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ANALYSIS OF THE MORPHOLOGICAL AND BIOLOGICAL FEATURES OF TOMATO (SOLANUM LYCOPERSICUM) AND ITS ROLE IN AGRICULTURE

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Abstract
Tomato (Solanum lycopersicum) is one of the most important agricultural crops globally, cultivated worldwide. The fruit is characterized by a high content of biologically active compounds, such as lycopene, β-carotene, vitamin C, and others. This article discusses the botanical characteristics of tomato, its morphological and biological features, and evaluates its role in agriculture.

Keywords: Tomato, genus Solanum, family Solanaceae, Solanum lycopersicum, biological features of tomato, disease resistance, agriculture.

Introduction

Tomato (Solanum lycopersicum) is one of the most widely cultivated vegetable crops, playing a key role in both the food industry and agriculture. This product is of great importance not only for human health but also for addressing environmental issues in agriculture. The morphological and biological features determine not only the success of their cultivation but also their impact on food security and the economic development of countries. The challenge lies in the need for a deep understanding of these characteristics to optimize agronomic practices and increase yields, which is becoming particularly relevant in the context of global climate change and growing food demand.

Morphological and biological features of tomato. Tomato belongs to the Solanaceae family, which also includes plants such as potato, eggplant, and pepper. Its native region is South America, where it began to be cultivated in the territories of present-day Peru and Ecuador. The tomato was introduced to Europe in the 16th century after the discovery of the Americas. Tomato is an annual herbaceous plant

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that can take various growth forms, from bushy to vine-like. Depending on the variety and growing conditions, its height can range from 30 cm to 2 meters. The leaves are large, alternate, and have a serrated edge. Tomato flowers are yellow and are gathered in inflorescences. The fruit is a fleshy berry, which can vary in color from red to yellow, green, or even black.

Root system: Tomatoes have a fibrous root system consisting of numerous thin roots that develop from the cotyledons. The roots of tomatoes grow rapidly in loose, fertile soil, facilitating good absorption of water and nutrients.

Stem: The tomato stem is often hollow, and depending on the variety, it can be either erect or climbing. It is covered with stiff hairs that can serve a protective function. Some varieties require staking due to the weak strength of the stem.

Leaves: Tomato leaves are compound, pinnately divided, with serrated edges. They may be covered with short hairs, which help protect the plant from excessive evaporation and pests.

Flowers and fruit: Tomatoes bloom with small yellow flowers gathered in clusters. The flowers have five petals and are hermaphroditic. After pollination, fruits form, which, depending on the variety, can be red, yellow, orange, or even black. The fruit is a multi-seed berry.

Fruit and its development: Tomato fruits begin to ripen a few weeks after pollination, changing from green to yellow or red, depending on the variety. Tomatoes contain a large amount of water, vitamins, especially vitamin C, and carotenoids such as lycopene.

Biological features climate requirements: Tomatoes are a warm-loving plant that requires temperatures between 20°C and 30°C for normal growth. Frost can damage the plant. They are also demanding on sunlight, requiring 6–8 hours of direct sunlight per day.

Light regime: Tomatoes are photoperiodic plants, meaning their growth and development can depend on the duration of day and night. It is important to ensure an optimal light regime, especially in greenhouses.

Watering and soil: Tomatoes require regular watering, especially during fruiting. The soil should be light, well-drained, with a neutral or slightly acidic reaction. Overwatering can lead to root diseases.

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Pollination: Most tomato varieties are self-pollinating, but additional pollination is recommended to increase yields. In open fields, pollination occurs through wind and insects, while in greenhouses, mechanical pollination is often used.
Disease resistance: Tomatoes can be susceptible to various diseases, such as late blight, powdery mildew, and bacterial spots. They are also affected by pests such as aphids and spider mites.
Growing conditions: Tomato is a warm-loving plant that requires moderate climate conditions for growth. The optimal temperature for growth and development is 18–25°C. For good fruiting, long sunlight exposure is necessary. Additionally, the soil must be well-drained and fertile, with a pH generally between 6 and 6.8.
Physiological features: Tomato has developed photosynthetic mechanisms that allow it to effectively use solar energy for the synthesis of substances. Its root system adapts to different soil conditions, ensuring drought resistance. However, regular irrigation is required to obtain high yields. Tomatoes can be either self-pollinating or cross-pollinated, which makes them more flexible in stable ecosystems.
Fruit composition: Tomato fruits contain a large amount of biologically active substances, including vitamins (A, C, E, K, B vitamins), minerals (potassium, magnesium, phosphorus), organic acids, and antioxidants, particularly lycopene. Lycopene is known for its antioxidant properties and is actively studied in modern strategies for cardiovascular diseases and cancer.

Importance of tomatoes in agriculture.
Economic value: Tomato occupies one of the leading positions among vegetable crops. According to data, more than 182 million tons of tomatoes are produced annually, making it a key product for global markets. Tomato products, including fresh fruits, juices, sauces, pastes, and canned goods, are consistently in demand on all continents.
Nutritional value: Tomatoes are an important source of vitamins and minerals, making them a key component of healthy diets. They are used in a variety of culinary dishes, including salads, soups, sauces, and side dishes.
Agricultural practices: Growing tomatoes requires the use of intensive technologies such as fertilization, pest and disease control, as well as various plant protection

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methods (greenhouse covering, drip irrigation systems). These practices ensure high yields and reduce disease risks.

Yield: Tomatoes can be grown both in open fields and greenhouses, which allows for an extended growing season and harvesting in moderate climates. To ensure year-round production, many farmers use greenhouse technologies.

Environmental significance: Tomatoes play a key role in agricultural sustainability, including maintaining soil biodiversity and regulating carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere. Plants such as tomatoes can be part of eco-friendly agronomic technologies aimed at protecting the environment and increasing agricultural productivity.

Breeding and variety improvement: Recently, much attention has been given to developing tomato varieties resistant to diseases, pests, and adverse climatic conditions. Breeders are also working on improving taste qualities and increasing yields.

Conclusion

Tomato is an important agricultural crop that plays a key role in ensuring food security and the economy. In Uzbekistan, it is not only a major product for the domestic market but also holds leading positions in the global market. Scientific achievements in agronomy, biotechnology, and genetics open new horizons for maintaining the sustainability and productivity of tomatoes, as well as supporting the agricultural economy in changing climatic conditions.

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