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PRODUCTION AND MARKETING OF CHILLIES

India contributes one-fourth of the total quantity of chilli exported in the world. But China is not far behind and it has been posing a severe competition to the Indian exporters due to India's variable supply and high domestic consumption.

Chilli is one of the most valuable crops of India. It is grown almost throughout the country. Different varieties are grown for vegetables, spices, condiments, sauces and pickles. Chilli is also known as 'hot pepper' and capsicum as 'bell pepper.' The Portuguese brought capsicum from Brazil to India during the year 1584.

Chilli is a fruit of the plants 'capsicum annum' and 'capsicum frutescens' that come from the genus 'capsicum,' belonging to the family of 'Solanaceae,' which also includes tomato and potato. These fruits are small in size and known for their sharp acidic flavour and colour.

Currently, chillies are used throughout the world as a spice and also in the making of beverages and medicines. If some varieties of chillies are famous for red colour because of the pigment 'capsanthin,' others are known for biting pungency attributed to 'capsian.' India is the only country which is rich in many varieties with different quality factors.

Chillies are said to have origi-

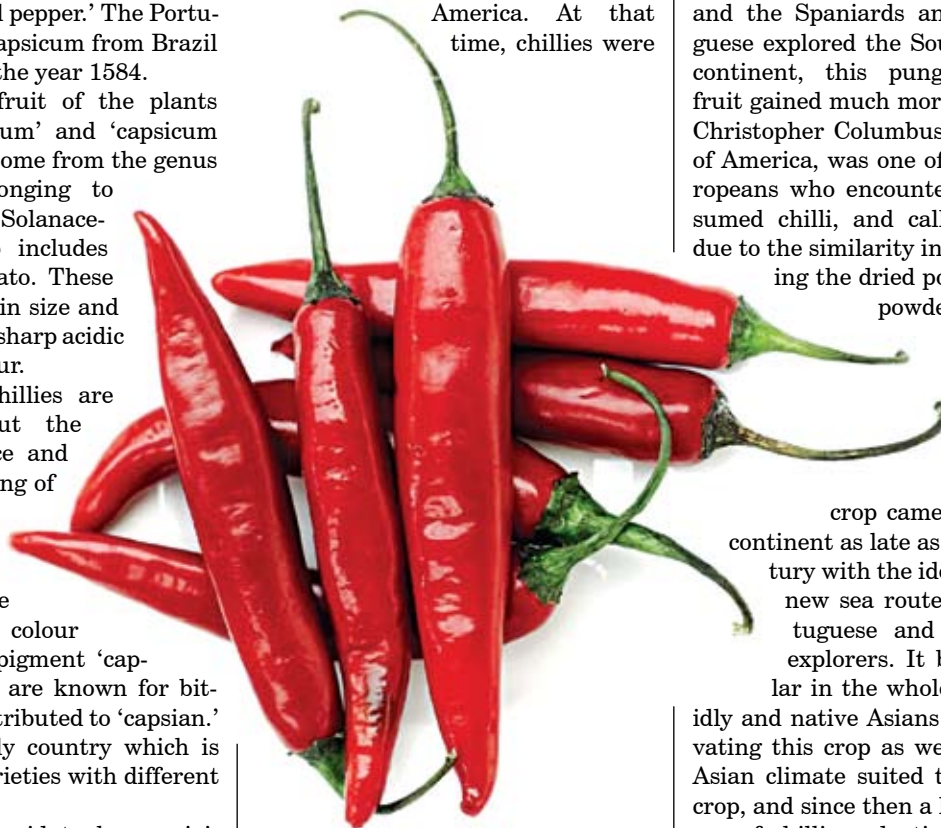
nated in the Latin American regions of the New Mexico and Guatemala as a wild crop around 7500BC. The people native to these places domesticated this crop in 5000BC, as per the remains of the pre-historic Peru. Chilli is said to be the first ever domesticated crop in America. At that time, chillies were

cultivated by the farmers together with a primary crop to protect the primary crop from any damage that the birds could do. Chillies gained popularity in the American continent for flavouring and have been largely cultivated since then.

