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HORTICULTURAL CROP MANAGEMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY : INNOVATIONS, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

Bhagyashree Das[1], Lakhwinder Singh[2*], Achanta Manoj[3], Lakshya[4], Guddu Kumar[5], Lav Kumar[6], Nitu Kumari[7] and Ravinder Kaur[8]

[1]Department of Fruit Science and Horticulture technology, College of Agriculture. Odisha University of Agriculture and Technology, Bhubaneswar, 751 003, Odisha, India
[2]Faculty of Agriculture, Guru Kashi University, Talwandi Sabo, Bathinda, Punjab India (151-302)
[3]Department of Fruit science College of Horticulture, Dr. Y.S.R. Horticultural University, Venkataramannagudem, Andhra Pradesh. India
[4]School of agriculture sciences and engineering, Maharaja Ranjit Singh Punjab technical University, Bathinda, Punjab, India
[5]Department of Post-Harvest Technology, Faculty of Horticulture, Bidhan Chandra Krishi Viswavidyalaya, Mohanpur Nadia W.B 741252, India
[6]Institute of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, Shri Ramswaroop Memorial University, Lucknow deva road, Barabanki U.P., India
[7]Department of Fruit science, Rani Lakshmibai Central Agricultural University, Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh, India.
[8]School of Agriculture, Dev Bhoomi Uttarakhand University, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India
*Corresponding Author E-mail: lakhwindersingh60478@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century has seen a revolutionary change in horticultural crop management due to quick technological breakthroughs, changing consumer tastes, and escalating environmental concerns. The need for horticulture products that are high-quality, safe, and nutritious has increased as the world's population grows and becomes more urbanized. Innovative strategies that strike a balance between ecological sustainability and productivity are therefore required. The key developments influencing contemporary horticulture are summarized in this study, including digital tools that improve decision-making and maximize input utilization, precision agriculture, biotechnology, smart irrigation systems, and protected growing. An integrated framework integrating innovation, supportive policies, public-private partnerships, and farmer-focused capacity-building efforts is needed to address these complex concerns. With the advent of digital agriculture, artificial intelligence, robotics, genome editing, and circular economy models, horticulture crop management is set to undergo even more change in the future. This review offers a thorough examination of the development of horticulture crop management throughout history, present-day methods, and prospects for the future. The horticulture industry can overcome current obstacles and realize its full potential to support environmental sustainability, economic growth, and global food security by encouraging cooperation among academics, policymakers, and stakeholders.

Introduction

A vital role in global food systems, livelihoods, and employment is played by cultivation, the branch of agribusiness that deals with the production of natural products, vegetables, flowers, and exotic plants. The demand for premium, wholesome, and unique green products is rising swiftly as the world's population continues to grow and urbanize. For trim administration hones, this evolving request offers both opportunities and challenges. In the twenty-first century, innovation, environmental concerns, and socioeconomic factors are driving significant developments in green edit administration. Innovative methods are focusing on supportability, asset productivity, and climate flexibility rather than just increasing efficiency. The adoption of innovative tools like precision farming, biotechnology, and computerized data systems is transforming traditional methods and enabling ranchers to maximize inputs like water, fertilizer, and pesticides while reducing waste and environmental impact. Because of the burdens of climate change, soil degradation, water scarcity, and biodiversity loss, sustainability has become a crucial issue. As a result, coordinated trim administration tactics that integrate environmental regulations with rational information are becoming increasingly important. By developing techniques like natural farming, coordinating pest management, and soil preservation, these methods aim to maintain healthy surroundings and ensure long-term effectiveness. The socioeconomic context of farming is also improving. In many places, smallholder farmers are the backbone of the green generation, yet they face obstacles when trying to access markets, innovation, and the other way around. In order to address these problems and create complete and adaptable rural frameworks, consistent planning, capacity building, and advertising advancement are needed. This survey report examines the condition of green trim administration today, highlighting developments, difficulties, and potential opportunities. It emphasizes the division's emerging patterns, arrangement methods, maintainable hones, and subsequent mechanical advancements Partners may better investigate the intricacies of modern farming and assist natural supportability, financial development, and food security by comprehending these points of view. In the twenty-first century, green trim administration may be a dynamic field at the nexus of social change, innovation, and sustainability. This study aims to provide a thorough overview of its essential elements and provide insights into potential future developments.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF HORTICULTURAL PRACTICES

