mm, whatever rainfall is received, all drains and forms uncontrolled flow which ultimately falls into rivers and to further big water bodies. No surface percolation of rainfall is there and the curse is that during May-June no lives wells are seen in the countryside in the district. Furthermore, with the failing of the forest and rising pressure of the population effective crop growing days remains very less. Under such circumstances, the productivity of field crop is very less. The income of the farmers is very poor. Any alternative to increase the income of the farmer is in the way of improvement of livelihood support to the agrarian community.



With the overall objective of improving the farm income the project entitled “Exploring possibility of strawberry cultivation in Jhalawar district of Rajasthan” during 2012-13 to 2015-16. As the part of the experiment 18 genotypes collected from CITH, Srinagar and K.F. Bioplants Pvt. Ltd, Pune were collected and evaluated under four environmental conditions viz., Naturally ventilated polyhouse, Fan-pad polyhouse, shadenet house and open field condition with different mulch namely silver on black polythene mulch,



black polythene mulch and rice husk. From the experiment, variety “Winter Dawn” in open field condition with silver on black polythene mulch was found higher yielder. The variety yielded 530g fruits/plant. Strawberry is a low growing plant and being planted at closer spacing of 60 x 30 cm,

one hectare accommodates 50-60 thousand plants. Thus, one hectare crop yield 125-175 quintals per ha. By selling the strawberry at bare minimum local price of Rs. 100 a kg, a farmer can earn about 15 to 20 lacs. The strawberry plants being costlier and cultivation being input and care intensive, the cost of cultivation for one hectare crops comes around 8-9 lacs per ha. In all, a farmer can get net profit of Rs. 7-8 lacs per ha within a short crop span of 6 months. Being short stature, short duration and early yielder it fits well in inter spaces of mandarin orchard. By doing so while earning net profit of Rs. 4-5 lacs per ha annually from mandarin a farmer can get additional income of Rs. 2-3 lacs from strawberry (20-25 thousands inter plants in mandarin orchard). It is in tune to the doubling farmer income through agriculture. It is worth mentioning that in the district strawberry is grown on raised bed with the support of drip irrigation system and only localized area is irrigated. If proper care in planting and



application of irrigation water is taken it does not interfere in flowering process in winter in the mandarin. In contrary, the other crops namely wheat, coriander, mustard, lucern, etc. which even winter requires irrigation when mandarin has no water requirement and it largely interferes with the flowering process which usually appears during February-March.

Seeing the beneficiality of the strawberry cultivation a good number of farmers are coming forward for strawberry cultivation. One such progressive farmer Mr. Manjeet Singh Jhala of Bhilwari village of Jhalawar district undertook strawberry cultivation in mandarin orchard over 1.0 hectare area during 2017-18. He planted 55000 plants and earned about Rs. 6-7 lacs from produce of about 20 ton. The farmer expressed that he could have earned more provided planting material, packaging material and industry had been made available locally. He further opined that at present the availability of planting material and packaging material are being arranged from Mahabalesher (Maharashtra), which raises cost of cultivation and lessens the profit of strawberry cultivation. Another farmer Mr. Laxmi Naryan Patidar of village Jagannathpuri of district Jhalawar got net profit of Rs. 1.5-2.0 lacs from 20000 plants planted over 1-5 bigha area. Likewise many other farmers are showing inclination to go for strawberry cultivation. The strawberry traditionally finds cultivation in hilly areas where winter remains sufficiently cold. Its popularity in area like Jhalawar where winter is sufficiently shorter is really worth mentioning. As strawberry is a new crop in the area, adaptation of farmers for strawberry cultivation itself reflects the profitability of the crop and its potential virtue in doubling the income from the farming.

