

# CENTRE TO PROMOTE DRAGON FRUIT CULTIVATION

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Economics of Animal-Rearing incl. White, Blue & Pink Revolutions

Dragon fruit costs up to Rs. 400 per kg in local markets.

Following in the footsteps of the Gujarat and Haryana governments, the Centre has decided to promote the cultivation of dragon fruit, known as a “super fruit” for its health benefits. The Centre feels that considering the cost effectiveness and global demand for the fruit due to its nutritional values, its cultivation can be expanded in India. At present, this exotic fruit is cultivated in 3,000 hectares; the plan is to increase cultivation to 50,000 hectares in five years.

The Gujarat government recently renamed dragon fruit as *kamlam* [lotus] and announced an incentive for farmers who cultivate it. The Haryana government also provides a grant for farmers who are ready to plant this exotic fruit variety. The fruit is considered good for diabetic patients, low in calories and high in nutrients like iron, calcium, potassium and zinc. Addressing a national conclave on the fruit here on Thursday, Union Agriculture Secretary Manoj Ahuja said the demand for the fruit is high in domestic and global markets because of its nutritional values.

## Win-win situation

“50,000 hectares in five years is an achievable target. The demand for the fruit will remain. Prices for farmers will also be good. The benefit is that this fruit can be cultivated in degraded and rainfed land,” Mr. Ahuja said. He added that the Centre will assist States in providing good quality planting materials to farmers.

Talking to *The Hindu* on the sidelines of the conclave, he said the Centre can also provide specific target-based help to States and farmers under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH). “Processing infrastructure can also be developed with the help of the Food Processing Ministry. Its cultivation will be beneficial for farmers and consumers. It is a win-win situation for all,” he added.

According to the authorities, and the Indian Council of Agriculture Research, the fruit plant doesn't need much water and can be cultivated on dry land, too. Horticulture Commissioner Prabhat Kumar told *The Hindu* that dragon fruit is now sold at a price of Rs. 400 per kg and the effort is to make it available to consumers for Rs. 100 per kg.

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