



AGRI-HORTI EXPORT FACILITATION

A Research-based Recommendation Paper By
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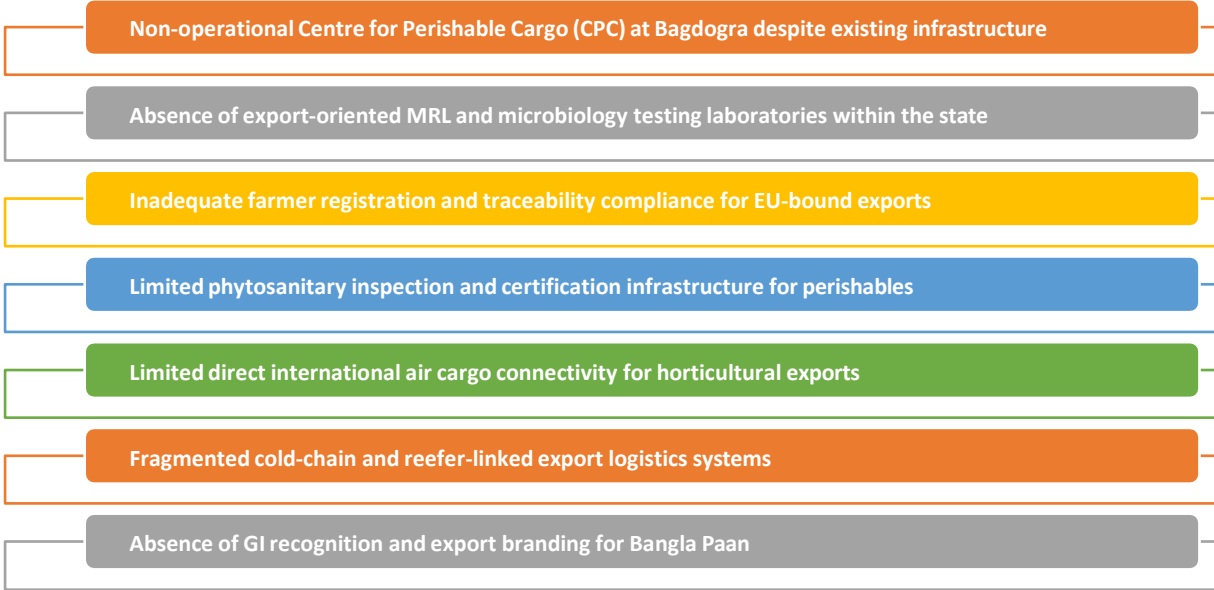
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1. ENHANCING EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS OF WEST BENGAL’S AGRI-HORTI SECTOR

West Bengal possesses significant potential in agri-horti exports owing to its diversified agricultural production base, favourable agro-climatic conditions, and strategic access to neighbouring and international markets, including Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, South-East Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. The state is a major producer of vegetables, fruits, flowers, spices, and betel leaves with strong export potential in fresh horticultural commodities.

However, despite the policy focus under the Agriculture Export Policy 2018 and the West Bengal State Agriculture Export Policy 2022, exports of fresh fruits and vegetables from the state have reportedly declined from nearly 6,600 MT in 2018-19 to around 2,749 MT in 2023-24. The decline highlights critical gaps in export logistics, cold-chain infrastructure, testing and certification facilities, traceability systems, and international cargo connectivity, which continue to constrain the state’s agri-horti export competitiveness.

