



Madurai Malli. Pic: APEDA

**Tamil Nadu**

## Madurai's jasmine spreads its fragrance abroad

3 mins read

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Jasmine from Madurai, celebrated by the Tamil community as 'Madurai Malli' and highly rated for its mesmerising fragrance, is going global.

In fact, Madurai has emerged as the jasmine (*Jasminum Officinale*) capital of India – its fragrance as popular as the Meenakshi Amman temple.

The scent of this premium variety of 'Malligai' flower has now spread as far as the US, with GI (Geographical Indication) certification to boot. Backed by the Union Government's plan to boost floriculture exports, a consignment of 'Madurai Malli' took off on Thursday (July 8) and will adorn the shelves of flower markets in the United States of America and very soon in Dubai.

'Malligai' flower and its fragrance have been an integral part of Tamil literature and movies, but somehow it failed to get recognition outside Tamil Nadu – unlike silk sarees of Kanchipuram or breakfast favourites like idli and dosa that are immediately identified with Tamil culture. Therefore, Agriculture and Processed Food Export Development Authority (APEDA) included jasmine from Madurai region as a prominent floriculture product and is encouraging its export by offering a slew of incentives to growers.



## Challenges in exports

Unlike export of software or manufactured goods like Tirupur ready-made garments, shipping of floriculture products is a different kettle of fish. Keeping the flowers fresh on way to the destination is a challenge because they are highly perishable. Jasmine and other delicate flowers have to be air-freighted for quick transport.

The global market for flowers is dominated by roses, with high demand during Valentine's Day. Other flowers are mostly used in making bouquets. At present, flowers like 'Madurai Malli' fall in the niche category and find demand only in specific markets as their consumption is limited to certain communities.

Apart from jasmine, APEDA has been encouraging export of button rose, lily, chamanthi and marigold from Tamil Nadu. Vanguard Exports, a Coimbatore-based firm registered with the APEDA, have already shipped several consignments of these flowers. The flowers were sourced from Nilakottai, Dindigul and Sathyamangalam, the Commerce & Industry Ministry said in a statement recently.

## Growers get support in packaging and export

Professors from the floriculture department of Tamil Nadu Agriculture University (TNAU) in Coimbatore have provided assistance by introducing advanced packaging technology to growers and exporters. Adoption of correct packaging technology has helped increase the shelf life of flowers. Good packaging will definitely help take these highly-perishable flowers to far away destination markets.

There have been recent examples of exporters working directly with growers to cultivate quality flowers which provided employment for about 130 women workers and 30 skilled workers. This also helped in harvesting desired quality flowers in accordance with export requirements, especially for longer shelf life.

## Prospective customers abroad

The Commerce & Industry Ministry thinks that Indians living abroad would be prime customers for these fresh flowers that are used during festivals at home and on a regular basis at temples.

The Indian community in Dubai and the USA would be able to source these fresh flowers that find a special place in religious and cultural festivals once regular exports begin, the Ministry said.

During 2020-2021, fresh cut flowers, jasmine and bouquets (consisting of jasmine and other traditional flowers) valued at Rs 66.28 crore were exported to countries like USA, UAE, Singapore. Out of this, exports worth Rs 11.84 crore were from Tamil Nadu – shipped through Chennai, Coimbatore and Madurai airports.