Since the beginning of horticulture, cultivation derived from the Latin words hortus (plant) and cultural (development) has been an essential component of human civilization. In ancient times, when early societal orders domesticated wild plants for food, medicine, and decoration, agricultural edit management got its start. According to archeological evidence, Neolithic civilizations began producing natural goods, vegetables, and herbs about 10,000 years ago, which halted the transition from scavenging to settled cultivation (Zohary & Hopf, 2000). Systematic techniques to horticulture were created by ancient civilizations in the Indus Valley, Egypt, China, and Mesopotamia. These included specific plant breeding, basic pest control techniques, and water system initiatives including canals and wells (Harlan, 1992). With contemporary plant planning, joining techniques, and the display of exceptional species throughout Europe, the Roman Domain promoted advanced cultivation (Rackham, 1990). Religious gardens, which focused on medicinal plants and food crops, preserved agricultural knowledge during the Center Ages (Confidence, 1997). Critical advancements in agriculture tactics were impacted by logical requests and experiments during the Renaissance and Edification periods. While research brought modern crops like potatoes, tomatoes, and maize to Europe, the invention of the magnifying tool allowed for a far greater understanding of plant life structures and illnesses (Smith, 1997). Mechanization, chemical insecticides, and fertilizers were introduced by the mechanical transition, which accelerated production but also raised biological issues (Pimentel *et al.*, 1992). With the establishment of dedicated research, education, and extension administrations, cultivation expanded during the 20th century. Improved high-yielding and disease-resistant assortments are the result of advances in plant breeding and genetic traits. Techniques including hybridization, cloning, and joining improved the quality and adaptability of the trim (Simmonds & Smartt, 1999). Furthermore, off-season and high-density production were made possible by the development of protected growth techniques such hydroponics, shade nets, and greenhouses (Resh, 2013). The goals of agricultural trim administration have always been consistent: to increase productivity, enhance quality, and ensure sustainability. In any case, the methods and tools have drastically changed from human labour and experimental data to technologically driven and mechanized frameworks. Early cultivation relied heavily on manual labour and the availability of common resources, whereas modern techniques integrated rational research, creativity, and natural management (Janick & Paull, 2008). This historical development offers crucial background information for comprehending current issues and advancements. As an example, traditional natural methods are experiencing a comeback in response to the natural effects of chemical inputs introduced in the 20th century (Reganold & Wachter, 2016). In a similar vein, contemporary rootstock breeding initiatives that support high-density orchards and pest resistance are based on antiquated grafting procedures (Webster, 2004). Furthermore, horticulture's globalization has brought with it both benefits and difficulties. Crop variety and resilience have been improved by the sharing of genetic resources and information, but the hazards of invading pests and diseases have also grown

(Frison *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, historical viewpoints highlight the necessity of integrated, flexible management strategies that blend conventional knowledge with cutting-edge scientific research. The history of horticultural crop management is extensive and varied, influenced by scientific, technological, and cultural factors.

CURRENT TRENDS IN HORTICULTURAL PRACTICES

The 21st century has witnessed significant changes in cultivation, fueled by evolving consumer demands, technological advancements, and organic reflections. The way green crops are developed, supervised, and marketed is shaped by a complex interplay of logical development, advertising power, and supportability aims. For partners looking to increase the effectiveness, caliber and adaptability of green frameworks, it is essential to comprehend these trends.

Urban cultivation

The emergence of urban farming is one notable deviation. Given that over half of the world's population currently lives in urban areas, urban agriculture which includes hydroponics, housetop gardens, communal gardens, and vertical cultivation is becoming more popular (Orsini *et al.*, 2017). Urban farming provides fresh product to urban consumers while lowering transportation costs and carbon footprints, so addressing food security in cities (Sanye-Mengual *et al.*, 2015). According to Kalantari *et al.* (2017), the employment of controlled environment agribusiness (CEA) technologies enables year-round production in limited areas with high resource-use efficiency.

High-value horticultural crops

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Organic horticulture

The rise of organic horticulture is another significant trend that shows customer demand for environmentally friendly, chemical-free products (Willer & Lernoud, 2021). Globally, organic horticultural production has been growing at double-digit rates as customers become more conscious of food safety and sustainability (Luna *et al.*, 2019). Certification programs and ecolabels, which ensure quality and authenticity, also support organic market growth. This trend forces farmers to utilize crop rotation, soil fertility management, and integrated pest management (IPM) strategies that enhance soil health and biodiversity without resorting to artificial chemicals (Reganold & Wachter, 2016).

Protected cultivation techniques

In order to maximize growth and prolong cropping seasons, more and more people are using protected growing techniques, which allow for exact control over environmental elements including temperature, humidity, and light (Kumar & Kaushik, 2019). In commercial horticulture, greenhouses, shade nets, and polyhouses are becoming more and more prevalent, particularly in desert and temperate climates where outdoor conditions are constrained. These constructions are now more productive and energy efficient thanks to automation and material advancements like solar-powered ventilation and LED lighting (Singh *et al.*, 2020).

