
Potentials and Prospective of Investment in Fruit and Nut Crops Industry

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The world's population is estimated to increase by one billion people by 2025 to reach 8 billion; while more than 1.4, 1 and 3 billion people are hungry, overweight and malnutrition, respectively. Horticulture industry can overcome many of these problems. Horticulture industry especially fruit and nut industry is known as one of the high-income parts of the economy of any country. In addition, the high labor demand of fruit production (on-farm and off-farm) has the added benefit of local employment. Generally, production of horticultural crops creates more than twice jobs per hectare compared to cereal production. Also, profit of fruit and nut crops production per m³ water consumption is 3 to 5 times more than cereal production. For example, income of 1 m³ of water is 1.86 vs. 0.61 dollars for walnuts vs. cereal production, respectively. Iran with 2.7 million hectares of orchards and production of 2% (19 million tons) of the world is one of top ten producers of fruit and nuts. Nut crops (especially pistachio and walnut) are more valuable for Iran not only because they mostly originated from Iran but also because they have easy storage and high economic value. Pistachio has the highest profitability among the non-oil and even non-raw oil products. Pistachio export value is more than 4.5 % (1.65 billion dollars) of the total export value of Iran. However this industry still has more potential to advance. For example, 5 products from 10 profitable commodities in the US are fruit crops which include grapes (\$ 2.5 billion), strawberry (\$ 5.2 billion), almond (\$ 5.9 billion), walnut (\$ 8.1 billion) and pistachio (\$ 6.1 billion). The leading countries in fruit production have realized the importance of this industry and its related processing industries, and increased amount of nuts production and its harvested area every year. For instance, the export value of the U.S walnut kernel has increased 9.8 times compared to 20 last year. Or walnut production in China, as the first leader producer, has increased 10 times compared to 20 last year. In contrast, the production and export value of walnut in Iran as the world's second largest producer this crop has increased only 7 and 2 times, respectively. Therefore, it is necessary to pay special attention to improvement of fruit and nut industry, renovation and commercialization of the traditional orchards, establishment of large commercial modern orchards and fruit related processing industries to improve Iran's rank in the global market and increase its revenue.