

Potato: Record production of over 3.8 billion tonnes in 2014-15

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The country has exported 120,000 tonnes of Potato in the last three months. Around 34,483 tonnes have gone to the United Arab Emirates, 41,283 tonnes to Sri Lanka, 11,231 tonnes to Malaysia, 2,977 tonnes to Qatar, 18,637 tonnes to Bahrain, 6,989 tonnes to Oman, 1,045 tonnes to Kuwait, 191 tonnes to the Maldives, 492 to Singapore, 875 tonnes to Russia and 59 tonnes to Somalia.

Duty-free exports and government's facilitation to exporters had helped produce positive results. Potato has been cultivated over 174,400 acres this year, which is 3.5% higher than the last year. Keeping in view the average production of last five years at 3.80 million tonnes (95%) in Punjab, there would still be a surplus of at least 300,000 tonnes in the province which should be exported.

The prime objective of the government was to benefit growers for their hard work, and ensuring better prices through exports was one way of doing this. Farmers are getting direct benefit from Potato exports and we will continue to export surplus crop. The government of Punjab is spending billions of rupees on several agricultural projects to benefit the farming community.

Table 1: Area Under Potato Cultivation (000' Hectares)

Year	Punjab	Sindh	KPK	Baluchistan	Pakistan
2005-06	104.5	0.3	9.8	2.8	117.4
2006-07	120.7	0.3	9.6	2.8	133.4
2007-08	142.0	0.3	8.9	3.1	154.3
2008-09	133.2	0.4	9.1	2.3	145.0
2009-10	127.2	0.4	8.7	2.2	138.5
2010-11	148.1	0.4	8.9	2.0	159.4
2011-12	148.1	0.4	9.9	2.0	160.4
2012-13	158.1	0.5	9.9	2.0	170.5
2013-14	171.6	0.5	10.2	2.1	174.4

Source: Agriculture Statistics of Pakistan,

Indian products are banned in Europe, America, Russia and many other countries. In contrast, Pakistani food commodities are welcomed all over the world due to its best quality.

Agriculture sector plays the role of backbone for the country pertaining to its socio-economic matters. Contribution of this sector to National Gross Domestic Production is 21.62% and involves about 44.7% of the total employment of the country. There is no blinking the fact that agriculture is the sector which has great potential to be explored for amelioration of economically strained circumstances, in which our country is entangled. Substantial growth of agriculture sector

will not only tackle the menace of food security but will also resolve the severe issue of unemployment to great extent. Agronomic as well as horticultural crops are of great importance for feeding the 190 million people of the country. Major horticultural produce of the country are vegetable and fruit crops. Among the vegetables Potato ranks higher position regarding area under cultivation and total yield.

Globally Potato is fourth largest food crop after rice, wheat and maize. China is the top country on global scale for Potato production. In 2013-14 Potato was cultivated over an area of 174.4 thousand hectares and production 3,802.3 thousand tonnes of Potato were harvested in Pakistan. Surplus Potato produced locally is exported to Afghanistan, UAE, Russia, and Kuwait. Russia is another big market where demand of Pakistani Potato is on rise.

In Pakistan Potato cultivation is categorized in three growing seasons as spring, summer and autumn crop with different geographical locations. In spring season it is grown in plains and lower hills of Balochistan and KPK province in January-February with harvesting in April-May. Summer crop is sown in Northern

Table 2: Production of Potato (000 Tonnes)

Year	Punjab	Sindh	KPK	Baluchistan	Pakistan
2005-06	1389.6	2.6	134.2	41.5	1567.9
2006-07	2407.5	2.7	129.6	41.8	2581.6
2007-08	2387.5	2.6	117.2	31.7	2539.0
2008-09	2782.7	3.0	121.0	34.6	2941.3
2009-10	2990.9	3.3	113.7	33.5	3141.4
2010-11	3339.9	3.9	118.2	29.7	3491.7
2011-12	3396.5	4.0	119.0	31.0	3550.5
2012-13	3628.9	4.1	120.0	30.0	3675.2
2013-14	3645.7	4.5	120.5	31.6	3802.3

