

## Mango Festival in Mirpur Khas

According to media reports this year a significant drop in annual mango production has been observed due to adverse effects of global warming on mango's yield. Sindh and Punjab are mango producing provinces in the country. Mango production in both provinces has been damaged by unexpected weather conditions. This damage will not only create hurdles in meeting domestic needs of the country but also export targets set for mangoes.

Recently the "52nd National Mango & Summer Fruits Festival 2017" was held in Mirpur khas, District of Sindh. Mirpur khas plays a vital role in providing numerous varieties of mangoes and other horticultural goods annually, but better known for mango production. The aim of the event was to promote Mango and other summer fruits.

Sindh Horticulture Research Institute. City District Government, Agri -tourism



Development Corporation of Pakistan, Farmers, Mango growers of Mirpur khas and other districts, Management community mango festival played a significant role in organizing the successful event at Benazir Exhibition Hall, Mirpur khas.

More than 200 different varieties of mangoes were showcased for the visitors which include Sindhri, Neelam, BeganPahli, Langra, Dilruba and many others. The event was inaugurated by Sindh's Minister for Agriculture and the conclusion ceremony was attended by Chief Minister of Sindh. The event gathered a large number of visitors. Both leaders stressed the significance and export potential of the Sindh's Mango.

## Importance of Agriculture Ignored in Budget

Ministry of Finance and the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) were criticized by Minister for Food Security Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan and members of National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance for ignoring the agriculture sector in the budget.

After a brief discussion on budgetary measures for the agriculture sector to ensure smooth flow of credit to their farming community it was agreed by the committee meeting that each province should establish agriculture banks. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, chairman of the committee said, "This is a technical committee and we have tried to discuss issues on merit". He asked the special invitee the food security minister to brief the committee on the farming community concerns.

The minister noted that the banking sector too has not been supportive as farm loans entail highest rate of mark-up, and most credit is disbursed to traders and middlemen instead of farmers. Secretary Finance Tariq Bajwa indirectly defending the banking sector said that the cost of processing farm loans and associated risks are significantly high. It was agreed that the provinces needed to establish their own agriculture banks and provide subsidies to the farmers at the provincial level.



## Ostrich farming gaining ground in Punjab

Ostrich, which is now considered to be a part of livestock in Punjab, is becoming a popular source of meat due to its delicious taste and health benefits. Ostriches are farmed on a commercial basis in dozens of farms across Punjab for their meat, hide and feathers. The bird's meat, a very similar in taste and texture to mutton but containing very low content of cholesterol and fat, can provide a solution to Pakistan's increasing requirement of protein-containing meat amid escalating prices of mutton, beef, chicken, etc.

Ostrich, which is now considered to be a part of livestock in Punjab, is becoming a popular source of meat due to its delicious taste and health benefits. Pakistan has not only the 'perfect' climatic conditions for ostrich farming. It has also the required manpower, infrastructure and feed much cheaper than many other countries.

Many people have taken ostrich farming as a business. The inspiration to invest in the sector came through the livestock exhibitions. Farmers learnt the world is now switching to ostrich farming as they are now considered livestock.

In recent years, the government has taken various measures to boost the sector. However, still awareness and more efforts are needed to convert ostrich

farming into a profitable business. On the other hand, a number of farmers complained of lack of support from the government as well as the company that provided them with the birds. The Punjab government, they said, had declared ostrich a livestock but no veterinary assistance was available to ostrich farmers as was provided to those in the livestock business.

Meanwhile, the provincial government also provides Rs10,000 subsidy per ostrich to farmers and as of 2017, had registered over 10,000 ostriches in the province. Earlier this month, the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences distributed Rs6 million as subsidy among 49 ostrich farmers under its project, titled 'Developing of Ostrich Farming in Punjab'. This project was launched in October 2016 with Rs70 million with a major portion of around Rs60 million to be distributed among ostrich farmers as subsidy. The UVAS had so far registered 3,000 ostrich chicks at 61 farms in 18 districts of Punjab.

