

PROTECTING CASHEW PLANTATION FARMERS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF CASHEW INDUSTRY IN GOA

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Abstract

Goa, one of the favourite international destination sites for most of the tourist is struggling to come back on its track after the second wave of covid with major setback to the back bones of its economy VIZ Tourism and Mining. They have literally come to a standstill due to pandemic. However, the Goa's heritage drinks the Cashew feni and the king of nuts the cashew nuts are still able to keep the Goan's faith in God as Goan farmers are dependent on these two products as they provide a two-pronged source of income from cashew industry. The writer through this paper tries to highlight the problems faced by the cashew farmers in Goa and importance of these two products from cashew industry not only during pandemic and how they were able to maintain the economy even during pandemic crises but also how these two international products can make backbone of Goa's economy for sustenance of Goa and therefore why Government has to take initiative to support these cashew growing farmers in increasing area under cultivation and also providing them various schemes & subsidies for sustainable growth of cashew industry. Cashew Feni, a triple distilled spirit and a heritage liquor of Goa, accounts for barely 2 per cent of the total revenue collected by the excise department in the state. But for distillers, particularly the smaller farmers, it is a key source of income. cashew feni can last for up to 10 years. As it gets older, its price increases, thereby increasing the profits for the manufacturers. It is like a fixed deposit for farmers who can afford to wait.

India is the largest producer, processor, consumer and exporter of cashew in the world. The current Cashewnut production in India accounts for 45 per cent of the global production. India being the leader in the world in raw Cashew nut production and is also the largest supplier of cashew kernels to the major world markets. Cashew cultivation plays a significant role in the economy of Goa. Goa stands in sixth position both in area and production in India in 2017 however, the cashew productivity is much lower than the all-other cashew producing states in India. Growth rates in area, production and productivity of Cashewnut in Goa state and for all India. Goa state recorded Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 0.25 per cent and at all India level CAGR was 2.29 per cent. In Goa, a decreasing growth rate was observed for the area under cashew nut (-0.43 per cent). The productivity of cashew in India as a whole was growing at the rate of 0.71 per cent per annum, while in Goa productivity was decreasing at the rate of -0.69 per cent per annum. To strengthen cashew exports, there is scope for increasing production by developing cashew as plantation crop on commercial basis, exploring new markets, and strengthening non-traditional markets, adding value to the product by introducing innovations in processing and branding them.

Keywords: Distillation, GI(Geographical Indication), Tourism, Mining, Productivity

INTRODUCTION

Cashew (*Anacardium Occidentale L.*), native of Brazil, was introduced to India and Goa by the Portuguese about five centuries ago for controlling coastal erosion. India ranks third in the world production of cashewnut and The productivity of cashew trees in Goa is 430 kg / ha which is less than the national average of 748 kg/ ha. It is grown in Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, and Maharashtra along the West coast and Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal, occupies an area of 10.30 lakh hectares in the country with a production of 9.98 lakh metric tonnes. Cashew tree produces nuts and apples and both of which have export potential after processing.

The villages of Goa, predominantly in the hilly areas of western ghats (Biodiversity hot Spot) in four talukas VIZ , Canacona, Pernem, Sanguem and Dharbandoda have cashew plantations with feni distillers. These farmers yearly budget is totally dependent on selling of these raw cashewnuts and feni. Cashew feni is a triple-distilled spirit. There are farmers whose production of feni ranges from 1 to 100 cubic meters of feni in one season. The process of feni-making begins in the first week of March when the cashew apples start ripening and goes on till the end of May before the arrival of monsoon in Goa. Feni distillation is an intrinsic part of Goa culture , and is probably India's best known local liquor. The people of Goa, may it old or young are involved in the whole process of collecting the naturally fallen cashew apples, extracting its juice by manually or by using machine, fermenting the juice for about 3-4 days and then distilling it in a big copper vessel to obtain Urrak in the first round and the same urrak is distilled to obtain feni in the second round. Locals also claim it has medicinal properties, and recommend it for stomach problems and throat infections. The price of cashew feni is also speculated on the fruiting season. The feni selling market is not organised. Locals tend to buy feni directly from the thousands of traditional distillers who run seasonal mini-distilleries or stalls in the villages of Goa. A large volume of feni that is distilled is sold directly by distillers to taverns who have business relationships that extend over generations. It brings economy to farmers that help them to pay wages of skilled workers and cover some of the expenses incurred on sprucing up the distilling facilities Goan feni is a famous drink that tourists are keen to try out and take nostalgic memories before leaving Goa as it is the identity of Goa.

The skill of feni-making had been passed from generation to generation and was a cultural and culinary tradition for Goan's. The businesses are small and self-financed. Due to the smaller distilleries being family-owned, there are different production techniques, different distillers' practice, which gives different varieties of feni a flavour and character that are uniquely their own. The product testing mechanisms vary across the villages. A lot of the labour is dependent on the feni industry for their livelihood. About 40,000 people are employed across 4000 mini-distilleries/stills and about 1 million bottled litres of cashew feni is made on an average per season.