Precision agriculture

Precision agriculture, which makes decisions based on data, is transforming how crops are managed. A few of the technologies that enable site-specific management of inputs like water, fertilizer, and pesticides, reducing waste and environmental impact, include soil sensors, remote sensing, geographic information systems (GIS), and global positioning systems (GPS) (Gebbers & Adamchuk, 2010). Precision horticulture improves crop quality and resource usage efficiency by lowering production costs (Bongiovanni & Low Enberg Deboer, 2004). Real-time data on crop health, pest outbreaks, and nutrient deficiencies can be obtained by combining drones and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for aerial crop monitoring (Zhang & Kovacs, 2012).

Biotechnological Applications

The advent of biotechnology applications is changing horticulture. In order to create superior crop varieties with desired traits like disease resistance, drought tolerance, and higher nutritional content, tissue culture techniques, genetic engineering, and gene editing (such CRISPRCas9) are all used (Kumar *et al.*, 2016). Superior planting material can be quickly replicated using micropropagation, ensuring the planting stock's vigor and consistency (George *et al.*, 2008). These developments hold potential for improving horticultural productivity and tackling climate change-related problems.

Digital agriculture platforms and mobile applications

Thanks to the growing usage of mobile applications and digital agriculture platforms, farmers may now easily obtain weather forecasts, market pricing, pest alerts, and expert advice (Wolfert *et al.*, 2017). Even for smallholder farmers, these platforms facilitate data exchange, remote monitoring, and targeted interventions, promoting a more inclusive adoption of technology (Mittal *et al.*, 2016). In an effort to boost consumer trust, blockchain technology is also being investigated to improve traceability and transparency in horticulture supply chains (Tian, 2017).

Post harvest technology and value addition

With the aim of reducing losses, increasing shelf life, and increasing revenues, postharvest technology and value addition have become prominent trends (Kader, 2002). Improvements in cold storage, modified environment packaging, and processing methods all help to preserve quality from farm to market, especially for perishable horticulture products. The expansion of agricultural processing enterprises in rural areas is creating new job opportunities and expanding the market (Prakash *et al.*, 2019).

Climate-smart horticulture

Climate-smart horticulture, which combines mitigation and adaptation techniques to improve system resilience in the face of changing climate conditions, is becoming more and more well-known (Lipper *et al.*, 2014). To preserve productivity while lowering environmental impacts, methods like conservation agriculture, agroforestry, and the adoption of drought-tolerant cultivars are being encouraged.

INNOVATIONS IN CROP MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGIES

The 21st century has seen groundbreaking innovations in crop management technologies that have changed horticultural practices significantly. These advancements are designed to boost productivity, enhance resource utilization efficiency, minimize environmental effects, and improve crop quality. Important technological progress includes precision agriculture, the use of biotechnology, intelligent irrigation systems, and digital tools, all of which are transforming the horticultural field.

Precision Agriculture (PA)

Precision Agriculture (PA) has become an essential innovation, allowing farmers to enhance input utilization and manage their crops according to specific site requirements. By utilizing technologies like Global Positioning Systems (GPS), Geographic Information Systems (GIS), remote sensing, and variable rate application tools, PA facilitates real-time monitoring and accurate application of water, fertilizers, and pesticides (Gebbers & Adamchuk, 2010). This method decreases waste, reduces production expenses, and lowers environmental impact while improving yield and quality (Bongiovanni & Lowenberg-Deboer, 2004). For instance, drones and multispectral imaging offer comprehensive assessments of crop health, enabling the early identification of nutrient shortages and pest problems (Zhang & Kovacs, 2012).

Biotechnology

Biotechnology has played a crucial role in enhancing and safeguarding crops. Innovations in genetic engineering, marker-assisted selection, and gene editing technologies like CRISPR-Cas9 allow for the creation of crop varieties with improved characteristics such as resistance to diseases, tolerance to drought, and better nutritional qualities (Kumar *et al.*, 2016). Techniques like tissue culture and micropropagation enable the swift production of high-quality plant material, ensuring consistency and disease-resistant planting stock (George *et al.*, 2008). These advancements tackle the challenges presented by climate change, pests, and limited resources, while also promoting sustainable intensification.

