

# A Study of Horticultural Transformation in the Region of Shimla Hills

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## ABSTRACT

The topography of Himachal Pradesh and the region of Shimla Hills allow the production of all kinds of fruit crops ranging from temperate to sub-tropical species. Horticulture in Himachal Pradesh today contributes towards the achievement of major national objectives of development by increasing productivity, utilization of available land stock, helping in maintaining the ecological balance, alleviating poverty and generating employment. In 1958, more than 90 per cent population of the region of Shimla Hills was directly and indirectly dependent on agricultural and horticultural activities. The availability of agricultural land in this hilly region was limited. The environmental conditions of this region are most favorable for the development of horticulture. Due to this reason people of the Shimla Hills started the practice of horticulture to their uncultivable land holdings.

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## 1. Horticulture before Independence

Before the independence, the people of the region of Shimla Hills only grew fruit trees casually near their homes, and on the edges of their fields or on the land, which had considered unsuitable for agriculture. The fruits had used only for domestic use. Fruits like blackberry, strawberry, cherry, plum, peach, mango, fig, apple (pauloo), apricot etc. were found flourishing wild.<sup>1</sup>

Modern and organized horticulture introduced in the region of Shimla Hills in mid- 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Shimla Hills, the first orchard had planted by Alexander Coutts at Mashobra in the year, 1887.<sup>2</sup> However, the real revolution of apple cultivation came to the region of Shimla hills with the introduction of delicious varieties of apple by Sammel Stokes at Kotgarh in 1918. Horticulture in modern sense was started only after the formation of Himachal Pradesh with first the advent of First five Year plan.

## 2. Horticulture after Independence

After the formation of Himachal Pradesh, the government had realized importance of horticulture for improving the economic conditions of the state. In the rest of country, attention had paid to development of horticulture at the end of Third Five Year Plan. The planned development of horticulture in Himachal Pradesh in general commenced in the year 1953 with the formation of a small horticulture section in the Department of Agriculture. The separate Department of Horticulture had established in the year 1970.<sup>3</sup> The Horticulture Department had provided guidance at the doorsteps of the growers for the raising of orchards, and the fruit plants have provided from the government nurseries. In the year, 1985 a State Horticulture University was established and named after Dr. Yashwant Singh Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry.<sup>4</sup> This University is developing technologies for mass production and the horticulture department is energizing its resources to distribute and ensure their planting rapidly. The area under horticulture, which was around 520 hectares in 1950 with total production of 800 tones had increased to, 65,757 hectares with total production of 3.95 lakh tones in 2001. The cropping pattern has changed in the region of Shimla Hills and the traditional crops have replaced by cash crops. The following fruits crops are growing in the region of Shimla Hills.

## 3. Apple

Apple is main grown fruit in the region of Shimla Hills and Himachal Pradesh. It has been boosting state's economy and it constitutes about 49 per cent of the total fruit production. Apple economy of the region of Shimla Hills has pegged at around Rs 29,000 million. Apple is largely producing in the Shimla district.

The old varieties of the apple have replaced by new varieties, like Red Spur, Candy Crisp, Red Chief, Fuji, Gala, Granny Smith, Organ Spur etc. which ripen early, are also being grown.

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<sup>1</sup> Gazetteer of the Shimla Hill states 1910 (Introduction), Indus publications, New Delhi, 1995, (First publication, 1910), p.2.

<sup>2</sup> K.C. Azad, *Development of horticulture*, Agricultural Research and Development in Himachal Pradesh, Government of Himachal Pradesh, Shimla, 1986, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> *Horticulture in Himachal Pradesh*, Department of Agriculture, Government of Himachal Pradesh, Shimla, 1960, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dr.\\_Yashwant\\_Singh\\_Parmar\\_University\\_of\\_Horticulture\\_and\\_Forestry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dr._Yashwant_Singh_Parmar_University_of_Horticulture_and_Forestry)

Table No. 1

District-wise area under Apples orchards in hectares and production in metric tons in Shimla Hills region from 1951-2001.

