

## Saffron: The Golden Crop of High Value and Rich Tradition

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### Abstract

Saffron (*Crocus sativus L.*) is an autumnal flowering plant valued for dried stigmas are well known for their aromatic and colouring power. It possesses a number of medicinally important activities and helpful in controlling various diseases. Saffron has a reverse biological cycle compared with the majority of cultivated plants: flowering first in October-November, then vegetative development until May, which means that the vegetative development is not directly important for the production of stigmas, but for the production of new corms. Due to its unique biological, physiological and agronomic traits, saffron is able to exploit marginal land and to be included in low-input cropping systems, representing an important and alternative viable crop for sustainable agriculture. The essential features on which the quality of saffron depends are colour, taste and aroma of the stigma.



**Keywords:** Saffron, chemical constituents, yields, quality, sustainability

### Introduction

Saffron (*Crocus sativus L.*) belongs to the family of Iridaceae and to the genus *Crocus*, which includes about 80 species. Saffron is a geophyte herbaceous plant, whose stigmas have been used from ancient times as a spice in food, as a dye, in perfume. Saffron is one of the most precious and expensive spices in the world, often referred to as red gold due to its labour intensive cultivation and numerous application.

### Cultivation

Saffron is primarily cultivated in regions with dry climates, cold winters, and warm springs. Major saffron producing countries include Iran, India, Spain and Greece. The spice is obtained from the stigmas of the flower, which are painstakingly handpicked. Each flower has three stigmas.

### Growing Condition

Saffron thrives in well-drained soil and requires a semi-arid climate.

### Nutrition

Dried saffron is 65% carbohydrates, 6% fat, 11% protein and 12% water.

### Storage

Saffron will not spoil, but will lose flavor within six months if not stored in an airtight, cool and dark place. Freezer storage can maintain flavor for up to two years.