Smart irrigation systems

Smart irrigation systems are a significant advancement aimed at improving water management efficiency. Given that agriculture uses roughly 70% of the world's freshwater resources, optimizing irrigation practices is vital for sustainability (FAO, 2017). Innovations such as drip irrigation, sprinkler systems, and subsurface irrigation have been improved through the addition of sensors that track soil moisture levels, weather patterns, and the water requirements of crops in real time (Jones, 2018). Automated irrigation controllers can plan and modify water distribution based on these data inputs, which helps minimize water waste and enhances water use efficiency (Chaudhury *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, the incorporation of Internet of Things (IoT) devices into irrigation systems allows for remote management and data analysis, making precision irrigation more attainable for farmers (Wang *et al*., 2019).

Digital agriculture and data analytics

The emergence of digital agriculture and data analytics represents a significant trend in the industry. Mobile applications, cloud technology, and machine learning algorithms offer decision-making support tools for managing crops, predicting pests, and forecasting yields (Wolfert *et al*., 2017). These innovations promote the sharing of knowledge, particularly benefiting smallholder farmers by improving their access to timely guidance and market data (Mittal *et al*., 2016). Additionally, blockchain technology is being investigated for its potential to enhance transparency and traceability.

Protected cultivation technologies

Furthermore, controlled environment agriculture that regulates temperature, humidity, light, and CO_2 levels for year-round production is made possible by advancements in protected cultivation technologies, such as contemporary greenhouses, polyhouses, and vertical farming (Kumar & Kaushik, 2019). Crop productivity and energy efficiency are increased by developments in automated nutrient delivery, climate control systems, and LED lighting (Singh *et al*., 2020). Urban food production near customers is made possible by vertical farming, which in particular maximizes space utilization and minimizes water consumption (Kalantari *et al*., 2017).

Robotics and automation

By carrying out operations like planting, trimming, harvesting, and sorting with extreme efficiency and precision, robotics and automation are starting to play a part in horticulture. In order to alleviate the labour shortage that is common in many areas, autonomous cars and robotic arms lower labour expenses and improve operational precision (Duckett *et al*., 2018).

SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES IN HORTICULTURE

As the industry works to strike a balance between productivity, environmental stewardship, social equality, and economic viability, sustainability has emerged as a crucial area of concern. In order to supply the world's food demand while preserving natural resources and preserving the health of ecosystems, sustainable horticulture methods are essential. Policymakers, researchers, farmers, and consumers must work together to integrate these methods into mainstream horticulture. Horticultural systems in the twenty-first century must ensure long-term agricultural profitability while preserving resources, reducing pollution, and boosting biodiversity. Horticultural sustainability encompasses a range of measures, such as agroecological techniques, water conservation, integrated pest management (IPM), organic farming, and soil health enhancement.

Organic Farming Techniques

Utilizing natural methods and inputs to preserve soil fertility and manage pests and diseases without the use of artificial chemicals is the focus of organic horticulture (Reganold & Wachter, 2016). This method improves ecosystem services including pollination and nutrient cycling, safeguards beneficial creatures, and lowers chemical residues in product (Luna *et al*., 2019). Standards for organic certification guarantee adherence and increase consumer confidence in organic products. Farm revenue can be supported by organic horticulture, which can command premium market pricing despite higher labour needs and frequently lower yields (Willer & Lernoud, 2021).

Integrated Pest Management (IPM

To manage pests in a sustainable manner, IPM combines mechanical, chemical, biological, and cultural control techniques (Kogan, 1998). IPM emphasizes monitoring pest populations, employing resistant cultivars, promoting natural enemies, and implementing tailored interventions only when required, as opposed to only depending on pesticides (Barzman *et al*., 2015). This strategy delays the development of insect resistance, reduces environmental contamination, and fosters biodiversity. IPM effectiveness has increased thanks to developments in pest monitoring technology as remote sensing and pheromone traps (Dent, 2000).

Water Conservation and Efficient Irrigation

In horticulture, water scarcity is becoming a bigger problem. Sustainable practices prioritize water efficiency by utilizing technologies such as rainwater collecting, mulching, and drip irrigation (FAO, 2017). By delivering water straight to the root zone, drip irrigation lowers runoff and evaporation losses (Jones, 2018). Mulching enhances soil structure, inhibits weed growth, and preserves soil moisture (Ojiem *et al*., 2019). By offering alternate water sources, rainwater collecting systems lessen reliance on surface and groundwater (Mukherjee & Singh, 2016).

Soil Health Management

Because they promote plant development, nutrient cycling, and water retention, healthy soils are essential to sustainable horticulture. Soil organic matter, microbial diversity, and structure are improved by techniques such crop rotation, cover crops, decreased tillage, and organic amendments (Lal, 2015). According to Thierfelder *et al.* (2017), conservation agriculture principles increase resistance to climate shocks by reducing soil erosion and compaction. Sustainable nutrient management is further supported by the use of compost and biofertilizers (Vessey, 2003).