Year	Area in hectares				Production in metric tons			
	Kinnaur	Shimla	Solan	Total	Kinnaur	Shimla	Solan	Total
1951	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1961	NA	NA	707	707	NA	NA	2,594	2,594
1971	121	NA	6,603	6,724	535	NA	29,171	29,706
1981	2,200	19,422	490	22,112	7,760	209,240	627	217,627
1991	4,431	26,750	529	31,710	16,530	208,245	256	225,031
2001	6,369	35,052	553	41,974	21,793	274,056	99	295,948

Source: Statistical Abstract from 1951 to 2001, Directorate of Horticulture, Government of Himachal Pradesh.

The Table No.1 shows district-wise Apple cultivated area and production during the period from 1951 to 2001. The total area under the apple orchards in the region of Shimla Hills was 707 hectares in 1961, which increased from 707 hectares to 41,974 hectares in 2001, making a huge increase of 41,267 hectares in 2001 from 1961. The production of apple was 2,594 metric tons in 1961, which increased from 2,594 metric tons to 295,948 metric tons in 2001, making an increase of 293,354 metric tons in 2001 from 1961. This trend shows development of horticultural activities in the region of Shimla Hills.

The state has created number of infrastructural facilities, such as mechanical grading, packing houses, cold stores, roads, ropeways, processing agro-based industries, carton manufacturing factories etc. Apple is one of most commercially grown fruit crop in the Shimla Hills and Himachal Pradesh. Apple crop packing, transportation, grading, storage etc. activities provide also seasonable employment for migrant labor.

#### 4. Citrus Fruits

Citrus fruits are growing all the tropical and sub-tropical parts of the region of the Shimla Hills. Foothills of this region's offer the most suitable conditions for the cultivation of citrus fruits. Orange, lemon, grapes, litchi, hill lemon etc. are the main citrus fruits are growing in the lower hills of area under study. Professional growers of the region grown quality citrus fruits and earn handsome income.

Table No. 2

District-wise area under Citrus fruits in hectares and production in metric tons in the Shimla Hills from 1951-2001.

Year	Area in hectares				Production in metric tons			
	Kinnaur	Shimla	Solan	Total	Kinnaur	Shimla	Solan	Total
1951	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1961	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1971	NA	358	280	638	NA	NA	NA	NA
1981	NA	526	2,072	2,598	NA	369	314	683
1991	NA	736	3,410	4,146	NA	76	139	215
2001	NA	795	3,719	4,514	NA	56	704	760

Source: Statistical Abstract from 1951 to 2001, Directorate of Horticulture, Government of Himachal Pradesh.

The Table No. 2 shows detail regarding citrus fruits cultivated area and production during the period from 1951 to 2001. The total area under the citric fruits in the region of Shimla Hills was 638 hectares in 1971, which increased from 638 hectares to 4,514 hectares in 2001, making a huge increase of 3,876 hectares in 2001 from 1961. The production of citric fruits was 683 metric tons in 1981, which reached from 683 metric tons to 760 metric tons in 2001, making an increase of 77 metric tons in 2001 from 1981.

#### 5. Dry fruits

The cold and dry zone of this region consisting ideally suited for growing dry fruits like, walnut, apricot, almond, raisin grape, peach, plum, pecan nut, pistachio nut etc. The dry fruits cultivated area and production in the region of Shimla Hills shows the details in Table No. 3 The Kinnaur district is large producer of dry fruits, because of suitable climatic condition. People of Hills not cultivate dry fruits professionally, as like apple crops. The dry fruits had used only for domestic use.

Table No. 3

District-wise area under Dry fruits in hectares and production in metric tons from 1951-2001.

