

MAJOR CONSTRAINTS TO HORTICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN RASUWA

Development of horticultural crops, such as fruits, vegetables, and potatoes, in Rasuwa faces several constraints such as biophysical conditions, technical conditions, socioeconomic conditions, institutional conditions, etc.

Biophysical Conditions

Adverse Weather

The maximum rainfall occurs from June to August. In general, rainfall is in excess of local requirements. Sometimes fruit plants die as a result of water logging. In winter, there is an acute shortage of rainfall resulting in water shortage during the flowering and fruiting stages. Consequently, there is less fruiting or no fruiting. Although Rasuwa is not a hailstorm-prone district, considerable damage is caused by frost, especially in spring. There are no irrigation facilities for fruit and potato cultivation during the dry winter period.

Soil Conditions

In Rasuwa, 26.99 per cent of the total land area is rocky. Soils in general are mixed with gravel or rocks. Shallow soils have poor soil fertility.

Technical Conditions

Research

Low priority was accorded to fruit research in the past. Horticultural programmes only stressed the introduction of new crops and the establishment of horticultural stations. Recently, the responsibility for research has been given to the Nepal Agricultural Research Council (NARC), but the horticultural farm in Rasuwa is under the administration of the Department of Horticulture (DOH) and does not focus on problem-oriented research.

Saplings and Seeds

There is a lack of high quality saplings and seeds suitable for Rasuwa's climate.

Inputs

Farmers seldom use any fertilisers to cultivate fruit crops. Pesticides are not available when needed. Sufficient compost is not available for field use.

Disease and Pest Control

Disease control and pest control are mostly neglected by the farmers because of lack of information and the unavailability of fungicides and pesticides. Some of the bacterial or viral

diseases are not cured even after spraying. Careful surveillance and control measures are required to reduce the occurrence of pests and diseases.

Skills

Almost all the farmers in Rasuwa are ignorant of proper technical practices such as management methods, pruning, harvesting, plant protection, etc.

Socioeconomic Conditions

- a. Constrained by lack of funds, farmers cannot afford even the most basic inputs, e.g., good quality seeds, fertilisers, and pesticides. Horticultural crops require relatively high initial investments.
- b. Farmers are reluctant to approach moneylenders who charge three to five per cent interest and there is a lack of official creditors (ADB/N or other agencies). The existing ADB/N procedure for granting loans is lengthy and a source of harassment to small farmers. There are no provisions for consumer loans, particularly during the gestation period for fruit crops. Small farmers have practically no access to loans because of lack of collateral.
- c. Traditionally, the Nepalese diet does not normally include fruits. This is the reason why Rasuwa farmers also do not eat more vegetables and fruits.
- d. Single farmers may not be able to find markets for their produce. Only an organised group of farmers engaged in vegetable and fruit production would have access to markets as such farmers have large quantities of produce. Such groups do not exist at present.

Institutional Conditions

- a. Difficult terrain and lack of a transportation infrastructure (from the production area to the road head or to the market) are major constraints.
- b. The lack of a marketing infrastructure is another problem. There is no market information system to disseminate information to producers as well as small traders.
- c. There are no storage and processing facilities.
- d. The prevailing extension services are not able to motivate farmers and fulfill their requirements. Horticultural crops receive low priority. Separate horticultural extension services are critically important.
- e. Post-harvest handling, including harvesting, packing, transportation, and storage techniques are required.
- f. Langtang National Park covers about seven village development committees. The wild animals from this park destroy the succulent crops of the farmers, thereby discouraging farmers from fruit and vegetable cultivation. Some of the farmers from these VDCs are not willing to adopt improved technologies because of this problem.