

SPICES AND CASHEWNUT DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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[Only Cashew and Pepper are dealt with elaborately in this article - Ed.]

During the last quarter century, the value and importance of pepper, cardamom, ginger, turmeric, cashewnut and lemon grass as cash crops and dollar earners of India, have been steadily on the increase. In 1951, the Planning Commission in India brought to the notice of the Ministry of Food & Agriculture that the attention paid to the development of these very important dollar earning crops of South India was very inadequate. Accordingly, the Ministry of Food & Agriculture constituted a high level committee, known as the Spices Enquiry Committee, to enquire and obtain basic information needed for a study of the situation with a view to considering what specific measures are necessary for developing the production and marketing of these agricultural products of India.

This Committee toured the important areas in India where these crops were produced and made a preliminary survey and study of the problems connected with the scientific organisation and development of the production and marketing of these commodities. The Committee received evidence from leading agriculturists, traders, representatives of co-operative societies and Government officials of these areas. As a result, the Committee observed a general sense of awareness on the part of the growers and others of the importance of these commodities and the fact that these cash crops which have assumed very great importance in the economy of the country had not received the attention it deserved and that there had not been any organised efforts to improve the production and marketing of these commodities as is being done in regard to tea, coffee, and rubber. The pressing need for better planning, more agricultural research and co-ordinated efforts in the proper development of these crops as measures which should substantially increase production and result in financial gains to growers and the

Governments concerned alike, were pointedly brought to the notice of the Committee.

The Spices Enquiry Committee submitted its report to the Government of India in October 1953. The Government accepted the recommendations of the Committee and made suitable allotments of funds for the establishment of various schemes for research, development and the marketing of spices and cashewnut in all the regions of India where they were and could be grown, and entrusted this work to the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

Central Spices & Cashewnut Committee Constituted

The Spices Enquiry Committee was dissolved immediately after the submission of its report. However, to assist the Indian Council of Agricultural Research in the implementation of the Committee's recommendations, a Central Spices and Cashewnut Committee consisting of Government officials and representatives of producers and traders of these commodities in the concerned States was constituted by the Central Government. This Committee is responsible for assisting the Indian Council of Agricultural Research in the work of planning and co-ordinating research and development of spices and cashewnut in India. This Committee met for the first time at Trivandrum in March 1956 and discussed various schemes and sanctioned their working. An Officer on Special Duty (Spices) has also been appointed for the same purpose with his headquarters at Ernakulam, the centre of the most important spices and cashewnut producing area in India.

The Madras State has marched ahead of others in the matter of research on spices and cashewnut and had started with the aid of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, research schemes on cardamom, pepper, ginger and cashewnut crops as early as 1944, 1950 and 1953 respectively.

Since the acceptance by the Government of India of the recommendations of the Spices Enquiry Committee, a number of research and development schemes on spices and cashewnut are now being started in various States of India with the assistance of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research and the Central Government.

PEPPER

Although South West India was the original home of the pepper vine and the crop has been in cultivation here from very ancient times, India's production of pepper has not kept pace with the increase in the world demand for the produce during the post-war period. When the pepper industry became a Dutch monopoly in Indonesia and other islands of the East Indies in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the industry in India was on the decline chiefly because this industry on the west coast of India was never on an organised scientific basis. The great post-war demand for pepper from the U. S. A. and the U. K. and the consequent phenomenal increase in the price of pepper in India was mainly due to the neglect and destruction of the Indonesian pepper gardens during the Japanese occupation of these islands. However, by 1954 Indonesia had brought back her pepper production to the pre-war level. India has, therefore, to strive hard now to develop her pepper production and trade on sound scientific basis to be able to compete successfully with other pepper producing countries of the world.