In 2013, a hatchery was established at the Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi for research and to train farmers. The university helped farmers in Rawat, Chakwal and Jhelum set up ostrich farms and provided them technical assistance, consultancy services and medication to ensure safe investment in ostrich farming.

## Need for technology based agriculture to be introduced in Pakistan

The nexus of third generation and fourth generation technologies is natural and was inevitable for further development. One had to adopt the automated digital systems for their industries in order to save time and manpower. This combination was the only way forward to meet fast growing demands of the growing population. For instance, gigantic infrastructural development had not been possible without automated cement production units. Innovations related to the fields of engineering were not possible without the intervention of fourth generation technologies. Digital age has changed the concept of engineering mechanics altogether. In short, the old techniques and practices will become irrelevant and impractical if one fails to adopt upcoming trends and technologies.

The agriculture sector of Pakistan constitutes the largest sector of our economy and contributes about 21% of GDP. This sector has the potential to contribute even more to the county's GDP, if we start tech-based agricultural practices. Pakistan needs to adopt a fourth generation innovative approach to the traditional and old agricultural techniques. There is no doubt that agriculture research institutes in Pakistan are very progressive and contributing much to agricultural productivity.

Scientist and biotechnologists in Pakistan have achieved the diversification in seed development and moved to higher value-added seeds, particularly in the crops sector. Resultantly, we are producing surplus of wheat, maize (pulses) and sugarcane, according to the statistics of Pakistan Agriculture Research Council. However, all good practices are required to be adopted throughout the country of Pakistan so that productivity of the ordinary farms may also increase like the productivity at the research centers.

In recent years, special measures have been taken by the Government of Pakistan including the concessions of Rs. 15 billion in taxes and duties, increase in agriculture credit from Rs. 336 billion to



Rs. 600 billion and tariff reduction for agriculture tube wells. All these steps were promising, and encouraged the farmer community to promote this sector.

However, agricultural development cannot be achieved by offering subsidies and tax concessions, rather we have to encourage and promote smart agricultural practices to build the resilience of our agriculture sector and the said resilience can only be achieved by clipping science and technology together with our agriculture practices.

For instance, environment and climate are the major external factors that impact our agricultural growth leading to food insecurity. Climate change projections accompanied by the rapidly changing weather patterns needs to be studied through proper climate change research centers, so as to adopt mechanisms protecting us from excessive rain-fall, melting of glaciers, floods and, sometimes drought spells. Likewise we also need to focus on integrated pest management techniques and systematic surveillance for the prevention of pest, disease and parasites in crops and livestock in Pakistan.

Pakistan is a country where we often experience floods in one year and drought in the very next season. Apart from constructing small and big dams, we should focus on water resource management for agricultural purposes. It is high time to replicate world-wide modern irrigation techniques to enhance agricultural productivity. Sprinkler, drip and central pivot irrigation systems are the latest techniques, which ensure productivity with the small amounts of water.



### CPEC to raise Pakistan's Agricultural growth by 5.5 %

The World Bank in a recent report mentioned that a robust agriculture sector and Chinese-led infrastructure development would lead to 5.5 % growth in Pakistan's economy during the fiscal year 2017-18. The Washington-based lender also projected the country's growth at 5.8 % in FY19 and the subsequent fiscal year.

In Pakistan, favourable weather and increased cotton prices are supporting agricultural production, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor infrastructure project and a stable macroeconomic environment have contributed to an increase in private investment. The latest projections were kept unchanged compared with those for the next three fiscal years in the Bank's recent report. The report is released on semiannual basis.

The government set growth target at 6% for FY18. The World Bank, however,

warned that perturbed law and order situation could discourage local and foreign investments. It forecast growth in the South Asia to advance to a 6.8 % pace in 2017 and accelerate to 7.1 % in 2018, reflecting a solid expansion of domestic demand and exports.

### First Belarus-Pakistan Agriculture Forum hosted by ZTBL

Zarai Taraqiat Bank Ltd. hosted First Belarus-Pakistan Agriculture Forum a Business to Business Interactive Conference recently at Marriott Islamabad. The event was graced by a high powered delegation of Belarrussian Parliament, headed by H.E Mr. Andri Ackenehenko, Speaker of the House of Representatives, National Assembly Republic of Belarus. Along with him a delegation of agri-business community was also present there headed by H.E Lnoid Zayats, honorable Minister for Agriculture and Food Republic of Belarus. Minister for National Food Security and Research Mr. Sikander Hayat Khan Bosan was also present at the event.

