

India imposed 200% duties on Pakistan's Date's exports

After imposition of 200% duties by India on Pakistan's dates exports during recent escalation of tensions, the latter is shifting towards Sri Lanka for dry date exports. A three-member delegation of date importers from Sri Lanka arrived in Sukkur on an invitation of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP).

Since last year, Pakistan Horticulture Development and Export Company (PHDEC) and TDAP have made extensive efforts to find new markets for the dry fruit. However, they could not find any as "we have one of the oldest varieties and nobody demands it." Dry dates only have

Rank	Country	Production (000Tonnes)
1	Egypt	1,373
2	Saudi Arabia	1,123
3	Iran	1,017
4	UAE	900
5	Algeria	690
6	Iraq	619
7	Pakistan	557
8	Oman	268
9	Tunisia	180
10	Libya	166

Source: Embassy of Egypt

Year	Area (000 Hectors)	Production (000 Tonnes)
2014-15	91,145	537
2015-16	91,850	540
2016-17	92,350	550
2017-18	92,358	552
2018-19	92,360	558

Source: Ministry of Food Security and Research, Government of Pakistan

a few markets, with India being the biggest one, followed by Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

In India, dry dates are used for religious rituals. The consumption is so huge that, despite growing the product itself, Delhi has to import it, thus, Sri Lanka may not be able to replace India as Pakistan exported 80% of dates to India.

Prices of dates at the farmer's level, where middlemen buy in bulk, have decreased up to 40% and stocks have accumulated in the wake of escalation of tensions between Pakistan and India.

Dates are rich in carbohydrates, minerals and vitamins. There is no cholesterol and no fat in dates. Dates have a great importance as a staple food as well as a dessert fruit. Dates have found their way into sweets, confectionery, chocolates, baking products, preservatives, salads,

sauces, and breakfast cereals. Dates also have bulk industrial uses with advancements in food technology.

Production

Pakistan is the 6th largest producer of dates. The top five countries producing dates – Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, UAE and Pakistan contribute over 60% to the global production. Dates are being grown in all the four provinces of Pakistan over an area of about 558,000 hectares. In Pakistan more than 130 varieties are grown. Province wise commercial varieties are in Sindh Aseel, Fasli, Bhedir, Karbalian, Kupro and Mithri. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dhakki, Mazavati, Kango, Gookna .Balochisrtan Bagma Jang Kaharba & Mozawati . Punjab Hillavi, Khudrawi, Zahidi & Shmran. Sindh is the largest date producing province followed

by Balochistan, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The harvesting season for dates starts in July and runs till September the local fresh dates, therefore, hit the markets after mid-Ramazan. But due to the lack of value addition, processing and preservation, the local farmers are unable to stock dates for a longer period and even lose as much as half of their produce every year.

The tremendous growth in date farming took place just after the Sukkur barrage was completed in the mid-1930s as the irrigated soil became more conducive for date palm. Agriculture is central to Khairpur's economy and date farming is the main source of livelihood for the residents.

Pakistan has not increased production for more than a decade while the rest of the world has more than doubled its production. Area and production of dates in Pakistan are given in **Table-1** and **Table-2** show World largest dates producers - 2018.

Dry dates are the main produce in terms of volume and value. They are handled at the date markets of Khairpur and Sukkur by more than 200 traders, nearly two dozen active exporters and around 5,000 workers. Soft dates are processed in local factories. There are 20 such factories, of which 10 are regularly involved in the export business.

Each factory employs around 200 people on an average, making the overall workforce to 4,000. Each worker takes home Rs 400 to Rs600 daily. These work-

Table 3: Exports of Dates (Dried)			
Year	Quantity	Value	
	(Tonnes)	(Rs. Million)	(US\$ 000)
2014-15	8,832	6,244	61,642
2015-16	114,500	7,293	69,966
2016-17	175,163	10,644	101,662
2017-18	94,854	60,751	68,009
2018-19	74,057	8,016	75,068

Source: i) Trade Development Authority of Pakistan
ii) Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

Table 4: Exports of Dates (Fresh)			
Year	Quantity	Value	
	(Tonnes)	(Rs. Million)	(US\$ 000)
2014-15	26,966	2,092	20,650
2015-16	11,386	1,095	10,509
2016-17	13,043	1,307	12,484
2017-18	9,159	910	17,535
2018-19	8,008	1,058	15,880

Source: i) Trade Development Authority of Pakistan
ii) Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

ers perform various processing tasks. However, a major part of the processing (grading, cleaning, pitting and dicing) also takes place in houses and cottages where three to four times more volume is handled than factory workers. This indirect workforce is estimated to comprise 12,000 to 15,000 people, almost all of whom are women.