Research Schemes Under Operation

The Madras Government, realising the great importance of the crop to this country as a cash crop and dollar earner, started in 1950, with the assistance of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, a scheme of research on pepper and established a Pepper Research Station at Panniyur, near Taliparamba in North Malabar. Research on the testing of varieties, propagation, manurial and

cultural practices, breeding and control of diseases and pests of this crop is under way at this Station. Very useful work on the propagation and methods of cultivation of pepper which will be of the greatest importance in the development of this crop has been done at this Station. In pursuance of the recommendations of the Spices Enquiry Committee, a pilot scheme, fully financed by the Government of India, for the development of pepper cultivation in Malabar was started in 1955 with Cannanore, North Malabar, as headquarters and is under operation now. The main objects of such pepper development schemes in areas already growing the crop are; (1) Propaganda on intensive cultivation of the existing pepper plantations by regular manuring and regulation of shade as well as by taking proper steps to prevent soil erosion; (2) Replacing the vines that die periodically in pepper gardens and plantation as well as old and unthrifty vines in the existing gardens with selected superior vines; (3) Planting superior vines to all suitable trees in homestead gardens and all other suitable areas; (4) Establishing a net work of pepper nurseries in the pepper growing areas; (5) Distribution of rooted and unrooted cuttings of selected superior vines suited to each locality in nurseries; (6) Collection and distribution of seeds of *Erythrina indica* and other standard trees as well as seeds of cover crops for the pepper gardens.

The scope and jurisdiction of the Cannanore project is being extended to cover the entire Kerala State.

Cultivation to Develop in Other States

Possibilities of developing pepper cultivation in Kerala, Mysore, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam and Andaman & Nicobar Islands are under investigation. Wherever possible in these states pepper development schemes will be started. In order to encourage the development of pepper cultivation the Government of India and the State Governments are taking active steps to aid the growers by granting long-term loans, special lease rights, establishing a chain of nurseries for supply of seed and plant material, technical advice, etc. The valleys and hills of Assam are suitable for pepper cultivation. The Agriculture Department as well as the Demonstration Farms of the Shifting Cultivation Control Scheme of this State have started work on the development of pepper cultivation in the State. Pepper varieties introduced from South

West India into Assam are growing satisfactorily. There is every indication of Assam becoming a major pepper producing State in India. The new Kerala State is the major pepper producing State of India, producing nearly 92 per cent of the pepper produced in India at present. It is also proposed to increase, through development schemes, the production of pepper in India by another 40 per cent bringing it to a total of 36,000 tons.

Besides the research scheme now being worked out with Cannanore as the centre, another research scheme for the Travancore-Cochin area of the Kerala State has been sanctioned by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. Under this scheme a station will start working immediately at Thodupuzha in the centre of the pepper growing belt of Travancore-Cochin area. A Pepper Research Station sanctioned by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research for Assam has also started work near Jorhat in Upper Assam.

As a result of research work at the pepper research stations and the work done under the development schemes, it is hoped to achieve the target of production in the next ten years and organise pepper production in India on a very sound scientific basis.

CASHEW NUT

The manufacture of cashew kernels as an industry in India began only about 25 years ago. With growing demand for cashew kernels in the world markets the commercial importance of this industry was realised. With an annual production of about 60,000 tons of raw nuts India is the largest producer in the world. Moreover, nearly 90 per cent of the international trade in cashew kernels and cashew shell oil is in Indian hands. The chief buyers of cashew products are U. S. A. and the U. K., to whom nearly 75 per cent of the Indian produce is exported.

There has been a rapid increase in the production of cashew kernels from 50 tons in 1925 to 27,897 tons in 1952-53, valued at Rs. 12.9 crores and to 33,444 tons in 1954-55 valued at Rs. 10.5 crores. The cashew shell oil exports account for an additional income of over Rs. 60 lakhs a year. The cashewnut has thus come to occupy an important position in the foreign trade of India being comparable only to the other dollar earning crops like tea

and pepper.

Although India leads other countries in cashewnut production, she is not self-sufficient in her requirements of raw nuts. The present production of about 60,000 tons of raw nuts is sufficient to feed the Indian cashewnut factories only for five to six months in the year, necessitating imports of almost an equal quantity of nuts from East Africa. In 1954-55 India imported 85,000 tons of raw nuts valued at Rs. 4.25 crores. It is, therefore, imperative that the Indian production should at least be trebled to retain for her the dominant position in the world market.