1.1 Key Operational Challenges in Agri-Horti Exports



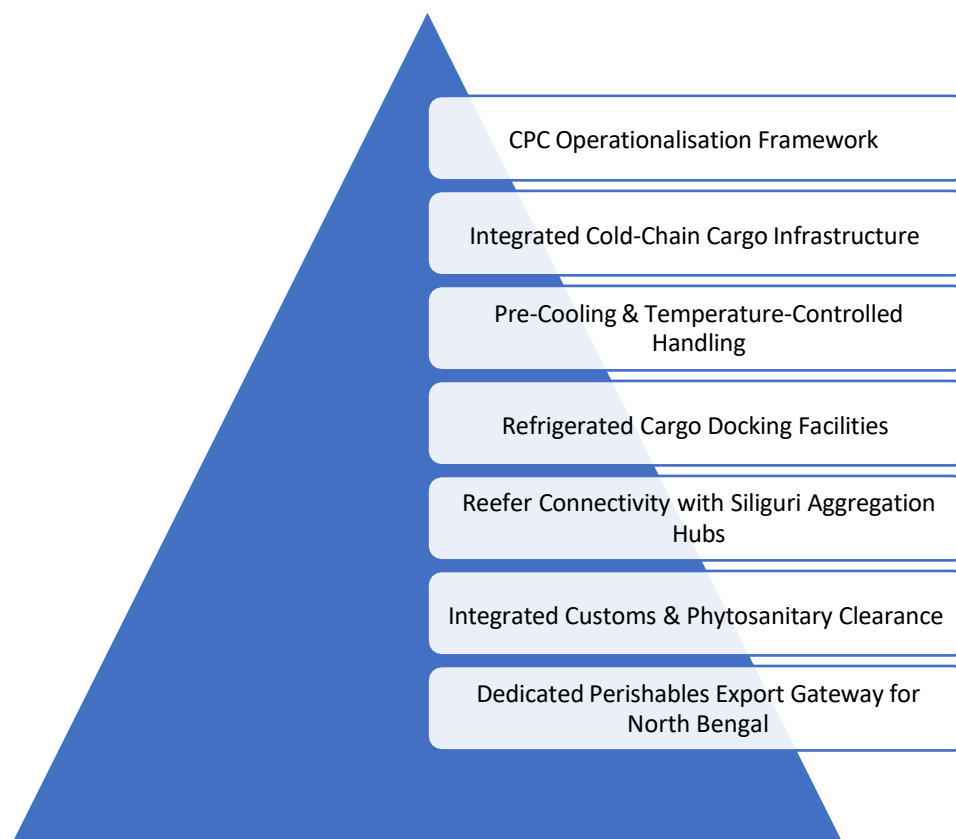
2. Proposed Interventions for Improving Agri-Horti Export Competitiveness

2.1 Operationalisation of CPC at Bagdogra for Perishable Export Handling

A Centre for Perishable Cargo (CPC) established at Bagdogra International Airport by Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority remains substantially underutilised/non-operational despite North Bengal being a major production cluster for export-oriented horticultural commodities including vegetables, flowers, pineapple, ginger, and oranges.

The absence of integrated perishables export infrastructure near production clusters has resulted in:

- increased spoilage losses,
- fragmented cargo aggregation,
- cold-chain discontinuity during transit,
- dependence on distant cargo gateways,
- reduced viability of direct air shipment for perishables.



Recommendations

2.2 Establishment of Export-Compliant Testing Infrastructure

West Bengal currently lacks adequate export-oriented testing infrastructure required for compliance with international residue and food safety standards, particularly for EU-bound horticultural exports.

Exporters continue to depend on laboratories outside the state for:

- Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) testing,
- pesticide residue analysis,
- microbiological contamination testing,
- export compliance certification.

This increases:

- shipment turnaround time,
- sample transportation costs,
- risk of cargo delay for perishables,
- export compliance burden.

The West Bengal State Agriculture Export Policy 2022 itself recognises the need for strengthening export-oriented testing infrastructure.



