

## FOREWORD

In the agro-based economy of Pakistan, the horticultural sub-sector deserves special attention. A vast natural diversity in the soils and climate of Pakistan is suitable for the cultivation of numerous fruits and vegetables. Promotion of the cultivation of fruits will not only help greatly enhance the availability for local consumption but would also generate exportable surplus. Export of fresh and processed fruits and vegetables can substantially add to our foreign exchange earnings. By encouraging the processing industry, we will be able to eliminate postharvest losses which, currently run as high as 35 to 40%.

Pakistan produces large quantities of mango and date fruits. The demand for the quality produce is on increase within the country and abroad. In Pakistan, room for improvement in packing and streamlined marketing exists. To compete in the international markets, there is need to present our produce in accordance with international standards and procedures. There is need to shift from a production driven to demand driven horticulture industry, keeping in view the changing consumers' preferences.

Great geo-political changes have taken place across our borders. The government, growers and the processors should avail these opportunities and plan to derive benefits from these developments. Many countries are already striving hard to penetrate into new international markets. Tropical and sub-tropical fruits like mango and dates would certainly find ready markets.

Keeping all these opportunities and constraints in view, the Institute of Horticultural Sciences, University of Agriculture Faisalabad organized an *International Conference on Mango and Date Palm: Culture and Export* from 20<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2005. A large number of participants representing various stake holders including researchers, academia, growers, processors and exporters, services and input providers, in mango and date industry attended the conference.

The conference provided an excellent opportunity to discuss all issues, thread bare and to benefit from the experience and knowledge of each other. Comprehensive and highly motivating papers were presented, which highlighted the factors responsible for inefficient mango and date fruit production and export and the steps needed to be taken to ameliorate the situation. The conduct of an international conference on mango and date palm culture and export and publication of the proceedings represent a forward step in the right direction. This manuscript will also help to create a forum for future discussions. Looking at the papers presented, I am impressed by the range and quality of the material. Almost all essential aspects of mango and date palm research and development have been covered. I hope that the recommendations of eminent scholars and industrial leaders would go a long way in establishing this emerging sector on a sound footing.

I am very pleased to mention that University of Agriculture Faisalabad, Higher Education Commission, Islamabad, Engro Chemicals Pak. Ltd., The Horticultural Foundation of Pakistan, Pakistan Horticulture & Export Board, Shakarganj Mills Ltd. and Pakistan Society of Horticultural Sciences made meaningful contribution towards this conference.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the organizers of this conference, the editors and the publishers of the proceedings, for a job very well accomplished.

**Prof. Dr. Bashir Ahmad**

*(Ezaz-e-Fazeelat)*

Vice Chancellor,

University of Agriculture Faisalabad