

Export of dates: India largest importer with market share 81% in 2010-11

By Dr. Noor Ahmed Memon.

Export of dates from Pakistan increased from Rs1.94 billion in 2005-06 to Rs4.62 billion in 2010-11, thus showing an average increase of 23% per annum. Pakistan mainly exports dates to India, USA, the UK, Bangladesh, Germany Canada and South Africa. India is the largest importer with market share of about 81% while USA and UK are second and third largest importers with shares of 8% and 5% respectively. Sukkur, Rohri, Khairpur, Turbat, Mand, Panjgur and Mashka are famous for the high quality of dates.

Pakistan is the fifth largest producer and exporter of dates. The top five countries producing dates – Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, UAE and Pakistan – con-

tribute over 60% to the global production.

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. The fruit is generally associated with health foods. Peak season for date consumption is during the month of Ramadan.

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.

Dates are being grown in all the four provinces of Pakistan over an area of about 91,000 hectares. In Pakistan more than 130 varieties are grown. Province wise commercial varieties are in Sindh Aseel, Fasli, Bhedir, Karbalian, Kupro and Mithri N.W.F.P. Dhakki, Mazavati, Kango, Gookna .Balochistan Bagma Jangi, Kaharba & Mozawati . Punjab Hillavi, Khudrawi, Zahidi & Shmrn.

Sindh is the largest date producing province followed



by Balochistan, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The annual production of dates in Pakistan is estimated at around 561,000 tonnes of which only 112,723 tonnes is exported in 2010-11, rest of them either consumed locally or perished. Area and production of dates in Pakistan is given in **Tabel-1** and Province-wise production of dates are given in **Table-2** on the next page.

In Pakistan dates are usually classified according to the following grades:

- (a) Extra Class
- (b) Select - A
- (c) Select - B
- (d) Good Average Quality (GAQ)
- (e) Fair Average Quality (FAQ)
- (f) Industrial Grade

Exports: Pakistan entered the international date trade by sheer chance in early 1980s when Iran and Iraq went to war, and became the number one date exporting nation in the world by selling over 78,000 tonnes of dates in 2004. Overall export of dates has witnessed a steady growth. In 2005-06, date exports were valued at Rs1.94 billion rising to Rs3.45 billion in 2008-09 and to Rs4.15 billion in 2009-10. Export of dates from Pakistan is given in **Table-3** on the next page.

Table 1: Area and Production of Dates in Pakistan

Year	Area (000 hectares)	Production (000 Tonnes)	Yield per Hectare (in kgs)
2000-01	78.6	612.5	7,793
2001-02	78.5	630.3	8,029
2002-03	77.9	625.0	8,023
2003-04	74.8	427.0	6,705
2004-05	81.7	622.1	7,614
2005-06	82.0	496.6	6,056
2006-07	84.7	426.3	5,033
2007-08	90.1	557.5	6,188
2008-09	90.7	556.4	6,245
2009-10	90.6	531.2	5,863
2010-11 (P)	90.8	560.9	6,177

Source: Federal Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan.

The major markets are India, USA, the UK, Bangladesh, Germany Canada and South Africa. India is the largest importer with market share of about 92% while USA and UK are second and third largest importers with shares of 2.4% and 1.4% respectively. Country-wise export of fresh and dried dates are given in Table-4 and Table-5.

Future Prospects: There is a great scope for increasing the exports of Pakistani dates as they have the potential to become one of the leading sources of foreign exchange earnings. The chances for value-addition in dates are very high. If the country opts for processing dates through modern techniques, pays vigilant attention to packaging and dates' product manufacturing, this versatile and highly nutritious fruit has the potential to become another major source for foreign exchange earnings for the nation.

Pakistan is the fifth largest producer of dates but exports are insignificant because processing technology and practices are primitive. Pakistani dates exports can be enhanced to between Rs10 billion and Rs15 billion per annum with proper processing and packaging. Currently, the country earns around Rs4 billion from its exports, which does not reflect the real potential of this sector.

There are more than 130 varieties of dates produced in Pakistan. Out of these large number of varieties, Begam Jangi of Balochistan, Aseel of Sindh and Dhakki of Dera Ismail Khan are the varieties which are much sought after the world over due to their exotic taste. Due to lack of processing and packaging facilities these highly valuable varieties do not fetch their real worth in the export market. Exporting dates is likely to register a manifold increase in the coming years as a result of improvement in the infrastructure facilities, including date processing and packaging plants and also facilities for their storage. The Gawadar sea port and the coastal highway is likely to provide the much needed outlet for exporting dates, thus bringing prosperity to the date-growing areas of Balochistan in general and the coastal areas of that province in particular. ♦

Table 2: Province wise Production of Dates

Province	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Punjab	44.3	44.6	44.7	44.8
Sindh	253.1	261.9	265.3	268.5
Khyber Pakhtoon Khwa	10.4	11.3	11.3	11.5
Balechistan	249.7	248.6	209.9	236.1
Total	557.5	566.4	531.2	560.9

Source: Federal Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan.

Table 3: Export of Dates from Pakistan

Quantity: Tonnes
Value: Rs. in Million

Year	Fresh		Dried		Total	
	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value
2005-06	4,023	161	85,321	17,80	12,555	1,941
2006-07	6,767	291	9,733	2,034	16,500	2,325
2007-08	4,687	195	88,451	2,068	93,136	2,263
2008-09	4,471	258	107,244	3,232	111,715	3,490
2009-10	6,394	364	115,286	3,783	121,679	4,147
2010-11	7,844	6,24	104,879	4,000	112,723	4,624

Source: Federal Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan.

Table 4: Export of Fresh Dates

Country	2010-2011		2009-2010		2008-2009	
	Quantity (Tonnes)	Value (Rs. 000)	Quantity (Tonnes)	Value (Rs. 000)	Quantity (Tonnes)	Value (Rs. 000)
Bangladesh	283	12,507	927	28,112	351	17,125
Canada	104	7,822	353	22,815	118	6,790
Denmark	552	42,113	287	16,592	424	25,576
Germany	1,227	87,944	976	55,582	539	46,483
India	24	916	57	2,469	62	3,274
South Africa	264	19,988	381	22,898	359	22,167
U.S.A.	3,411	295,395	1,992	134,451	1,319	84,620
U.K	1,669	139,279	1,327	76,980	668	37,340
All others	2,953	17,792	437	4,345	631	14,589
Total	4,844	623,756	6,394	364,244	4,471	257,964

Source: Federal Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan.

Table 5: Export of Dried Dates

Country	2010-2011		2009-2010		2008-2009	
	Quantity (Tonnes)	Value (Rs. 000)	Quantity (Tonnes)	Value (Rs. 000)	Quantity (Tonnes)	Value (Rs. 000)
Australia	508	21,991	110	4,665	4	182
Bangladesh	354	19,885	501	20,081	1,073	35,790
Canada	273	17,190	706	33,033	321	15,669
Germany	113	8,425	300	17,830	132	8,740
India	9,974	3,739,319	111,425	3,596,452	103,563	3,073,695
Japan	315	16,046	229	10,412	188	7,769
U.S.A.	1,719	83,101	983	47,519	1,098	55,035
U.A.E.	89	4,001	211	10,535	319	11,990
U.K	1,193	69,282	447	26,171	358	15,240
All others	4,050	20,637	674	16,418	188	7,786
Total	10,488	3,999,877	115,286	3,783,116	107,244	3,231,896

Source: Federal Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan.