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A 'disease fighting' superfood from India can control a \$7-billion global market. If we move now.



Synopsis

Moringa is finding a larger space in the import basket of many countries due to the demand for superfoods. The good news: the tree grows easily in India and is of better quality than those grown abroad.



By Garima Bora ET Online

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Delhi-based **Terry Exports** has been exporting moringa since 2018. It cultivates the trees on a contract basis in Coimbatore. Dipankar Verma, MD of the export house, says they are now seeing interest from Gulf and South American governments for moringa seeds.

Terry Exports uses solar drying in temperature-controlled ovens to raise the nutrition of moringa leaves. The amount of protein, fibre and other vitamins are increased this way, explains Verma. “The temperature should not be too much, else the chlorophyll of the leaves would get dried, leaving the colour of the leaves brown and less nutrition.”

On the export side, the demand is for organic moringa. However, Verma says, farmers tend to use **pesticides**.

Learn to grow

Verma lists the challenges in growing moringa are in nutrition, quality and organic practices. It starts with the quality and type of soil as the nutrition moringa gets is based on that. "It is extremely important to examine the soil for heavy metals content as this can make the product toxic," he says.

Second, it is important to disseminate scientific information about the moringa leaves among farmers. Moringa leaves have to be washed properly to remove impurities and then require proper drying. "Research has shown that when the leaves are dried in a controlled manner, it increases the nutrition in the leaves. Therefore, the crushed and the powdered form of moringa is ready for use with enhanced nutrition," Verma says.

Verma of Terry Exports says India has an advantage over other countries when it comes to the quality of moringa — the tree is also produced in Somalia, Kenya, the Philippines, and other parts of South Asia. He calls it a farmer-friendly tree for all seasons. “Moringa grows well in sandy or loamy types of soil and requires little irrigation compared to other trees. The temperature in the African belt is quite higher than here in India. High temperature means soaking of chlorophyll in the leaves and having a lesser amount of nutrition,” he explains.

Another factor, Verma says, is poor sanitation and water quality make African moringa inferior to the Indian variety. So, there are higher levels of salmonella and other microbiological components in African moringa, according to a WHO report.

