

Present and Prospective scenario of Gram production in desert areas of the Punjab-Pakistan

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Abstract

Pakistan is ranked at 4th in terms of chickpea production in the world. Being an important pulse crop, chickpea is a cheaper source of dietary protein and nutritional security in Pakistan. Among all provinces of the country, Punjab holds the largest share in production of chickpea. Increasing population demands an increase production of this crop but unfortunately, the chickpea production has decreased manifold due to many factors. In 2012-13, the potential production of chickpea was 973,000 tones and in 2021-22 it stands at 319,000 tones. To fulfill the gap, the government has started import from Australia, Turkey and Canada that has a huge burden on economic stability of the country. Gram the top most user crop of the poor man's diet in Pakistan has been deliberately ignored by the government and that is the major reason behind its downfall. This ignorant behavior of the government pushed the farmers to search other options for sustainable livelihoods. This situation raised the concept of Eucalyptus (Sufeda) plantation in desert areas of the Punjab. Now, it has been estimated and observed that almost half of the chickpea area is under Eucalyptus and that will increase if some viable measures would not be taken by the agriculture sector of Pakistan. The reason behind extensive plantation of this tree species are i.e Easy germination, less labour requirement, less preparation of land, and huge economic benefits (after 3-5 years). This new paradigm shift is benefitting the farmers but that development is not a sustainable choice. The cons of this shift have witnessed a huge decline in livestock production and decreased biodiversity. If this pattern moves in the same way, then the population is going to have a severe shortage of this cheaper protein source.