

Sunnhemp cultivation : Problems and prospects

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ABSTRACT : Sunnhemp (*Crotalaria juncea* L.) is an important multipurpose crop widely distributed in the tropical and subtropical regions of India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Southern Africa. It is one of the earliest and most distinctly named bast fibre of India next to jute. The fibre is used for manufacturing of wide variety of products like rope, marine cordage, string, fishing nets, coarse fabric for hose pipe, tissue paper, currency paper, rugs, carpets, webbing, belting and canvas etc. It is one of the most outstanding green manure crops suited to almost all parts of the country. It has played a pivotal role in the socio-economy of rural India as an important component in the cottage industries. But with the advent of green revolution and subsequent development of irrigation facilities, short duration, fertilizer responsive, high yielding varieties of the staple food crops particularly rice and introduction of synthetic fibre, the acreage under sunnhemp crop in India reduced drastically since 1960's onwards. The area under sunnhemp cultivation declined from about 200 thousand hectares in 1960's to merely 31.5 thousand hectares in 2007-08 with production and productivity of 18.8 thousand tonnes and 597 kg/ha, respectively. Keeping in view the progressive decline in area and production of sunnhemp especially during last 3-4 decades, an attempt has been made to investigate in detail about the production constraints and their ways out along with future thrust areas to improve the situation of sunnhemp cultivation in India.

Key Words : Sunnhemp, yield, nitrogen fixation, chemical fertilizer dependence.