Agroecological and Biodiversity-Friendly Practices

To maximize interactions between plants, animals, people, and the environment, agroecology uses ecological concepts (Altieri, 2004). According to Lin (2011), intercropping, agroforestry, and habitat diversification improve system resilience, biodiversity, and pest control. Additionally, these methods can improve carbon sequestration and slow down global warming (Jose, 2009). Flower strips and less pesticide use promote pollinators and beneficial insects, which maintain ecosystem services vital to crop growth (Garibaldi *et al.*, 2013).

Challenges and Prospects

Sustainable techniques have advantages, but they also have drawbacks, including increased labour expenses, the need for an initial investment, and a lack of farmer knowledge (Pretty, 2008). To promote adoption, market incentives, extension services, and institutional support are crucial (Tittonell, 2014). These obstacles can be addressed by innovations such as participatory research and digital decision-support systems.

CHALLENGES IN HORTICULTURAL CROP MANAGEMENT

Horticultural crop management technologies and sustainable practices have advanced significantly, but the industry still faces a number of obstacles that restrict profitability, sustainability, and productivity. The full potential of contemporary horticulture requires addressing these issues, which have technological, social, economic, and environmental facets. It will take a combination of scientific innovation, policy assistance, capacity building, and sustainable resource management to overcome these complex issues. To make sure horticulture crop management satisfies the 21st century's goals for food security and sustainability, it will be essential to strengthen climate change resistance, advance equal access to technologies, enhance value chains, and promote inclusive governance.

Climate Change and Environmental Stressors

Global horticulture faces significant challenges due to climate change, which has an impact on crop quality, yields, and growth. Crop phenology is disrupted and pest and disease pressures are intensified by rising temperatures, changed rainfall patterns, and an increase in the frequency of extreme weather events including droughts, floods, and storms (Lesk *et al.*, 2016). Water scarcity restricts irrigation capacity, and heat stress can lower fruit set, quality, and shelf life (Lobell *et al.*, 2011). The availability of fertile land is further diminished by salinity and soil degradation, which are exacerbated by unsustainable farming methods (FAO, 2017). Diversified cropping systems, enhanced water management, and resilient crop varieties are necessary for climate change adaptation (Tubiello *et al.*, 2021).

Pest and Disease Management

Diseases and pests continue to be significant obstacles to the development of horticulture crops. Invasive pests and diseases are more common and more widely distributed as a result of globalization and climate change (Bebber *et al.*, 2013). Overuse of pesticides causes resistance, which makes control more difficult and increases production costs (Gould *et al.*, 2018). Lack of information and restricted access to biological control agents cause inconsistent adoption of integrated pest management (IPM) (Pretty & Bharucha, 2015). Key horticultural businesses around the world are at risk from emerging illnesses like Panama disease and citrus greening (Bové, 2006; Ordoñez *et al.*, 2016).

Resource Constraints and Cost Pressures

Particularly in underdeveloped nations, horticulture frequently confronts barriers to accessing high-quality inputs including certified seeds, fertilizers, and irrigation infrastructure (Pingali, 2015). Increased expenses for labour, energy, and agrochemicals reduce profit margins and deter investment (FAO, 2018). Timely field operations like harvesting and trimming are hampered by a labour scarcity brought on by urban migration and demographic shifts (Carolan, 2017). Automation and mechanization can help with labor concerns, but they come with a high cost.

Knowledge Gaps and Technology Adoption

Many smallholders and resource-poor farmers may not have access to the markets, credit, and extension services necessary to implement contemporary horticulture methods, despite technical advancements (Anderson *et al.*, 2019). Knowledge diffusion is further hampered by low literacy, inadequate infrastructure, and restricted digital connectivity (Aker, 2011). According to (Feder *et al.* 2011), cultural considerations and risk aversion also hinder the adoption of advances like biotechnology and precision agriculture. It will take inclusive policy frameworks, capacity building, and participatory research to close these gaps.

Market and Supply Chain Challenges

Because horticultural food is frequently perishable, it needs to be handled, stored, and transported efficiently after harvest in order to preserve quality and minimize losses (Kader, 2005). Significant postharvest waste and revenue losses are caused by inadequate cold chain infrastructure and market connections, particularly in poor nations (Parfitt *et al*., 2010). Farmers' incentives for investment and diversification are diminished by price volatility and restricted access to fair markets (Dillon *et al*., 2014). Market access is made more difficult by certification requirements and customer demands for safety and quality (Swinnen, 2016).

