



Better Income by Small Farmers

A Success Story of Strawberry Cultivation with Drip Irrigation

PIPIP
Feature Story

Strawberry is a profitable fruit having good prices in the local markets due to their unique sweet & sour taste. In the Punjab, they blossom with their eye catching bright red color and attractive fragrance during spring season. A few years back, there was no perception to grow strawberry on commercial scale due to little knowledge about its production technology among the farming community. The progressive growers are now taking interest to grow it and getting high economic returns. Although some farmers are growing it with conventional method (flood irrigation) but the small farmers, who have adopted drip irrigation, are getting more profit due to less production cost and higher yields per acre.



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Mr. Liaqat Ali is one of those farmers who decided to abjure traditional crops like Sugarcane, Maize etc. due to less availability of canal water and grow Strawberry with drip irrigation. He got installed drip irrigation system on 5.5 acres land during 2017-18 on cost sharing basis under Punjab Irrigated-Agriculture Productivity Improvement Project (PIPIP) and started high value farming under the technical guidance of OFWM staff. He shared his experience as "Before drip irrigation, I used to grow Sugarcane & Maize crops which were high delta crops and I had not enough water to irrigate these crops through flood irrigation. Meanwhile, I came to know about the latest irrigation technology (drip irrigation) which is highly efficient in terms of water and fertilizer application. So, I decided to get benefit from the government subsidy scheme and installed drip irrigation system for growing high value crops (Strawberry). This experience was so successful that I recovered all initial capital cost on drip irrigation system installation from income of the first crop".

Recent research studies have highlighted the fact that the delicious berry fruits are power houses of antioxidants and nutrition. The researchers have indicated that strawberries can be grown easily in the upper and middle regions of the Punjab due to favorable climactic conditions.

While comparing the cultivation of strawberry with drip irrigation vs flood irrigation, Mr. Liaqat explained that "flood irrigation is not suitable for strawberry at all. There are more fungus diseases due to continuous standing water for three to four days in the strawberry field. Moreover, strawberry's picking has to be done on daily basis which is not possible with the flood irrigation due to standing water in the furrows". He further added that "one of the major benefit of drip irrigation is that it facilitates to enhance the strawberry's population from 50,000 to 80,000 plants per acre". So, it provides more economic returns on the basis of more plants-more yield. Strawberry's cultivation with drip irrigation has created livelihood opportunities for local people especially rural females for harvesting and other farm operations".

Although Water Management is promoting strawberry's cultivation on drip irrigation by providing subsidy in the entire Punjab but there are still a number of factors like size, taste, perishability etc. for its restricted production. By addressing the issues related to quality and perishability of the strawberry fruit, Pakistan can also export it to the Europe, the United States and Middle East countries to earn foreign exchange.

