

Over the years, India's share in world spices market has not appreciated much and its monopoly as a supplier of spices is threatened by countries like China, Brazil, Vietnam, Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey and other African and Caribbean countries. India also faces shortage of exportable surplus because of increasing domestic demand. During 2012-13, a total of 0.69 million tonnes (12% of total production) of spice and spice products valued at Rs.11171.16 crore (US\$2040.18 Million) has been exported from the country as against 0.57 million tonnes (9% of total production) valued at Rs.9783.42 crore (US\$ 2037.76 Million) in 2011-12, registering an increase of 22% in volume and 14% in rupee terms.

The spices which are getting exported from India have to undergo stringent food laws and regulations set up by the importing countries such as the US, China, the UAE and Malaysia. The biggest handicaps that Indian spices face in the international market are the high cost of the product and high level of microbials including mycotoxin and toxic chemicals in the finished product. Also due to lack of awareness among the farmers pertaining to the latest technologies in production and post harvest operations, the quality of spices suffer. Proper drying of spices is not done after harvesting which leads to microbial contamination.

As a measure to trigger growth of the spice market in India and at the same time ensure the quality of the final product Government has set up evaluation laboratories at various locations like Cochin, Chennai, Mumbai, Guntur and Tuticorn. These labs stay in direct touch with the importer's association of importing countries and provide the testing of spices to match international requirements. Along with this government has also proposed to set up a number of spice parks at major spice producing regions which offers common facilities to cleaning, grading, value addition, storage and marketing in major spices growing states. These parks follow an integrated operation for cultivation, post harvesting, processing for value addition, packaging, storage and exports. Out of the 10 parks that were proposed, 5 have been established at Chhindwara, Puttady, Jodhpur, Guna and Sivaganga. Other parks that are in the pipeline are at Guntur, Mehsana, Jodhpur, Rae Bareli and Hamirpur.

Though, the industry is working towards engaging with farmers to adopt these parameters, it still remains a slow and gradual process. Less than 2% of spices produced in the country undergo value addition. Considerable efforts will have to go to improve the present post harvest processing and storage systems and in educating the farmers and traders in handling/ processing the produce hygienically. India can withstand competition only by increasing productivity and reducing cost of cultivation. In order to ensure high yield and better quality it is necessary to secure high quality of planting materials, overcome soil constraints and assure stable price along with the usage of modern processing technology. Higher productivity, clean spices through improved post harvest techniques and reasonable threshold price affordable to food industry are the keys to future spice trade.