



Golden Flake for Better Living Standards

A Success Story of Potato Cultivation under Drip Irrigation

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Feature Story

Owing to the exponentially increasing demand for water due to rapidly growing population, especially on the industrial and domestic fronts, the agriculture sector should focus on efficient use of irrigation water with modern technologies as its savings will fulfill the additional demands of other sectors. The best option in the current technological era is more crop per drop through drip irrigation along with adopting proper irrigation scheduling as per crop water requirement. Drip irrigation has many advantages over traditional methods as higher efficiency in the application of irrigation water, better control with demand based irrigation, suitability for the waterlogged areas and uniformity in availability of nutrition to the plants for improvement in the crop & water productivity.

Many progressive potato growers in the Punjab have realised the situation and using this modern irrigation method to get higher economic returns with limited use of precious agricultural inputs especially water and fertilizers. The Punjab government has provided the financial assistance to vegetable growers for installation of drip irrigation systems on 7,500 acres. Out of which, 1,000 acres are under potato cultivation.



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Mr. Shahzad Amin from district Kasur, one of the most suitable areas for potato cultivation in the Punjab, is successfully growing potato with drip irrigation on 6.5 acres. He shared his experiences as "potatoes are very sensitive to water scarcity and yield can drop by 40 or even 60% under poorly managed irrigation. With drip irrigation, the water is provided on daily basis or on alternate days according to the plants requirement considering the local weather conditions. The plants, therefore, grow healthier and produce higher with better quality". Due to limited and non-perennial canal water supply (only for 6 months) and huge benefits of drip irrigation, Mr. Shahzad is planning to install drip irrigation on more 15 acres land.

While sharing about the net benefits of drip irrigation, he shared excitedly that "Before installation of drip irrigation on my farm, I used to grow potato with furrow irrigation. There is significant difference between both methods in terms of per acre production cost and yield. Drip irrigation has helped me to save 50 percent water and 35 percent fertilizers as well as increasing 30 percent yield per acre".

Agricultural experts consider that drip irrigation has proven to be the most water and energy efficient irrigation method globally. Therefore, it should be the preferred method among the farming community in Pakistan for cultivating row crops like potatoes. Potato is a beneficial crop for both farmers and consumers due to better yield and rich nutritive value.

Although Pakistan is self-sufficient in potatoes for household consumption but there is a dire need to increase the crop yield while reducing the production cost for enhancing farmers' profit margin. The potato industry is growing in Pakistan as many private companies are producing high value products (mostly chips) and selling in the local market to get higher returns. On the other hand, post-harvest handling of potatoes cause loss of produce (20-30% post harvest losses) and deteriorates its quality as sufficient cold storages are not available for the purpose. Moreover, the handling of potatoes in cold storage is unsatisfactory and poorly managed. By overcoming these issues and promotion of high efficiency irrigation systems, it may provide higher economic returns per acre to the potato growers of the Punjab.

