



## Escalating Food Demands and Modern Technologies



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**Feature Story**

**T**he estimates point out that Pakistan's population will be doubled with the current growth rate by 2050. On the other hand, climate changes have negative impacts on agricultural production. These facts indicate alarming situation in the near future and we may have to face severe problems like water crisis and food insecurity.

**O**n Farm Water Management wing of Agriculture Department is promoting high efficiency irrigation systems and tunnel technology to enhance per acre yield and mitigate the impacts of climate changes all over the Punjab for fulfilling the food demands of rapidly escalating population.

**M**r. M. Binyamin, a progressive farmer of Toba Tek Singh is growing vegetables with drip irrigation under tunnel since 2012-13. While sharing his views, he told that "I decided to install drip irrigation system on 5 acres during 2012-13 due to shortage of canal water and extended it to 9 acres during 2017-18. He acknowledged that drip irrigation enabled him to get better farm returns (30 % more yield) with less inputs (water, fertilizer etc.). Growing vegetables with drip irrigation under tunnel is a wonderful experience and I am growing cucumber and red chillies on commercial basis now".

**W**hile discussing about disease attack, he shared that "with drip irrigation system, the water is supplied directly to the plant roots. As such, there is less water application leading to less humidity in the tunnels and the crops are less prone to fungal diseases". He added that drip irrigation is helping us to overcome water scarcity and improve off-season vegetables production with economized use of water and other farm inputs.

**H**e excitedly shared that "vegetables grown with drip irrigation are more healthy & nutritious and hence fetch better economic returns per acre. Before drip irrigation, the profit margin was very low because of high cost of production & less yield due to insect/ pest and diseases attack caused by higher humidity with flood irrigation of the crop. Adoption of drip irrigation and tunnel technology enabled to use water efficiently and cutting production costs significantly as well as improving crop yields".

**M**r. M. Binyamin advised the farmers to shift from traditional farming to high value agriculture as the Punjab government is providing subsidy with the World Bank assistance for adoption of drip irrigation technology in the province.

**I**n fact, growing high value crops with drip irrigation under tunnel is providing huge benefits to all the stakeholders. Firstly, it helps to provide more production and high economic returns to the farmers. Secondly, it is providing livelihood opportunities to the farm workers (especially rural females). Thirdly, the marketers get high profit due to better quality products. Lastly, the consumers are benefitted in terms of good quality food. Summing it up, high value agriculture with drip irrigation and tunnel technology is helping to ensure food security in Pakistan and tackle future challenges of food for exponentially growing population.



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