

Growth in Area and Production of Apple in Himachal Pradesh

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Fruits and vegetables play a unique role in developing countries like India both in economic and social spheres for improving income and nutritional status particularly of the rural masses. Establishment of orchards not only makes variety of fruits available for human but also help to maintain ecological balance and diversification of cropping pattern. In fruit cultivation, the grower has to plan for a longer period keeping in view his land, labour and capital resources. Though the initial cost of establishing an orchard is fairly high, the cost of maintenance during the fruiting period is almost the same as that for field crops. In many countries, the area under cultivation increased over a period of time still leaving large potential for extension of more area under plough. In India, while only about 47 per cent of the total area is under cultivation, the cultivable waste which constitutes only about five per cent of the total area, can at best be utilized for cultivation. In Western Himalayas, i.e., Jammu and Kashmir, U.P. hills and Himachal Pradesh, more emphasis is being made on the development of horticulture because of suitability of climate, more returns and it helps in maintaining eco-system, soil conservation and proper utilization of cultivable waste, etc. Relatively a larger proportion of the geographical area is devoted to fruit cultivation in Himachal Pradesh than elsewhere in the country. The main fruits grown in these hilly areas are apple, apricot, peach, plums, cherry, citrus, mango etc., amongst which apple occupies the significant position. Commercially too, apples are second to no other fruit grown in Himachal Pradesh. The apple alone accounts for more than 45 per cent of the total area under fruits and 90 per cent of production of all the fruits in the state.