Year	Area in hectares				Production in metric tons			
	Kinn-aur	Shimla	Solan	Total	Kinn-aur	Shimla	Solan	Total
1951	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1961	122	NA	NA	122	NA	NA	NA	NA

1971	254	442	60	756	NA	NA	NA	NA
1981	819	795	673	2,287	454	123	120	697
1991	1,176	1,595	949	3,720	312	347	288	947
2001	1,248	2,041	1,219	4,508	759	187	127	1,073

Source: Statistical Abstract from 1951 to 2001, Directorate of Horticulture, Government of Himachal Pradesh.

The Table No. 3 shows district-wise dry fruits cultivated area and production during the period from 1951 to 2001. The total area under the dry fruits in the region of Shimla hills was 122 hectares in 1961, which increased from 122 hectares to 4,508 hectares in 2001, making a huge increase of 4,386 hectares in 2001 from 1961. The production of dry fruits was 697 metric tons in 1981, which reached from 697 metric tons to 1,073 metric tons in 1991 and 2001, making an increase of 376 metric tons in 2001 from 1981.

## 6. Sub-tropical fruits

Sub-tropical zone of area under study consisting ideally suited for growing sub-tropical fruits like, guava, mango, fig, litchi, sweet orange, papaya, jackfruit, pomegranate etc. In the sub-tropical zone overall climate is hot and comparatively dry and the winters are less cold sub-tropical fruits cultivated area and production in the region of Shimla Hills shows the district-wise details in Table No. 4.

**Table No. 4**  
District-wise area under Sub-tropical fruits in hectares and production in metric tons in the region of Shimla Hills from 1951-2001.

Year	Area in hectares				Production in metric tons			
	Kinnaur	Shimla	Solan	Total	Kinnaur	Shimla	Solan	Total
1951	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
1961	NA	NA	102	102	NA	NA	NA	NA
1971	NA	76	120	196	NA	NA	NA	NA
1981	NA	80	852	932	NA	138	300	438
1991	NA	137	1,308	1,445	NA	05	25	30
2001	NA	244	2,228	2,472	NA	20	862	882

Source: Statistical Abstract from 1951 to 2001, Directorate of Horticulture, Government of Himachal Pradesh.

The Table No. 4 shows detail of district-wise sub-tropical fruits cultivated area and production during the period from 1951 to 2001. The cultivated area under the sub-tropical fruits in the Kinnaur district was nil, because climatic conditions of Kinnaur district are not suitable for sub-tropical fruits. The total area under the sub-tropical fruits in the region of Shimla Hills was 102 hectares in 1961, which increased from 102 hectares to 2,472 hectares in 2001, making a huge increase of 2,370 hectares in 2001 from 1961. The production of sub-tropical fruits was 438 metric tons in 1981, which reached from 438 metric tons to 882 metric tons in 2001, making an increase of 444 metric tons in 2001 from 1981. This trend indicates development of horticultural activities in the area under study.

## 7. Vegetables

With the encouragement and extensive services of the Vegetable research station, which had established at Solan in 1958, the farmers had undertaken the work of off-season vegetables growing seriously. Vegetable growing was not only maintained, but stepped up as is evident from the fact that some progressive farmers of the region of Shimla Hills have taken up large scale vegetable and seed production. Peas, tomatoes, cauliflowers, turnips, cabbage, radishes, beans, garlic, carrots, cucumber etc. were grown. With the better transport and market facility, the vegetables were sent to Chandigarh, Haryana, Punjab, Delhi and there was supply of out of off-season vegetables which earns good price in the market and helped to improve the financial position of people of the region of Shimla Hills.