Recommendations

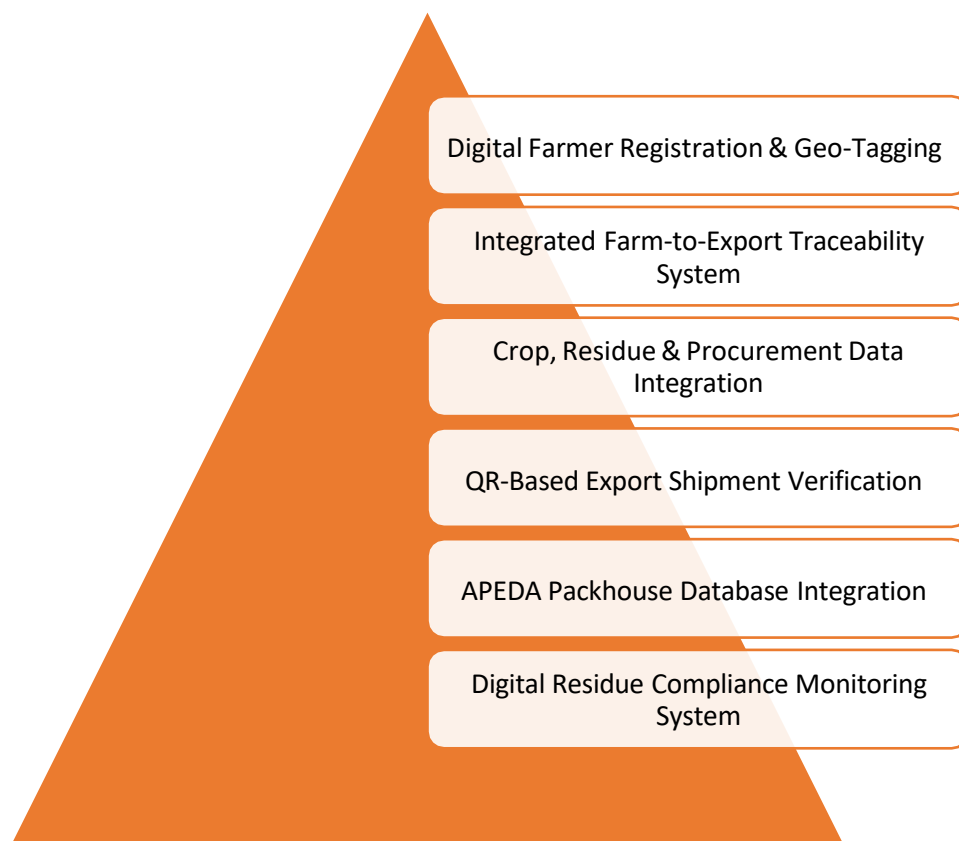
2.3 Development of Digital Traceability and Farmer Registration Systems

Under the Government of India SOP for export of vegetables to the European Union, farmer registration with the State Horticulture Department is mandatory to ensure backward traceability and export compliance.

However, a substantial number of export-oriented growers in West Bengal remain outside the formal registration system, limiting export eligibility for regulated international markets.

The absence of integrated traceability systems affects:

- shipment verification,
- exporter compliance documentation,
- buyer assurance,
- EU market access.



Recommendations

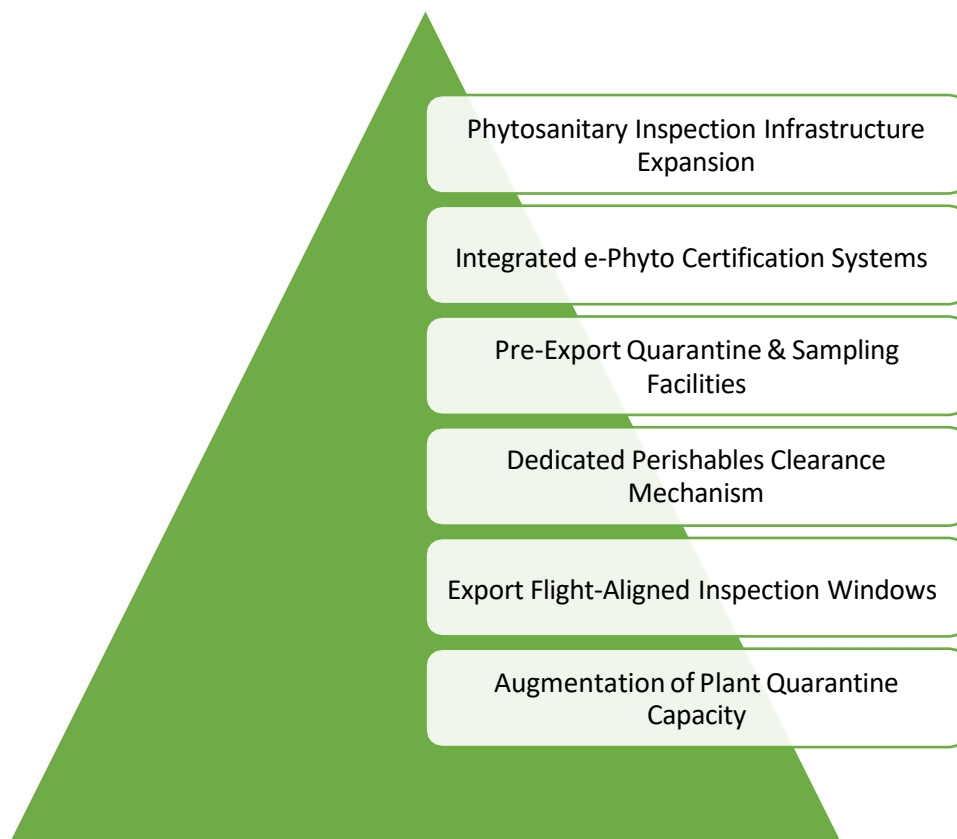
2.4 Strengthening Phytosanitary Certification Infrastructure

