

Need for Pulses Revolution in India

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In News

Pulses are a **key source of protein** in most Indian diets and India is the biggest consumer of pulses in the world. Yet, with **stagnation of production in spite of increase in demand**, there has been an increasing demand-supply gap for pulses in India. Due to an increasingly nutrition-conscious urban population in India, the demand for pulses is growing rapidly; the supply lags far behind.

Pulses Production in India

- India **produces a quarter of the world's total production of pulses and consumes almost one-third, importing 2–6 million tons annually** (most of it from Canada, Myanmar, Australia and African countries) to meet the domestic demand.
- India's ubiquitous position as the leading producer, the foremost consumer and the largest importer of pulses is further **worsened by mediocre policy intervention and inadequate agricultural research budgets**.
- Pulses in India recorded **less than 40% growth in production in the past 40 years** while its **per capita availability declined** from 60 grams a day in the 1950s to 35 grams a day in the 2000s.
- **Price fluctuation** is common in the largely unorganised pulses market of the country, and often exacerbated by the **lack of assured procurement**.
- Estimates suggest that **India needs an annual growth of 4.2% to ensure projected demand of 30 million tonnes by 2030**. To meet this benchmark, constraints to production must be analysed and effective steps must be taken.

Causes of Low Production

- The **lack of a supporting mechanism** for the procurement and marketing of pulses has been a major impediment to the propagation of pulses.
- **Low genetic yield** of Indian pulses and their **vulnerability to pests and diseases** is a major hindrance to adoption of pulses by farmers. Further, being rain-fed, pulses often experience drought at critical growth stages.
- Public **investment in agricultural research** to develop high-yielding, short-duration strains of pulses, oilseeds and other horticultural crops has been **exceptionally low**.
- **Lack of awareness of production technologies** is a critical gap leading to low productivity. The nation **needs quality extension personnel** who must be trained and equipped with exceptional knowledge and latest practices.
- **Poor availability of critical inputs** including seeds, bio-pesticides and micronutrients such as zinc is another barrier.
- **Diversification** of the rice-wheat system in the Indo-Gangetic plain through popularisation of **short-duration varieties of pigeon pea, kabuli chickpea, field pea and summer moong bean** will be key to sustainability.
- There is ample scope for bringing additional areas under these pulses in newer niche areas such as rice fallows, tal (lake) areas, hill agriculture and in intercropping for remunerating cropping systems. **An estimated additional 3.0 million hectare can be brought under pulses cultivation across the country.**