Solar Technology

Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) has built capacity for date growers to use solar technology for drying of

dates by developing a Solar-cum-Gas Fired Date Dryer for the dehydration of dates. This system can reduce post-harvest losses and improve quality of dates. Five solar drying systems have been installed in Khairpur and Sukkur Region of Sindh Province at Pano Aquil, Pryalo, Pir Jo Goth, Therhi and Hayyat Solangi in date production areas of Sindh.

Exports

Pakistan produces dry dates in surplus, which is why it has to export. However, the quality of dates is so low



that its own population does not consume it and the country has to import dates, especially for Ramazan.

The export market of dates requires compliance of global food standards; hence it has different dynamics. Export of dates from Pakistan increased from Rs.6.07 billion (US\$ 68 million) in 2017-18 to Rs. 8.02 billion (US\$ 75 million) in 2018-19, thus showing an average increase of 13% per annum. Export of dates from Pakistan are given in **Table-3** and **Table-4**.

Pakistan receives low prices of its dates as compared to other export countries like, UAE, Egypt and Tunisia because of low standard and lack of value addition. Exports of dried and fresh dates from Pakistan are given in **Table-5** and **Table-6**.

Importers of dates such as India, USA, UK, Germany, Denmark and Turkey are re-exporting Pakistani dates after quality enhancement and preparation of by-products, at a price that is four to six times higher than their import price. Pakistan imports dates to meet local demand almost every year in the month of Ramazan. Imported dates are processed in comparison with the local ones thus are more appealing to the consumers and for this reason for importing dates.

The major markets are India, USA, the UK, Bangladesh, Germany Turkey and South Africa. India is the largest importer with market share of about 97%.

Country-wise export of fresh and dried dates is given in **Table-3** and **Table-4**.

Problems

Since 1999, per acre yield of dates in Pakistan has not increased much, whereas worldwide production increased by 166%. Thus, due to these problems the country had to import dates during the month of Ramadan. A report of USAID revealed that lack of awareness about best farming practices, improper fruit handling techniques, and an absence of developed processing facilities are major constraints inhibiting profitable date production in Pakistan. Usually the harvest season of dates starts in July in upper

Table 5: Country-Wise Exports of Fresh Dates

**Quantity: Tonnes
Value: Rs. Million**

Country	2018-19		2017-18	
	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value
U.K.	1,901	250	3,053	287
U.S.A	2,612	331	1,037	102
Turkey	349	46	996	94
India	561	65	596	70
Denmark	397	45	527	46
Germany	1,013	125	1,264	129
Italy	--	--	434	40
Lithuania	143	18	275	30
All others	1,112	178	977	112
Total	8,088	1,058	9,159	910

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

Table 6: Country-Wise Exports of Dried Dates

**Quantity: Tonnes
Value: Rs. Million**

Country	2018-19		2017-18	
	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value
India	72,236	7,807	93,069	5,905
Germany	233	34	224	23
Turkey	123	23	311	31
U.K	638	79	935	89
U.A.E	19	3	93	6
U.S.A	48	8	17	2
Bangladesh	512	44	92	6
South Africa	7	2	53	6
All others	691	16	85,308	7
Total	7,4507	8,016	9,486	6,075

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

Sindh, during the monsoon season; they remain safe due to lack of rain in these areas during harvesting. Besides proper storage and value addition, date farmers also lack techniques to control fruit disease thus a significant amount of their produce perish in the post harvesting process.

Moreover, farmers' perspective is greatly ignored by the government especially in marketing of dates and provision of training regarding production and protection aspect of date palm. Pakistan has a favourable climate for the production of organic dates which have a great demand in international date market. There is still no intervention for the production and

marketing of organic standard dates in Pakistan. Pakistani date varieties can compete with other top varieties like Medjoul, Deglet Nour, Barhee etc. if government pay attention on value addition, processing and post-harvest technology of date palm.

References :

1. Ministry of Food Security and Research, Government of Pakistan
2. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics
3. Trade Development Authority of Pakistan. ♦