Exports of green chillies, green papaya, and other fresh horticultural products require phytosanitary certification and plant quarantine clearance prior to shipment to regulated international markets.

At present, inadequate inspection infrastructure and certification delays continue to affect perishables exports from the state.

For fresh produce exports, cargo dwell time directly impacts:

- shelf life,
- product quality,
- rejection risk,
- export competitiveness.



Recommendations

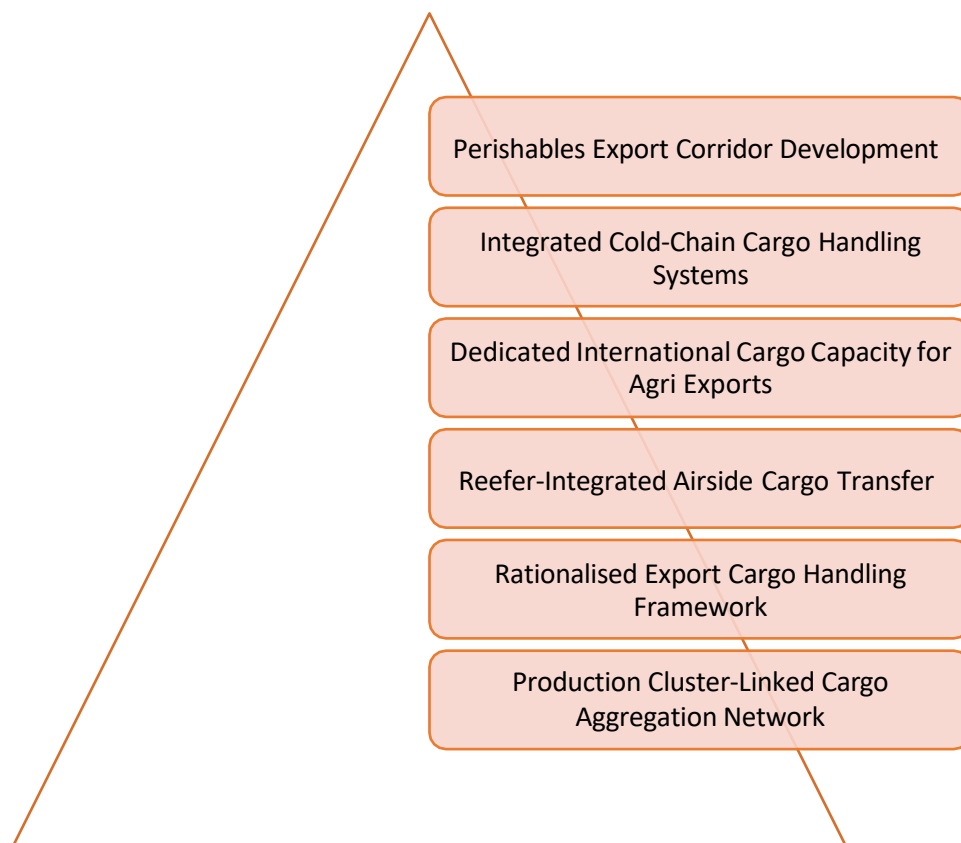
2.5 Expansion of International Air Cargo Connectivity for Perishables

Limited direct international cargo connectivity from Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport continues to increase logistics costs and transit duration for perishables exports from the state.

A significant portion of export cargo is routed through other metropolitan hubs, resulting in:

- increased cargo dwell time,
- higher reefer dependency costs,
- multiple cargo handling points,
- higher spoilage and thermal exposure risks.