At the event two Memorandum of understanding (MOUs) were signed for extension of cooperation among both the countries. One was signed between Zarai Taraqiat Bank Limited and Gomselmash an agriculture machinery manufacturer of Republic of Belarus, for extension of cooperation by ZTBL to Gomselmash.

Delivering the welcoming address, Syed Talat Mahmood thanked the honorable delegation for providing ZTBL the



opportunity to serve as a bridge in building agri-business relationship between both the countries, Belarus and Pakistan. Mr. Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan while thanking the honorable Parliamentarian and agri-business community delegation of Republic of Belarus appreciated the efforts of Zarai Taraqiati Bank Ltd. for hosting this event and emphasized the foregoing of long lasting cooperation to agriculture and allied sectors of both the countries. He further said that heavy mechanical industry for agriculture, Pakistan's high potential for Dairy and Livestock products and major crops along with the need for mechanization of agriculture fields of Pakistan offers great potential to the agribusiness community of Belarus.

### Rice exporters delegation from Pakistan expecting big deals in KSA

A 14-member joint delegation of Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) and Pak-Saudi Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PSJCCI), headed by Shah Jan Malik, Vice Chairman REAP visited Saudi Arabia from in May, 2017, as part of trade promotion activities to increase export of rice to the Royal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

According to the Consulate General of Pakistan, Jeddah, Shehryar Akbar Khan Consul General of Pakistan has appreciated the initiative taken by the rice exporters of Pakistan, and hoped that these efforts would support our efforts to increase the exports of rice to the Kingdom.

He shared that the consulate is making an extensive programme for the delegation which includes meetings with Makkah and Jeddah chambers, Business to Business Networking Session and meetings/visits to the leading supermarkets and hypermarkets of the Western Region.

The President of Pak-Saudi Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mian Mehmood said Saudi Arabia imports over USD 1 billion worth of rice every year making great opportunity for REAP to further increase the export of rice.



He said the joint chamber of both the countries is playing a very vital role in promoting trade in all the sectors between the two brotherly countries.

Vice Chairman Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI), Sheikh Mahzen Batterjie has welcomed the visit of the delegation and said such bilateral visits are necessary to increase the bilateral trade, commerce and investment between both the countries.

Members of the delegation are very confident that they will meet their objective and the visit will be fruitful. They are hopeful that there is tremendous scope for the export of Pakistani Basmati rice to Saudi Arabia, because of its supreme quality, unique aroma and taste.

### Mango exporters going online to access US, Dubai markets

In order to swiftly and easily reach out to overseas retail customers, the exporters of mango in Pakistan have started embracing e-commerce in a bid. Fruit exporter Farm House Export Private Limited has made preparations to ship Pakistani mangoes after booking orders online with increased focus on high-value markets of the US, Canada and Dubai.

It began such sales in association with Southwest Airlines of the US last year. Under the

arrangement, orders were booked through the airline's website and the fruit was delivered to customers at almost all big airports of the US. This year, the company has decided to approach the customers directly as well. It has developed a website named farmfreshshop.com to take retail orders of up to 2kg packaging.

Farmfreshshop.com Director Zulfiqar Momin revealed that last year the company exported 55 tons of mangoes to the US, which constituted 33% of total exports of the fruit to that market. It sold about three tons of mango packs of 2kg each totalling 1,400 boxes with the help of Southwest Airlines.

The company expects to step up its US sales to 80 tons this year," he said. "Ramazan provides the best opportunity for mango shipments to the US." Momin insisted that it was for the first time that a Pakistani company was planning to put in place an organized system for mango sales through e-commerce. Partnerships have been formed with American air carriers including United Airlines and Southwest Airlines as well as with logistics firm UPS.