When America was discovered, and the Spaniards and the Portuguese explored the South American continent, this pungent-flavoured fruit gained much more recognition. Christopher Columbus, the founder of America, was one of the first Europeans who encountered and consumed chilli, and called it pepper due to the similarity in taste. Crushing the dried pods gave chilli

powder, which was later identified as a substitute of 'peppercorn.'

The chilli crop came to the Asian continent as late as the 16th century with the identification of new sea routes by the Portuguese and the Spanish explorers. It became popular in the whole of Asia rapidly and native Asians started cultivating this crop as well. The south Asian climate suited this vegetable crop, and since then a large percentage of chilli production has shifted



Chilli Named in International Languages

Country	Name
Spanish	Pimenton
French	Puvre de Guinee
German	Paprika
Arabic	Filfil Ahmar
Dutch	Spaanse Peper
Italian	Peperone
Portuguese	Pimento
Russian	Struchkovy pyeret
Japanese	Togarashi
Chinese	Hesiung Yali chiao
Hindi	Lal-mirch

to Asia. Today, the most sharp and valued varieties of chillies are grown in Asia only.

Cultivation pattern

Chilli is a much simpler crop to cultivate. It can survive on different soil types and in several climatic conditions. But the best output of this crop is obtained when it is grown on deep, loamy, fertile soil with appropriate moisture content. The soil is ploughed properly at the time of planting of the crop. It has a short-duration period of three to four months.

As said earlier, in the Indian subcontinent, chillies are produced throughout the year. Two crops are produced in a year, in each dry and wet season in the country.

The dry season extends from mid-March to August, in which the rainfall level is much lower than other parts of the year. That's why chilli crop requires proper irrigation in this season. The seeds or the seedlings are planted in April and harvested in the month of August.

On the other hand, wet season starts from August and ends in December. This season is accompanied with a good amount of rainfall and the crop is planted as and when the rainfall occurs. Harvesting of the crop takes place in December and chillies start reaching the major

markets in February and March.

Watering and harvesting are of utmost importance for proper growth of the crop. Regular and appropriate watering is required when the chilli plant is at its sprouting stage. Harvesting of the green chilli crop is done when the pods are green and matured. The red chilli crop has to be harvested late when the green pods dry up and 80 per cent of those become red.

Production of chillies in India

As already mentioned, India is the largest producer of chillies in the world. Its production level hovers around 1.1 million tonnes annually. India also has the maximum area dedicated to the production of this crop.

Chilli is a universal spice of India. It is cultivated in all the states and union territories of the country. The important states growing chilli are Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu. As per the latest statistics, India produced 800,100 tonnes of dry chilli from an area of 930,000 hectares.

Andhra Pradesh stands first in the list of chilli-producing states in India and also has the maximum acreage under chilli cultivation in the country. It alone commands 49 per cent of the chilli production in India, with a production of around 2.7 lakh tonnes of chillies. Karnataka follows Andhra Pradesh, contributing 14 per cent of the country's production.

The major chilli producing states in India, namely, Andhra Pradesh,

The exports can be further improved, provided India is able to meet the strict quality demands of the international market.

Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu, contribute around 86 per cent of the total area under chilli crop cultivation in the country and 90 per cent of the total Indian produce.

Indian chilli market

Currently, chillies are produced throughout India, making our country the most dominating player in the world market. The varieties of chillies produced by India are Sannam, LC 334, Byadgi, Wonder Hot and Jwala.

The market for chillies is affected by seasonal price fluctuations, overall production in the country, world demand, stocks available in cold storages and hedging among the various varieties of chillies.