Policy and Institutional Barriers

Coordinated horticultural development is hampered by disjointed policies and inadequate institutional support. Growth is hampered by regulatory barriers, irregular subsidies, and a lack of funding for infrastructure and research (Pingali, 2015). Effective enforcement procedures are necessary for environmental legislation that aim to reduce the use of agrochemicals and water usage (Pretty, 2008). To establish an enabling environment, farmers, researchers, and politicians must engage in collaborative governance.

PROSPECTS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN HORTICULTURAL CROP MANAGEMENT

Technological advancements, environmental requirements, and changing consumer preferences are all expected to bring about significant changes in horticulture crop management in the future. In order to guarantee food security, economic viability, and ecosystem health, the horticultural industry must adopt adaptive, robust, and efficient systems as the world's population grows and environmental concerns worsen.

Technological Innovations and Digital Agriculture

Unprecedented accuracy and efficiency in horticultural crop management are promised by developments in digital agriculture, such as the incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, remote sensing, and big data analytics (Liakos *et al*., 2018). By evaluating real-time sensor data and weather forecasts, AI-powered decision support systems can optimize pest control, nutrient management, and irrigation (Kamilaris & Prenafeta-Boldú, 2018). By completing operations like harvesting, pruning, and sorting quickly and accurately, robotics and automation lessen the need for human labour (Bac *et al*., 2014). Early intervention is made possible by timely crop health monitoring provided by drones fitted with multispectral sensors (Zhang & Kovacs, 2012).

Biotechnology and Breeding

In order to create superior cultivars, future possibilities also depend on sophisticated breeding methods like genomic selection, gene editing (such as CRISPR-Cas9), and marker-assisted breeding (Bassi *et al*., 2016). According to Chen *et al*. (2019), these technologies allow for the exact enhancement of characteristics like fruit quality, nutrient use efficiency, disease resistance, and drought tolerance. Opportunities to increase production and resilience to abiotic stress are presented by genetically modified rootstocks and scions (Kumari *et al*., 2021). These methods, when combined with phenomics and bioinformatics, speed up cultivar development and climate adaptation.

Models of the Circular Economy and Sustainability

Adoption of circular economy concepts in horticulture, which prioritize resource recycling, waste reduction, and ecosystem services, will be fueled by the growing emphasis on sustainability (Ghisellini *et al*., 2016). Organic amendments and careful nutrient management will improve soil health and reduce negative effects on the ecosystem (Mancuso & Malagoli, 2020). The conversion of horticulture waste into compost, bioenergy, and bioproducts will minimize reliance on outside inputs and establish new value chains (Mirabella *et al*., 2014). Resource efficiency and environmental preservation will also be aided by methods that combine pest management and water reuse.

Climate-Aware Gardening

By integrating robust crop varieties, adaptive management techniques, and cutting-edge technologies, the industry must promote climate-smart horticulture (FAO, 2013). In susceptible areas, breeding for resistance to heat, drought, and salinity will be essential (Kumar *et al*., 2021). Water utilization will be maximized by improved water-saving irrigation techniques, such as subsurface and automated drip irrigation (Fereres & Soriano, 2007). Diversification and agroforestry techniques will increase biodiversity and system resilience (Lin, 2011). Farmer decision-making in the face of uncertainty will be aided by risk management tools and climate information services (Thornton *et al*., 2018).

Inclusivity and Integration

The future of managing horticulture crops will rely on how well scientific innovation is combined with social inclusion and legislative backing. Mobile technology and digital platforms can improve farmer engagement and close knowledge gaps (Aker, 2011). Investment in infrastructure, research, and extension services will be stimulated by public-private partnerships and multi-stakeholder cooperation (Pingali, 2015). Resilient horticulture systems that serve both smallholders and commercial producers will require policies that support sustainable practices, equitable access to resources, and land tenure stability (Tittonell, 2014).

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AND THE FRAMEWORK FOR POLICIES

By fostering a climate that encourages innovation, sustainability, and fair growth, effective policy frameworks and government initiatives are essential in determining the direction of horticulture crop management. In order to help farmers, encourage research, and guarantee food security, comprehensive regulations and focused government initiatives are crucial given the numerous issues facing the horticulture industry, such as resource limitations, climate change, pest management, and market access.

