

Guava, the apple of tropics

By **Mohammad Omais Saqib**

GUAVA is the fruit of the tropics. It grows luxuriantly in Pakistan and occupies third position among major fruits grown in the country after citrus and mango.

Cultivated approximately on an area of 62.3 thousand hectares, the total guava production is of 512.3 thousand tonnes annually with a yield of 8,223 kg per hectare.

But the crop's full economic

potential is not realised because of lack of required focus on guava processing, value-addition and exports.

Guava, at present, is grown primarily for fresh consumption only. Traders are of the view that there is a good international market potential for the fresh guava and the demand will grow with more consumers becoming acquainted with the fruit.

The chief executive officer of the Harvest Tradings suggests that well-equipped processing units with latest technologies should be installed in guava producing areas with

research facilities to boost production of quality fruit and its products.

Guava has attained trade-related significance as it is capable of growing in different atmospheric and soil conditions with a good yield per annum. With two yields a year, some call it the apple of the tropics. According to fruit traders, the fruit generates about one billion rupees annually in exports but foreign sales are not regular.

Pakistan's exports of guava over the past five years were to Canada, UAE, UK, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

A large part of the crop goes waste due to its short shelf-life. However, the loss to the fruit can be averted by value addition. Investment opportunities in the sector exist in its pulping facility, and guava squash. Its pulp — which is the raw material for making juices — has strong demand in local and international markets.

Traders stress the need for setting up of guava processing facilities for pulps for which there is a growing demand both in local and international markets. Pakistan has some presence in the international guava market but is not a recognised supplier of guava pulp.

Local market for fruit drinks and juices have grown rapidly over the years. The market size of juice, nectars and still drinks for the year 2009 was 461 million litres. Overall market growth from 2005 to 2009 was recorded at 126 per cent.

Apart from its nutritional value, guava has a vast medicinal utility. It is very beneficial in diarrhoea and gastroenteritis. It is the richest source of dietary fibre. Its seeds, if ingested whole or chewed, serve as an excellent laxatives. Guava is one of the richest fruits in vitamin C and iron which prevents against cold and viral infections. Roasted ripe guava is also used as a remedy against extreme cases of cough, cold and congestion. Guava also helps reduce blood cholesterol and prevents blood from thickening. Being rich in fibre and hypoglycemic in nature, it also helps reduce blood pressure. It has many other utilities in the field of medicine.