The major trading centres of chilli and chilli powder in India are Guntur (Andhra Pradesh), Warangal (Andhra Pradesh), Khammam (Andhra Pradesh), Hindpur (Andhra Pradesh), Raichur (Karnataka), Bellary (Karnataka), Unjha (Gujarat), Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai, Delhi, Ahmedabad and Nagpur. Guntur is the largest chilli market in the world.

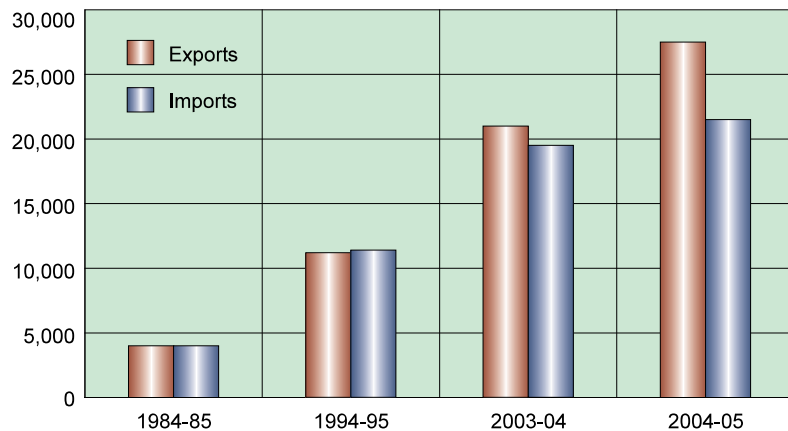
Chilli producing countries

Both green and dry chillies are produced all over the world. The world production of chilli crop sums up to around 7 million tones, which is cultivated on approximately 1.5 million hectares of land. India is the world leader in chilli production followed by China and Pakistan. This shows that the bulk share of chilli production is held by the Asian countries, though it is produced throughout the world. A large demand for chilli comes from several chilli-consuming countries as it forms a part of cuisines of various cultures and is also used as a colouring agent. Most of its demand is generated in the food-processing sector.

The world production of chillies has been increasing and there has been a significant rise in the production level since the late 1990s. It has

Exports and Imports

(US\$ million)



reached around 7 million tonnes per year now from the figure of 2.5 million tonnes in the last decade.

India, the largest producer of chillies in the world, accounts for 11 lakh tonnes of annual production followed by China (around 4 lakh tonnes) and Mexico and Pakistan (around 3 lakh tonnes each).

Major chilli consumers. The following countries are the major consumers of chillies with India again leading the list: India, China, Mexico, Thailand, the USA, the UK, Germany and Sweden.

Exports and imports

The graph explains the levels of chilli exports and imports during 1984-85 to 2004-05. It is clear that exports and imports of chilli, which stood at less than \$5000 million in 1984-85, steadily increased to above \$20,000 million in 2004-05. Chilli exports were higher than imports during 2004-05.

Major importers of Indian chillies. The major importers of Indian chillies are the USA, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Mexico, Canada, the UK, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Malaysia and Germany.

Major chilli exporters. Though Indian exports are showing satisfactory trends, nowadays India is fac-

ing a very tough competition in the international export market as price of the Indian chilli powder is considered too high and other competing countries are providing chilli at very competitive rates to the major importing countries. The exports can be further improved, provided India is able to meet the strict quality demands of the international market. Steps have to be taken by the government to encourage exporters in order to maintain India's dominance in the world market.

As the leading producer of chilli crop in the world, India is also the largest exporter of chilli in the world. It contributes one-fourth of the total quantity of chilli exported in the world. But China is not far behind and it has been posing a severe competition to the Indian exporters due to India's variable supply and high domestic consumption.

The major chilli exporters along with their percentage share in the world's total exports are India (25 per cent), China (24 per cent), Spain (17 per cent), Mexico (8 per cent), Pakistan (7.2 per cent), Morocco (7 per cent) and Turkey (4.5 per cent). ■

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