**Table No. 6**  
District-wise vegetables cropped area in hectares and production in metric tons (1951-2001).

Sr. No.	Year	Vegetables cropped area in hectares				Vegetables production in metric tons			
		Kinnaur	Shimla	Solan	Total	Kinnaur	Shimla	Solan	Total
1	1950-51	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2	1955-56	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
3	1960-61	427	NA	8,933	9,360	1,396	NA	20,714	22,110
4	1966-67	395	844	11,988	13,227	1,340	1,218	29,019	31,577
5	1970-71	380	830	11,447	12,657	1,325	1,243	49,060	51,628

6	1975-76	469	10,425	1,000	11,894	1,362	45,844	1,030	48,236
7	1980-81	551	10,471	1,234	12,256	2,151	12,417	1,291	15,859
8	1985-86	609	10,166	1,555	12,330	1,778	15,494	1,519	18,791
9	1990-91	394	11,618	2,904	14,916	2,829	43,166	1,058	47,053
10	1995-96	723	11,620	2,272	14,615	2,892	41,754	3,468	48,114
11	2000-01	218	13,044	3,399	16,661	2,930	76,718	11,964	91,612
12	2001-02	443	13,468	3,729	17,640	1,065	38,737	14,775	54,577

**Source:** Annual Season and crop reports, Directorate land records, Government of Himachal Pradesh.

The following table no. 6 shows detail of district-wise area and production of vegetables from 1955 to 2001. The total area under vegetables in the region of Shimla Hills was 9,360 hectares in the year, 1960-61, which came up to 17,640 hectares in 2001-02, making an increase of 8,280 hectares. The production was 22,110 metric tons in 1960-61, which reached up to 54,577 metric tons in 2001-02, making a sharp increase of 32,467 metric tons. The development of road transport, marketing and vegetables research facilities increased the area and production of offseason vegetables, both increased manifold with the four decades between 1960-61 and 2001-02 and improved the financial position of the people considerably.

## 8. Ginger Cultivation

The Ginger is one of the important cash crops of the Shimla Hills region as well as Himachal Pradesh. Ginger is an economic crop, so farmers of other suitable areas in the State started the cultivation of Ginger crop. In respect of production of Ginger, Himachal Pradesh ranked second in the Country after Kerala.<sup>5</sup> In the Shimla Hills region, Solan is leading district of Ginger cultivation. The Cultivation of Ginger is a labor intensive and high value occupation. It helps diversification of horticulture to get sustainable income in rural economy.

In this changing scenario, people of the Shimla Hills region are shifting their cultivation pattern from traditional cereal crops to cash crops as like Ginger. The commercial activities of production and marketing of Ginger crops are the foundation of profitable and excellence employment opportunities to the people of the region. There is great demand of Ginger in the markets and farmers are earning handsome income. Cultivation of Ginger have improved livelihood of the marginal and small farmers of the region of Shimla Hills as well as the State.

## 9. Infrastructural Development

Horticulture plays crucial role for the economy of the area of study, and also for economy of throughout the state. In the year 1970, after the separation of the horticulture department from the agriculture department, horticulture had started development for horticultural infrastructure. A number of centers for horticultural development activities has established in the region of Shimla Hills. These centers included research station, research laboratory, progeny-cum-demonstration nurseries and orchards. The detail of these horticultural development activities centers has given in the table no. 3.7.

The high-quality plants of various kinds of fruits are producing in these progeny-cum-demonstration nurseries and orchards and supplied to the orchardists of the Kinnaur, Shimla and Solan districts. The better varieties of fruit plants produced good quality fruits. Good quality fruits have great demand in the market and growers of the region are able to earning huge profit.

The State Government for providing agro-industrial supporting facilities for the farmers also established additional supporting institutional infrastructure.<sup>6</sup> In the year 1970, the Agro- Industries Corporation was established for assisting to farmers in the marketing of horticultural produce and help in setting up industries based on horticultural production. For the supportive strategy and protection of horticultural sector, the State Government established Horticulture Produce Marketing and Processing Corporation (HPMC), in the year 1974. Through the HPMC farmers have able to brought their unmarketable fruits in minimum supporting price. The corporation processed unmarketable fruits in processing plants and marketed in the form of Juices, jams, wines, pickles, etc. The institutional infrastructure development in the region helped to set up agro based industries.