Cashewnut is chiefly grown in the coastal districts of India and nearly 70 per cent of the production is from the West coast between Bombay and Cape Comorin. Ratnagiri, North Kanara District of Bombay state, South Kanara (part) in the Mysore state and South Kanara (part) Malabar and Travancore-Cochin in the new Kerala State Tiruchirapalli, Tanjore and South Arcot Districts in the Madras State, Nellore, Guntur, Godavari and Visakhapatnam Districts in the Andhra State are the major cashew producing areas.

Centre Takes Measures to Increase Production

As the pressing problem with regard to cashewnut industry in India today is to increase its production to the required level, the Govt. of India, through the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, has now taken up the task of improving cultivation methods and increasing the production of the commodity in India by working research and development schemes on the crop.

Research Centres

In pursuance of the recommendations of the Spices enquiry Committee, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research has established five research centres for work on cashewnut, one at Ullal in South Kanara, Mysore State, the others at Kattakara in Kerala, Ratnagiri in Bombay, Bapatla in Andhra, and near Jorhat in Upper Assam. The first three stations have been under operation for the last three years and the last two for an year. Research on the testing of varieties and types in a comprehensive collection for the determination of the tree-features that ensure maximum crop returns, suitable methods for large

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scale multiplication, the suitable season for propagation, cultural and manurial practices and control of pests and diseases of this crop, is under way in all these stations. Very useful work on the propagation of the cashew tree which will be of the greatest importance in cashew cultivation and development work has been done at the central Cashewnut Research Station at Ullal, South Kanara.

Development Schemes

Schemes for the development of cashewnut cultivation have already been sanctioned for Madhya Bharat and Kerala and a scheme for Madras State is under consideration. The Madhya Bharat scheme has just started working and is expected to form the nucleus of cashewnut development work in the new Madhya Pradesh.

Two big development schemes for the cultivation of cashewnut in forest land, over 40,000 acres in the east coast districts of the Madras State and 20,000 acres in the Kerala State have just now been sanctioned for the Second Five-Year Plan. These two schemes are being worked by the Forest Departments of the two states. Under these schemes, cashew cultivation will be done on a plantation scale in forest lands by the Government, and in small holdings by landholders. Land may also be leased to cultivators for cashewnut production on long term basis and on very favourable conditions. Financial assistance will also be given to prospective cashew growers for the capital outlay in the form of loans up to Rs. 150/- per acre.

Schemes for cashewnut development in the new Mysore State, Orissa, West Bengal and Andaman & Nicobar Islands are also under consideration. There is very great scope for the development of cashewnut in the Kanara area of the new Mysore State. In Assam, under the Shifting Cultivation Control Schemes in tribal areas, cashew growing is also under demonstration in different Demonstration Farms and it is expected that large areas in Assam will be brought under cultivation of this crop. Through

all these development schemes, it is proposed to ~~bring up~~ production of cashewnut in India from the present 1,000 tons to 1,06,000 tons in the next five years.

Cashew Shell Liquid

Production of cashew shell liquid is a part of the cashewnut industry of India. Of the 8000 tons of cashew shell liquid produced at present in the world, 5,500 tons are produced in India. The extraction of this liquid needs great improvement so as to get maximum quantity in as pure a form as possible. The entire quantity of cashew shell liquid produced in India at present is exported; but its use in the country is also gradually increasing. Steps are necessary to improve the methods of extracting cashew shell liquid as a side industry. Attention is also being paid to this aspect of the industry.

Export Promotion

At the instance of the Spices Enquiry Committee, the Government of India has established an Export Promotion Council for pepper and cashewnut at Cochin, the chief port of export of these commodities from India. This Council is actively working to promote the export of pepper and cashewnut from India to all foreign countries which require them, by suitable propaganda and all other possible means. It seems desirable that commodities like ginger, turmeric, lemon grass oil and other spices are also brought under the purview of this Export Promotion Council.

By the re-organisation of States, the Kerala state has become the largest and the most important spices and cashewnut producing state of India, producing at present 92 per cent of pepper produced in India, 80 per cent of cashewnut, 62 per cent of cardamom and 95 per cent each of exportable ginger and lemon grass oil. There is vast scope for further development of all these industries in the Kerala and the above mentioned states of India.
