

# Horticulture output overtakes field crop production: ICAR data

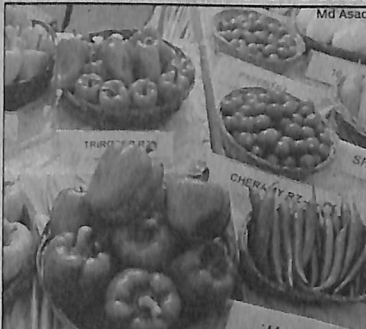
Rohith.BR @timesgroup.com

**Bengaluru:** India is growing more fruits and vegetables than field crops like paddy and wheat, indicating that more farmers are taking to horticulture, shows data compiled by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

On the sidelines of the three-day National Horticulture Fair 2019, being held at Hesaraghatta on the city's outskirts, Anand Kumar Singh, deputy director general (horticulture science), ICAR, said in September 2017, horticulture crop production in India touched 306 million tonnes, more than the field crop output of 285 million tonnes. "This is for the first time that such a shift has been witnessed," he added.

Crop production is up 1.5% year on year and about 8% higher than the previous five years' average. Singh said horticulture production contributes 29% of the country's GDP. "This despite horticulture oc-

## FROM COCONUT CHIPS TO JACKFRUIT ICE CREAM



**UP FOR GRABS:** Vegetables on display at the National Horticulture Fair at Hesaraghatta

How about chips or ladoos made of tender coconut? Or ice cream with jackfruit flavour? Exotic as it may sound, these are among the lip-smacking items on offer at the fair being held on Indian Institute of Horticulture Research campus.

Themed 'Horticulture for rural prosperity', the event has over 130 stalls of horticulture-based industries, both from government and private sectors, showcasing their practices and products. Farmers from Goa, Kerala, Tamil Nadu,

Jammu & Kashmir, Assam, Punjab and other states are participating.

Krishna BK, a resident of Vijayanagar, said he liked the elaneer (tender coconut) opener developed by Belgaun Siva Herbas. "The tool is simple and available for Rs 100," he added. Siddalingaiah M, a farmer from Tumakuru, said some modern equipment on display could make agriculture practices simple. "But their cost should be brought down," he added.

The variety of flowers, especially roses, was a crowd-puller on the first day. Entry to the fair, which is on till January 25, is free.



cupying only 14% of the total area under agriculture at 140 million hectares. Potato, tomato, onion, brinjal, mango and banana are other major horticulture crops the country is producing," he added.

A senior researcher from ICAR said with increasing production, India is set to expand its footprint in horticulture crop exports on the global

trade map. "Potato, onion, mango and banana are in high demand in other countries. For the first time, we recently exported bananas from Tamil Nadu. Apart from North America, South America, Gulf and European countries, we'll expand to other places in coming years," he added.

Researchers attribute the rise in production to higher re-

turns farmers are getting per unit area of cultivation. "While paddy gives a maximum yield of only 30 quintals per hectare for a cultivator, the same for banana is 400q/ha and grape is 100q/ha. Consumption of horticulture crops which are rich in vitamins and nutrients, has also gone up. Farmers are investing in flowers used for decorative purposes as well," he added.