This is particularly affecting exports to Europe and Middle Eastern destinations where rapid cargo movement is critical for fresh produce.



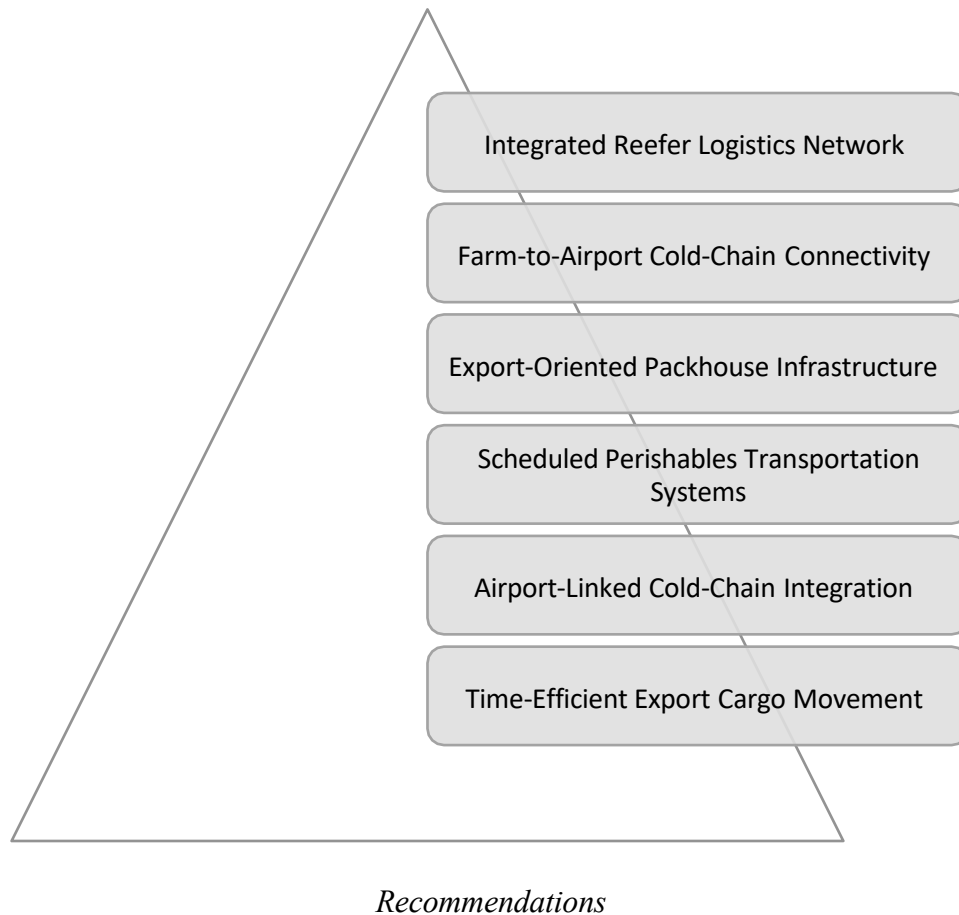
Recommendations

2.6 Development of Integrated Reefer and Export Logistics Corridors

Cold-chain fragmentation between farm clusters, packhouses, cargo terminals, and export gateways continues to affect export-grade handling of horticultural commodities from the state.

Inadequate reefer-linked logistics systems result in:

- temperature breaks during transit,
- deterioration in produce quality,
- reduced shelf life,
- higher post-harvest losses.



2.7 GI Recognition and Export Positioning for Bangla Paan

Bangla Paan or betel leaves from West Bengal possess significant export potential owing to their distinctive taste profile, aroma, and comparatively longer shelf life. However, absence of Geographical Indication (GI) recognition limits international branding and premium positioning in export markets.



Recommendations

3. CONCLUSION

The BCC&I team has prepared this recommendation report in consultation with its industry stakeholders. The main objective is to present its understanding of the crucial requirements for enhancing the export competitiveness of West Bengal's Agri-Horti Sector before the newly elected Government. The Chamber would be honoured to have the opportunity to work with the new Government towards its endeavour for a more export-oriented, globally competitive and value-driven Agri-Horti Sector in West Bengal.