Source: Agriculture Statistics of Pakistan,

hilly areas and Azad Jammu and Kashmir in March-May with harvesting in August-September. Autumn sowing is done in plains and southern Punjab, Sindh and plains of Balochistan in September-October and harvesting is done January-February Punjab has highest share for production and area which is contributed by autumn and spring crop. Major Potato producing districts in Punjab are Okara, Sahiwal, Kasur, Sialkot, Sheikhpura, Narowal, Lahore, Pakpattan, Jhang, Tobe Tek Singh and Gujranwala, in KPK are Nowshera, Dir and Mansehra, in Baluchistan are Pishin, Kila Saafulla and Kalat. Although, Pakistan is a large Potato producing country yet per hectare yield is only 19.34 tonnes which is about 45.66 tonnes lower than that of developed countries as USA and Holland where average per hectare yield is 65 tonnes and 45.5 tonnes respectively. Area and production of Potato are given in Table-1 and Table-2.

About 5000 varieties of Potato exist worldwide. In Pakistan both white and red skin varieties are cultivated but red skinned are mostly liked by consumers. Red skin varieties include Desiree, Asterix, Lady Roseta, Krouda, Rodeo, Cardinal, Ultima, Lal-e-Faisal, and Simphonia while Diamant, Santana, Ajax, Patrones, Multa and Sante are white skin varieties being cultivated commercially.

Exports

Overall export of Potato's from Pakistan has increased steady growth in the year 2012-13, Potato's exports were 456,185 tonnes worth Rs 12.3 billion. However, export of Potato from Pakistan increased from 272,800 tonnes worth Rs 6.8 billion in 2011-12 to 347,421 tonnes worth Rs, 10.3 billion in 2014-15, thus showing an average increase of 17% per annum in terms of value. Export of

Table 3: Export of Potato

Year	Quantity (Tonnes)	Value (Rs. Million)
2011-12	272,800	6,788
2012-13	456,185	12,290
2013-14	254,818	7,985
2014-15	347,421	10,296

Source: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics,

Table 4: Country-wise Exports of Potato (Major Countries)

Country	2014-15		2013-14	
	Quantity	Value	Quantity	Value
Afghanistan	173,900	6,668	125,050	4,906
Russian Federation	48,984	1,338	2,065	78
Maldives	4,327	75	10,466	264
Malaysia	18,507	352	4,762	132
Sri Lanka	49,538	940	36,112	903
U.A.E	35,680	616	60,156	1,334
Kuwait	18,507	352	4,617	132
Kazakhstan	5,520	95	7,294	162
Azerbaijan	3,578	74	4,302	103
All others	11,120	214	6,006	4,877
Total	347,421	10,296	254,818	7,985

Source: Trade Development Authority of Pakistan

Potato's from Pakistan is given in Table-3.

Pakistan mainly exports Potato to Afghanistan, Russia, Sri-Lanka, UAE, Kuwait and Malaysia. Afghanistan is the largest importer, while Russia and Sri Lanka are second and third largest importers country. Country-wise exports of Potato's from Pakistan are given in Table-4.

Pakistan plans to export 500,000 tonnes of Potato to stabilise the domestic market, which is likely to crash due to supply of the stocked commodity in the market by the local traders.

Potato requirements of the country are estimated to be around 3 million tonnes per annum. This year the country is expected to have a record production of Potato over 3.8 million tonnes. The hoarders have flooded an estimated 300,000 tonnes of the last year's stocked Potato in the wholesale market.

This year the Potato from farmers was procured at very low price of Rs 2 per kg but was sold at a price of over Rs 10 per kg throughout the year. The hoarders have planned a similar scheme for this year efforts to export the surplus to Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Experts are of the opinion that if the exports are not ensured in a timely manner, the farmers may not sow Potato crop next year which will result in another crisis. The farmers are already stressed

due to drastic reduction in prices of major cash crops like wheat, rice, cotton and sugarcane.

It is important to mention that Pakistan lacked cold storage facilities in the past. The rising exports of citrus have helped develop a good number of storages in the agriculture heartland. The same facility is now being utilised for the storage of vegetables and fruits.

References

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4. Trade Development Authority of Pakistan. ♦