The establishment of Government Corporations and research infrastructure, in the form of laboratories, progeny-cum-demonstration nurseries and orchards in the study area are certainly encouraging the development, of a dynamic horticultural economy and promoting people to change their traditional practices of agriculture and take to commercial horticulture.

## 10. Diversification of Horticulture

Horticulture being the backbone of the Shimla Hills region economy, efforts has required diversifying horticulture activities more in rural areas to increase production and productivity through better management, managerial practices and use of new technology. In order to boost the horticultural development and enhance the farm income in the rural areas of the region, it is therefore important to increase the productivity of the existing cultivated area, through shifting from self-subsistence crop cultivation to diversified horticulture, by adopting cash crops such as offseason vegetables cultivation, mushroom cultivation, floriculture,

<sup>5</sup> J. M. Balokhra, *The Wonderland Himachal Pradesh* H. G. Publication, New Delhi, 2011, (first published, 1995), p.930.

<sup>6</sup> K. C. Azad & D. K. Sharma, 'Development of Horticulture in Himachal Pradesh', in symposium on Social and Economic Problems of Hilly Area, New Delhi, 1988, p. 148.

apiculture etc. These emerging extra-horticultural industries hold great potential to boost the economic condition of the people of Shimla Hills region. The horticulture department is encouraging the horticulturists to horticultural diversification. The higher returns from the horticultural diversification improved the socio-economic condition of marginal and small farmers of this region.

### 11. The Impact of Horticultural Growth

Before independence, agriculture was the main occupation of the people of the region of Shimla Hills. The farmers were cultivated traditional cereal crops. The cultivation of horticultural crops was very less and only for domestic use. After the formation of Himachal Pradesh, State Government had developed infrastructure for horticultural activities and introduced hybrid horticultural crops. The commercial cultivation of horticultural crops has benefited the farmers of the area of study and throughout the State. Horticulture has generated employment opportunities for the people during the pre-harvest and post-harvest operations of the horticulture activities. In the area under study has been increased fruits cultivation, mainly apple fruit. This has been resulted in the increased availability of cash income to the rural people. Horticulture has been boosted the overall economy of the region of Shimla Hills as well as State.

Horticulture has provided to poor and landless farmers the most important diversification option for sustainable income, by adopting cash crops such as offseason vegetables cultivation, mushroom cultivation, floriculture, apiculture etc. These emerging extra-horticultural industries hold great potential to boost the economic condition of the people of this region.

The farmers of the region of Shimla hills have been adopted horticulture both as a complimentary as well as main occupation. Development of horticultural activities have usefully provided nutritive foods in the form of vegetables, nuts, fruits, mushroom, honey, etc.

Horticultural transformation has been improved economic conditions of the people of the Shimla Hills region and it has been marked social change. People of the region are providing good education to their children, both at the school and higher levels. Educated people improved their economic conditions by took up different profitable trades and educated farmers improved their farm and orchard management practice through scientific method of farming. The Horticultural transformation has changed their food habits from traditional cereals to wheat, rice and vegetables. Horticultural boom has brought in economic prosperity and changed the lifestyle of the people of the hilly region. However, traditional practices involving village level are slowly disappearing. The economic richness has been segregated social and community bounds. The economic transformation has been responsible for expansion of once small roadside village into the townships.

Apple cultivation is main horticultural crop of the area under study. Apple farming has brought rapid economic prosperity especially to the people of Shimla and Kinnaur districts. Due to economic prosperity living standard of the people of upper Shimla area has improved in many ways. In the area under study, more farmers are shifting their parental occupation and started apple cultivation due to its more profitable nature. However, farmers are destroying forests and converting it into apple orchards. The area under forest has continued to shrink and making negative impact on the natural environment. Thus, it is disturbing the natural environmental equilibrium of the region under study. Horticultural development has also adversely affected agriculture and livestock rearing, because people of this region impressed by the economic benefit of horticulture, and have lost interest in agricultural and livestock rearing activities.

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