

Food Briefs National

- ❖ The Sindh government has managed to fix the sugarcane rate for 2016-17 at Rs182/40kg in consultation with growers' bodies, coupled with an undertaking by sugar millers to commence cane crushing from mid of Nov.
- ❖ The agro-food sector is the largest non-textile component of the national export basket, and has been the main driver of export diversification during the last 15 years since 2001.
- ❖ According to the World Meteorological Organization, climate change and desertification are expected to lead to increasing levels of Stalination and desertification of agricultural lands.
- ❖ The recent assumption that the government would do away with the wheat crop support price was followed last week by the remarks of the Minister for National Food Security and Research, at a press conference, that the ministry is not interested in enhancing the crop support price, and that reducing the cost of production is the 'best solution.'
- ❖ A low-cost, direct dry rice cultivation technology has been developed at Plant Sciences division of the National Agricultural Research Centre in Islamabad. This technology will not only reduce the cost and enhance rice production by 25% but will also save nearly 35% of irrigation water.
- ❖ Pakistan started its kinnow export season recently with a mix of positive and negative factors. Exporters and officials believe that exports might cross the figure of 0.3m tonnes. The government has, however, fixed a target of 0.6m tonnes.
- ❖ Tunnel farming for vegetables is becoming popular across the country as it boosts per-acre yield, cuts the cost of production and helps in off-season production.
- ❖ According to Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif, setting up the Punjab Agriculture, Food & Drug Authority is an important step towards provision of quality medicines and food items to the people of the province.
- ❖ Papaya orchards in Pakistan nearly wiped out by a severe infestation mealybug (*Paracoccus marginatus*) of the papaya before the largely farmed country decided to replace conventional chemical pesticides that were not effective with natural predators that proved to be successful.
- ❖ A recent study by IFPRI, launched at PIDEs 32nd AGM held a few weeks ago, highlights that one of the reasons behind slow farming growth is low productivity. Total factor productivity in agriculture sector has in fact remained flat since 1990, where growth has been driven by input intensification rather than technical change.
- ❖ Punjab Agriculture Department has signed two Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with Nestle Pakistan for agricultural sustainability including Chaunsa Mango sector and Water Resource Management. For the Chaunsa project Nestle Pakistan shall take on board Mango Research Institute Multan as a research partner. ◆

Food Briefs International

- ❖ New America has recently launched new brand of strawberries with their Mexican partner from Michoacán, Don Limón named VITA MÁS. According to officials their supplying capacity is steady and reliable. The produce is checked, certified and packed at origin to secure international quality standards. Another inspection is done by Don Limón after arrival in the United States and before loading, to make sure only the freshest fruits are distributed.
- ❖ Vicente Benavent, a young Valencian who grew up in Morocco and studied in universities in America and Madrid, decided to undertake a unique project in Valencia with the production and sale of profitable alternatives to the traditional citrus crops.
- ❖ Following the incident where organic carrots from various EU countries were re-labelled as organic carrots from Germany, the market cooperative Naturland-Bauer eG commissioned further independent tests, the results of which are now available.
- ❖ Michoacan could lose more than 2,100 million pesos per week in avocado exports if the shortage in the supply of diesel continues. There would be a high unemployment for cutters, and the price of berries (strawberries, wild blackberries, and blackberries) and avocado would increase, according to businessmen in the area of Uruapan and Zamora.
- ❖ A new \$10 million fund has been proposed by Deputy Speaker and AAMBIS-OWA party-list Rep, Sharon Garin, to help the production and development of the mango industry in the Philippines. Mango is the Philippines third largest fruit export next to the Cavendish banana and the Pineapple.
- ❖ Peru is starting to take a share of the international market with its organic bananas, just when the demand for this product is reaching one of its highest peaks. The rising demand for organic foods by younger consumers is a growing trend and it is a strategic moment for the development of crops that respond to this need.
- ❖ The potential for the development of the organic food market in Poland is large, although the Polish market is still doing poorly compared to Western Europe. "The organic food market has growth prospects. It is a chance for smaller producers to find a niche and survive. I do not expect it to become a mass market, but it will still have a significant impact," stated Stefan Grzyb, of PKO Bank Polski.
- ❖ Japan has found a way to grow bananas in cold climates in a fraction of the time. Tropical fruits like bananas are usually not produced in colder climates like Japan. The country itself imports about 99% of its high banana consumption.
- ❖ The University of Almeria (UAL) is at the helm of the SABANA project, which seeks to obtain new biofertilizers and biopesticides as an alternative to the chemicals currently used in agriculture. The focus is on microalgae, which could help improve both the sustainability and profitability of agriculture. ◆