

A rosy future for Pakistan's cut flower industry

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This is a floral bouquet with red roses, gladiolus and chrysanthemum loose flowers at a market in Pakistan. Credit: Photo by Iftikhar Ahmad

Roses are one of the leading cut flowers in the global floriculture trade. In the last few years, cut flower consumption and the market for high-quality flowers has increased in Pakistan as a result of the country's rapid economic growth, improved living standards, enhanced access to electronic media, and increasing demand from the country's growing hospitality industry.

In Pakistan, where seasonable climatic conditions provide ideal environments for cut flowers, rose production generates employment opportunities in rural areas where few other jobs exist. But industry challenges, including a lack of standardized production techniques,

limited availability of greenhouses, and lack of professional education for growers, are delaying efforts to put Pakistan on the map as a cut flower exporter. A study published in *HortTechnology* reported on the present status and future prospects of cut rose [flower production](#) and postharvest management in Punjab, Pakistan. The researchers found that although cut roses were the leading flower crop in the area, production systems and practices were outdated and primitive, and the quality of cut stems produced was not acceptable in [international markets](#).

While all of the growers interviewed for the study reported that they sold their products in local markets in Pakistan, none said they exported their flowers. Producers indicated that they were limited to local sales because of factors such as lack of cooperation from government organizations, ignorance of international standards, and poor-quality production. "The growers with limited or no education felt that their product quality was too low to allow exporting, whereas more educated growers felt that the lack of support from the government prevented them from exporting", said Iftikhar Ahmad, an assistant professor in the Institute of Horticultural Sciences, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, Pakistan (who conducted the survey) and John Dole, a professor in the Department of Horticultural Science at North Carolina State University, and corresponding author of the study. Ahmad, Dole, and research colleagues from the Institute of [Horticultural Sciences](#) at the University of Agriculture in Faisalabad said that Pakistan's rose growers need more training in production and postharvest management to increase their product quality to international standards.

The research revealed several positive trends in the cut rose businesses, finding that more than half of growers (52%) entered the business during the last five years and 30% of the study's growers had been in business over 10 years. "That almost half of the producers started growing roses in the last five years is a positive sign for development of the rose industry as a non-traditional high value crop to incorporate into

traditional wheat–rice or wheat–cotton cropping pattern in the province. Experienced growers were maintaining plants in production for a longer period as compared with newer producers", the scientists explained.

Growing conditions pose unique challenges for Pakistan's cut flower growers. Because of the country's hot summer temperatures, good-quality flowers can be produced only from October to March. "Few growers in Pakistan have sufficient capital to afford the construction of greenhouses and the high cost of energy required to operate them. Since most growers have small landholdings, it is unlikely that they can save sufficient capital to construct a greenhouse without support by governmental or other agencies. However, 14-33% of the growers who had been in business more than five years were using greenhouses, indicating that they were successful enough to afford the greenhouses", said Ahmad. The researchers noted that the use of high tunnels may be a lower-cost alternative to greenhouses.

The study concluded that cut rose production has great potential to expand in Pakistan. The team recommended that the industry adopt more modern techniques and innovations and assist growers by providing access to training. Other recommendations included: planting elite cultivars, improving infrastructural facilities, providing interest-free loans, and offering assistance in marketing.

"Although public and private sector negligence has resulted in less than optimum growth of this sector, its potential has now been realized and initiatives are being taken by various organizations for boosting the industry in Pakistan", the authors concluded. They noted that the study can serve as a model for other countries where [cut flowers](#) industries are at a similar stage of development.

More information: The complete study and abstract are available on the ASHS *HortTechnology* electronic journal web site:

horttech.ashspublications.org/...t/abstract/20/6/1010

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