Frameworks for National and International Policy

Given its significance for rural employment, income creation, and nutrition, several nations have included horticulture in their agricultural development programs at the national level (FAO, 2017). To boost horticulture productivity and market competitiveness, policies that support agro-processing, high-value crop production, and diversification are essential (Pingali, 2015). Additionally, horticulture's integration with the Sustainable Development aims (SDGs) guarantees compatibility with more general aims including reducing poverty, protecting the environment, and combating climate change (UN, 2015). Frameworks such as the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the FAO's Climate-Smart Agriculture Strategy promote equitable and sustainable horticultural development on a global scale (FAO, 2009; FAO, 2013). In order to foster horticulture innovation and resilience, these frameworks promote the adoption of climate-resilient techniques, genetic variety conservation, and fair access to plant resources.

Support initiatives, incentives, and subsidies

Financial incentives and government subsidies aimed at horticulture can lower input prices and encourage the use of contemporary technology like greenhouse farming, drip irrigation, and organic fertilizers (Mishra *et al.*, 2020). Production efficiency is increased by input subsidy programs for high-quality seeds, fertilizer, and agricultural equipment. Furthermore, price support systems, crop insurance, and credit facilities help horticulture producers particularly smallholders reduce the risks they encounter (Hazra & Sahu, 2020). Frequently supported by the government, extension services and training initiatives aid in the dissemination of information regarding integrated pest management, postharvest handling, marketing tactics, and best practices (Aker, 2011). Governments have advocated for digital platforms and mobile-based advisory services to provide timely information and market data to farmers who live far away (Kamilaris & Prenafeta-Boldú, 2018).

Building Infrastructure and Gaining Access to Markets

To lower postharvest losses and enhance value addition, governments have been concentrating more on building horticultural infrastructure, including as cold storage, pack houses, processing facilities, and transportation networks (World Bank, 2019). Market connections and adherence to global standards are supported by the establishment of horticulture zones, export hubs, and quality certification organizations (Pingali, 2015). Policies that support cooperatives and contract farming give farmers more negotiating leverage and steady access to markets (Bijman *et al.*, 2012). E-market platforms and farmer-producer associations have been encouraged in certain nations to promote direct connections between buyers and producers, cutting out middlemen and increasing profitability (Jha *et al.*, 2018).

Climate and Environmental Policies

Climate policies and environmental regulations are essential to the development of sustainable horticulture. To lessen ecological footprints, governments impose pesticide laws, encourage organic certification, and provide incentives for water-efficient technologies (Pretty & Bharucha, 2015). In order to improve resilience, climate adaptation initiatives support drought-resistant cultivars, water collection systems, and climate information services (Kumar *et al.*, 2021).

Difficulties in Putting Policies into Practice

Due to a lack of awareness among farmers, insufficient money, and poor agency coordination, implementation gaps persist even with supportive policies (Tittonell, 2014). Gender equity and smallholder inclusion also need more policy focus. Decentralized governance, participatory policy creation, and ongoing monitoring and assessment are necessary to close these gaps.

PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Rapid technology breakthroughs, shifting consumer demands, and the urgent need for sustainable practices are all driving significant change in the field of horticulture crop management. In addition to tackling the environmental and social issues that are specific to contemporary horticulture, emerging trends hold the potential to boost production, resilience, and profitability.

Smart and Digital Agriculture

By enabling precision management at previously unheard-of sizes, the combination of digital technologies like the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), and big data analytics is transforming horticulture. IoT technologies, like as sensors and drones, enable farmers to maximize inputs and minimize waste by enabling real-time monitoring of soil moisture, nutrient status, and pest occurrence (Liakos *et al.*, 2018). Proactive decision-making is supported by AI-powered predictive models that forecast illnesses and yield (Kamilaris & Prenafeta-Boldú, 2018). In addition, automation and robotics are being used more and more for jobs like pruning and harvesting in order to solve the manpower crisis and boost productivity (Duckett *et al.*, 2018).

Climate-Smart and Resilient Practices

With changed precipitation patterns and extreme weather events affecting crop yields, climate change continues to pose a serious danger to horticulture (Lobell *et al.*, 2011). Climate-smart management techniques, such as crop varieties that are resistant to heat and drought and were created using cutting-edge breeding and gene editing technologies like CRISPR, will become more and more important in the future (Kumar *et al.*, 2021). Agroforestry, integrated pest management, and water-saving irrigation techniques all support environmental sustainability and system resilience (Pretty & Bharucha, 2015).

Biotechnology and Genetic Innovations

It is anticipated that the use of biotechnology in horticulture would grow considerably. The production of crops with enhanced nutritional characteristics, disease resistance, and stress tolerance is made possible by genetic modification and genome editing techniques (Zhang *et al.*, 2018). Superior rootstocks and cultivars can multiply more quickly thanks to developments in plant tissue culture and micropropagation (Kole *et al.*, 2015). These developments increase orchard yield by enabling early fruiting and high-density planting.