United Airlines will carry Pakistani mangoes from Houston to New York while Southwest Airlines will deliver the delicious fruit to customers in all cities across America. Pakistani mangoes are grown with 100% natural methods and no chemical is used during processing. Mango is ripened with the help of ethane an environment-friendly gas and its shelf life, natural sweetness and taste are maintained.



Mangoes will be sold at competitive prices which are \$6 lower than the price for Indian produce. These mangoes are grown at the best farms. The fruit will be processed in Houston and it will be delivered anywhere in the US within 36 hours.

Apart from the US, Farm House Export Limited is also targeting to market mangoes in Dubai by utilizing the e-commerce platform. Company Director Shafaq Siwani revealed that another website named *omymango.com* was being launched and it would start receiving orders soon.

### Pakistan's dairy exports not reaching expectations

While speaking to the general body elections and oath taking ceremony for officials, Mr. Shakir Umar Gujjar President Dairy and Cattle Farmers Association expressed that the government should develop supportive policies for the dairy sector which has the potential to lead the process of our economic revival. The event was attended by a large number of representatives of the dairy and livestock companies belonging to dairy and cattle farmers sector.

Pakistan ranks as the fourth-highest milk producing nation in the world as dairy farming is one of the biggest industries in Pakistan with an estimated 42 million tonnes of milk production per year, having 11.30 % share in the gross domestic products.

The country has approximately 63 million animals producing milk, and over eight million households involved in the trade. As such, the industry is providing employment to millions of Pakistanis but remains far below in exports of dairy products.



"Dairy farmers have been selling fresh unpasteurized milk to wholesalers at the low price while input costs including feed expenses and prices of new animals have multiplied, but we fail to understand why the government is bent upon controlling the prices of fresh unpasteurized milk only.

Increase in the price of milk would help overcome shortage in milk production as it would encourage dairy farmers to invest in the business. Otherwise, he feared, dairy industry would completely collapse.

He pointed out that Bhains Colony in Karachi set up in 1960s and now houses between 350,000 and 400,000 animals has no proper road infrastructure and drainage system. Most animal waste end up the sea untreated.

We believe that working together with the private sector, the government can play an important role in enabling the dairy industry to reach its maximum potential, said Shakir Umar Gujjar.

He further said, "Our aim should be to economize milk production so that the poor farmers are benefited and to check milk adulteration so that public health is safeguarded".

Milk being a highly perishable product with only four hours' shelf life at room temperature, its non-entry in the formal processing channel causes inexcusable 20% wastage of produce.

### Irrigation Project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of Pakistan recently signed a loan agreement of \$86.41 million for the extension of the Pehur High Level Canal in the Swabi and Nowshehra districts of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province.

Xiaohong Yang, ADB's Country Director for Pakistan, and Tariq Mahmood Pasha, Secretary Economic Affairs Division (EAD) for the Government of Pakistan, signed the loan agreement, and Tariq Rashid, KP's Irrigation Department Secretary, signed the project agreement.

"Bolstering water resource management is an important step to increase



farm productivity across Pakistan," said Ms. Yang. "The Pehur Canal irrigation project will help support agriculture output and raise income opportunities of the farming families in the KP province."

The project will build on the earlier phase of the Pehur High Level Canal developed with ADB's assistance by further increasing availability of water to farmers through new irrigation canals and pipeline over 65 kilometers and improving water-use efficiency and farm management capacity to secure the province's food security targets.

Agriculture remains a vital sector in the KP province, where agriculture contributes to 18% of the province's overall gross domestic product, with over 37% of people directly employed in the sector's activities. The project will decrease poverty and increase economic well-being and job opportunities for about 75,000 people in the new irrigated area of 8,727 hectares in the two districts.

The total project cost is \$96.60 million, with the Government of Pakistan contributing \$10.2 million. The estimated project implementation period is six years. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Irrigation Department is the executing agency responsible for overall project implementation. The Agriculture Department is the implementing agency responsible for farm management-related work of the project.

ADB, based in Manila, is dedicated to reducing poverty in Asia and the Pacific through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration. Established in 1966, ADB is celebrating 50 years of development partnership in the region. It is owned by 67, ADB assistance totaled \$31.7 billion, including \$14 billion in co-financing. ♦