

Prospects not juicy for Muthalamada farmers

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Palakkad: Climate change and pest attack have dampened the prospects of mango farmers in Muthalamada. Around 60% of ripened mango crop was destroyed this season.

Thrips infestation has upset the plans of Muthalamada farmers, known for its early mango harvest.

The mango season had arrived on time in January itself, but farmers, traders and exporters suffered a major loss due to the pest menace. Only 40% of the mango crop could be sold in the market, chief executive officer of Muthalamada Company, Senthil Nataraajan.

Farmers now face the danger of their huge investment becoming a liability owing to change in mango flowering season due to climate change and pest attack.

He said that there are more than 6,000 farmers in Muthalamada. According to estimates 6,5000 hectares are under mango cultivation. The orchards produce



nearly 58,500 tonnes of mangoes in one season. There are around 9,75,000 mango trees in Muthalamada.

The Secretary of Muthalamada Mango Farmers' Welfare Association Arumughan Pathichira said, "because of the increasing pest attack, farmers have been using hazardous pesticides indiscriminately, endangering the lives of consumer as well as the farmers."

Deputy director of agriculture and special officer for Muthalamada mango hub B Sureshkumar said, "Muthalamada mango farmers should adopt organic farming to attract international market. Use of hazardous chemical pesticides should be curbed".

The State Horticulture

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Mission (SHM) had announced plans to launch organic cultivation of mango in 500 acres of land in Palakkad district's Muthalamada, the mango hub of the state, this year.

In Muthalamada grama panchayat 90% of the cultivable area is under mango cultivation. It is the only place in Kerala where mango is commercially cultivated and exported.

Muthalamada mango is in great demand in the international market for its 'exotic sweet mango'. It is the first to hit the market in January every year, two months before the mango season in March.

There are only two other places in the world where Mango ripens as early as in January - Peru and Bolivia.