Circular Economy and Sustainability

The ideas of the circular economy, which emphasize resource recycling and waste reduction in horticulture systems, are becoming more and more popular. Crop wastes and organic waste are being valued more and more for composting and bioenergy generation in an effort to enhance soil health and reduce reliance on artificial inputs (García-García *et al.*, 2020). Technologies for nitrogen recovery and water recycling also promote sustainable resource usage.

Consumer Preferences and Market Trends

Horticultural production and marketing are being impacted by consumer knowledge of food safety, traceability, and nutrition. Demand for locally sourced, pesticide-free, and organic vegetables is rising (Willis & Campbell, 2020). To guarantee openness and foster customer confidence, blockchain technology and digital certification programs are being investigated (Tian, 2017). Furthermore, vertical farming and urban horticulture are becoming attractive options for supplying the increased need for food in expanding cities (Despommier, 2013).

Challenges Ahead

Despite these encouraging developments, smallholder farmers' lack of infrastructure, high costs, and knowledge gaps continue to hinder the adoption of new technologies (Tittonell, 2014). It will be essential to guarantee data privacy, fair access, and environmental safety for new technology. In order to solve ethical and socioeconomic issues and create supportive settings, policies must stay up to date with innovation.

FUTURE PROSPECTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

By improving real-time monitoring, predictive analytics, and automated crop management, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, robots, and remote sensing are poised to revolutionize precision horticulture (Liakos *et al.*, 2018; Duckett *et al.*, 2018). To satisfy customer requests, the incorporation of blockchain technology promises increased supply chain transparency, guaranteeing food safety and traceability (Tian, 2017). The development of horticulture crops that are disease-resistant, climate-resilient, and nutritionally enhanced is made possible by biotechnological developments, especially gene editing techniques like CRISPR (Zhang *et al.*, 2018). These developments, when combined with high-throughput phenotyping and omics technology, allow for improved adaption tactics and quicker breeding cycles (Kole *et al.*, 2015).

Circular economy ideas will continue to gain traction, and sustainability will remain a major factor. Ecological balance and resource efficiency will depend on practices like waste valuation, water recycling, integrated pest management, and organic farming (García-García *et al*., 2020; Pretty & Bharucha, 2015). Potential solutions to the problems of urban food security and land scarcity include urban horticulture and vertical farming. Although scalability and economic viability are still important factors, these controlled-environment agriculture systems allow for year-round production with less water and land use (Despommier, 2013).

Conclusion

The 21st century has seen a significant shift in the field of horticultural crop management due to advancements in technology, growing market demands, and sustainability concerns. The capacity to monitor crops, optimize inputs, and boost yields has been greatly improved by developments in digital technologies, biotechnology, and precision agriculture. With the help of these technology, farmers may increase productivity, cut waste, and lessen their negative effects on the environment. In order to preserve soil health, biodiversity, and water quality and guarantee long-term productivity, sustainable techniques including organic farming, integrated pest management, and resource conservation have become more significant. Horticultural crop management still faces many obstacles in spite of these encouraging advancements. Serious risks are posed by climate change because of its effects on growth conditions, pest and disease pressures, and unpredictable weather patterns. Smallholder and resource-poor farmers frequently face barriers to adopting innovative practices due to a lack of access to markets, capital, and technology. Furthermore, substantial postharvest losses and decreased profitability are caused by inadequate infrastructure for processing, transportation, and storage. A thorough and coordinated strategy is needed to address these issues. Collaboration between government agencies, the private sector, farming communities, and research institutes must be strengthened. Policies should improve excluded populations' access to credit, inputs, and knowledge in order to promote inclusive growth. Investing in digital literacy, extension services, and rural infrastructure can enable farmers to make efficient use of contemporary equipment. The sustainable development of horticulture output will depend on promoting eco-friendly methods in addition to technological advancements. Horticulture's future depends on utilizing cutting-edge technology like blockchain, gene editing, robotics, and artificial intelligence to improve crop efficiency, resilience, and traceability. Models of urban and vertical farming provide creative ways to minimize land use while satisfying the needs of expanding urban populations. However, social justice and environmental concerns must be taken into account while using such technologies. The management of horticultural crops has enormous potential to support environmental sustainability, economic growth, and global food security. The industry can overcome present obstacles and create a resilient and profitable future by embracing innovation, encouraging inclusion, and placing a high priority on sustainability. Meeting the demands of a growing population while preserving natural resources for future generations will depend on how well technology and sustainable practices are integrated.

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