



# BANANA

## Overview

Banana, one of the oldest cultivated fruits in the world, is currently the fourth largest fruit crop in the world. Banana is a tropical fruit and grows in warm and humid climates on well-drained lands but high winds, frost, and excessive heat are harmful to the plant as well as the fruit. Banana tree is not a tree in reality but a large herb and the fruit is technically a berry. Banana plant consists of a pseudostem that grows from a base called corm. The modern seedless banana varieties reproduce asexually from sucker shoots that grow from the corm. A full-grown banana tree develops rapidly within 7 to 8 months and given appropriate climate it can grow fruit throughout the year though at a time only one large bunch is produced. Banana and plantain, a green-skinned starchy fruit, fall in the same genus *Musa*. However, because of different characteristics, the edible banana is called “dessert banana” while plantain is called “cooking banana” because it is inconvenient to eat without cooking.

Banana is a highly nutritious fruit which is particularly rich in easily digestible carbohydrates, dietary fibre and minerals especially potassium, magnesium and manganese. It also contains significant quantities of vitamin C and smaller quantities of vitamins A and B. Because of this unique nutritional value, its low price, and abundant production banana remains a sought-after fruit. In Pakistan, Sindh remains undisputed leader in banana production because growth conditions suitable for banana are available in this province only. In Sindh, the production hubs are Benazirabad, Khairpur, Thatta, Badin, Hyderabad, Sanghar and Mirpur Khas. Southern Sindh is particularly suitable for banana cultivation because of moderate climate.

## Market Analysis

In Pakistan, banana is grown on nearly 35,000 hectares with annual production at around 140,000 tons out of which 85% produce is contributed by Sindh alone. The main variety produced is Dwarf Cavendish (locally “Basrai”) which constitutes 98% of total produce while the rest comprises Giant Cavendish or Williams hybrid variety. However, because of lack of controlled-atmosphere storage facilities and processing, improper post-harvest handling, and perishability of the fruit about 30% of banana produce is wasted annually. Globally, India is the largest producer of banana followed by Brazil but both countries end up consuming most of their produce leaving little for export. On the other hand, the largest exporters are Ecuador, Colombia, the Philippines, and Taiwan. Honduras and Guatemala in Central America are also major exporters to the USA. Ecuador and Colombia have made great headway in the post-harvest handling of banana.

Across the world, banana is mainly consumed as a fresh fruit. In fact, it is considered ideal fruit for athletes, the sick, the elderly, and babies. Worldwide, the USA, the EU, Japan, the Middle East are major importers of banana. In addition, there is a great demand for dried banana products especially banana powder which is used in various jams, health drinks, desserts and so on. There is also widespread demand for banana pulp across the world is smuggled to Afghanistan and Iran,



which remains a challenge for the state machinery. However, with proper post-harvest management banana can be successfully exported from Sindh to Central Asia, the Middle East and even continental Europe, which are major consumers of banana but lack indigenous production. Also, the quantum of banana production can be increased in Sindh by shifting from cultivation of suckers to tissue-culture technology, which can prevent diseases and ensure uniform growth of banana plants across the farm.

Some initiatives are being taken in Sindh to increase quantity and quality of banana cultivation in Sindh. In 2009, Agribusiness Support Fund, a project of USAID started the establishment in Tando Allah Yar of a tissue-culture research and development centre at a cost of Rs. 1.45 m. The centre is fully functional now and provides tissue-cultured banana plantlets on charge basis. Because of this facility, a local grower from Tando Allah Yar has successfully started cultivation of a disease-free variety of Giant Cavendish banana called "Grand Naine" or G9.

## Investment Opportunities

### ■ Basic Processing Plant with Packing House

The post-harvest processing of banana requires a simple plant, which promises high returns. Banana is harvested raw from the plants for artificial ripening because ripening on banana plant results in low-quality fruit. After careful cutting and transport to the processing plant, bananas from entire bunch are dipped in water to bring down temperature uniformly. After that, bananas are carefully washed and air-dried. After grading, bananas are packed in cardboard, wooden or plastic boxes with ventilation holes and suitable cushioning material for transport. If transported in controlled atmosphere at 13° Celsius with proper ventilation, then the shelf life of bananas can be 3 to 4 weeks.

### ■ Banana Powder Unit

As already mentioned, there is vast demand for banana powder across the world. The plant required for production of banana powder is simple and requires small investment but promises high returns. The shelf life of banana powder is also much higher than the fresh fruit.

### ■ Banana Pulping Unit

Banana pulp is also in significant demand in the world. The pulping unit is simple and requires small investment. For greater profitability, the same plant can carry out pulping of mango, guava, or tomato with the addition of a few components.



Dwarf Cavendish



Giant Cavendish



Banana Powder



Banana Pulp





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