Economic Importance of Sunflower

- Sunflower is grown in India as an ornamental plant since ancient time. But as an oilseed crop, it was introduced in 1969 only. Commercial cultivation of this in India was started in 1972 in few hectares land in southern states. Because of the certain qualities, sunflower becomes popular even in northern states also.

The favorable features for the phenomenal growth of sunflower in India are

1. Wide adoptability to range of agro climatic conditions and soil types
2. Photoperiod insensivity overcoming seasonal variations
3. Short duration (70-100 days)
4. High yield potential of seed and oil
5. High quality edible oil (high PUFA content)
6. High seed multiplication ratio (>1:80)
7. Easier and cheaper cultivation of the crop (low seed rate, no specialized operations, low water requirement)
8. Remunerative market price
9. Non branched determinate plant type with single head

From Sl No. 1 to 3: Makes the crop to fit in to many cropping systems and forms the best candidate for contingency planning. 4 to 8: Makes the crop to replace the less remunerative and low productive crops. 9: Provides future prospects for the crop for mechanized farming

- Sunflower contains 40 to 44% of good quality oil and high amount of quality protein in cake
- The oil of sunflower is yellow in colour and possess good odour which can be used as cooking oil
- The oil is also used in the manufacture of hydrogenated oil
- Sunflower oil is considered as premium because of its high PUFA (Poly Unsaturated Fatty Acid) content with high level of linoleic acid and absence of linolenic acid. Because of this, its use in diet reduces the level of blood
cholesterol, a factor which is responsible for the incidence of coronary heart disease

- Sunflower oil is used to some extent in certain paints, varnishes and plastics because of good semi drying properties. This is also used in the manufacture of soaps and detergents
- Sunflower meal is used as an animal food protein concentrate
- Sunflower hulls are used as roughage in animal food and as a fuel
- Hulls are also used in making insulation board and also as litter for livestock.
- Oilcake is used in manufacture of baby foods
- The sunflower kernels can be eaten raw or roasted