Due to lockdown of second wave of pandemic in April 2021 many farmers were Unable to distill the cashew juice into urrak and feni as they found it uneconomical to collect the fruit due to shortage of labours as migrant labourers promptly left for their homes near the border areas, fearing they could be stuck endlessly during the lockdown that they experienced during first wave of pandemic.

The growth of area under cashew nut was found to be highest in Orissa (4.80 %) followed by Kerala (3.51 %), Karnataka (1.93 %), Maharashtra (1.49 %), Tamil Nadu (1.33 %) and Goa (0.86 %), whereas the cashew nut production growth was highest in Karnataka (5.70 %) followed by West Bengal (2.60 %), Goa (2.40 %), Maharashtra (1.90 %) and Kerala (1.80 %).It was observed

from research study that the area under Cashewnut in Goa recorded 0.25 per cent Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) and at all India level, a significant growth of 2.29 per cent was observed. In Goa, a decreasing growth rate was observed for the area under cashew nut (-0.43 per cent). The productivity growth of cashew nut in India was 0.71 per cent, while in Goa state, negative growth (-0.69 per cent) per annum was observed.

The major impact of the bestowing GI status to feni is that some large distilleries have entered into the feni business. The skilled labourers who were involved in traditional feni making are gradually taking up employment in these distilleries. Hence, there is a shortage of skilled labour for local brewers who operate in their cashew plantations themselves. It is difficult and costly affair for the local farmer to hire worker for a season train him & pay his wages.

The recent research shows that feni production has significantly declined from over a million litres in 1971 to 875,000 litres in 2014 although the liquor market in the country has been growing at increasing rates and the number of licensed stills has been decreased in Goa over the last couple of decades. But the negative impact on feni is due to the fact that it still remains classified as country liquor, in spite of being given the GI status in 2009. which means that it cannot be sold outside the state of Goa, forcing manufacturers and distillers to lose a potentially large market across the country. So it is high time that, Goa Government should take a decision in the interest of farmers in particular & Goa in general if the cashew industry has an export potential especially in this pandemic, where the two Goa's strongest backbones i.e. Mining and Tourism are in standstill. The Cashew industry has power to support Goa during this pandemic crisis.

Cashew nut shell liquid (CNSL) is a by-product of the cashew industry having tremendous export potential. In spite of this potential, CNSL still continues to be burnt as crude fuel in the local manufacturing units. As per the extraction statistics, the CNSL comprises one per cent of the weight of roasted shells and more than three per cent of the weight of steamed shells, though the volume of foreign exchange brought in by the CNSL is poor compared to that brought in by the kernels. The demand for CNSL remains much higher than kernels, especially from abroad, Because of its heat resistant and anti-corrosive nature, the CNSL is largely used in the paint industry and at some stage in rockets and also used in brake lining. At present, India has the capacity to export around 7,000 metric tons of CNSL and Each metric ton brings in foreign exchange worth Rs.10, 000. India exports CNSL to U.S.A., Japan and South Korea from India.

PROBLEMS FACED BY THE CASHEW FARMERS IN GOA

Majority of the farmers having cashew plantations are of old age and are practicing it as it was their family tradition. Majority of the farmers are following traditional methods of cultivation that resulted in low productivity and low production of cashewnuts. Poor market intelligence which was the major problem experienced by all the farmers, followed by Price fluctuation, Lack of storage facilities at production site. Non availability of water, good quality seedlings, high wages of labour, pest and disease attack, and lack of improved harvesting techniques were the major problem faced by farmer during production of cashewnuts.

SUGGESTIONS

Following are some of the suggestions made, for Protecting the cashew plantation farmers for sustainable development of cashew industry in Goa.

Efforts should be made to bring fallow and uncultivable lands under cashew plantation by providing financial support to the cashew growers by Department of Agriculture and Forest,

Govt.of Goa.

To enhance productivity as well as total production of cashew nuts, efforts should be made to create awareness among the farmers regarding new methods and techniques of cashew cultivation by timely providing good quality sampling and adoption of scientific methods of cultivation.

To overcome the problem of cashew stem borer efforts should be made by the Agriculture departments to advice the farmers to take appropriate control measures to save the plant by application of appropriate pesticide And also arrangements have to be made to supply stem borer resistant varieties.

Majority of the farmers sell raw cashewnuts directly to the traders at low prices, devoid of the opportunity of value addition to the cashewnut. The private processing units are enjoying the major share in the consumer's market. To improve the producers, share in the consumers rupee, efforts should be made to create awareness among the farmers to organize Farmer Producer Groups to take up processing of the cashew nuts in to cashew and cashew apple in to juice/ Urrak and Fenny, which not only increased the value addition to the cashew nut but also increase the producer share.

Cashewnut farmers are facing legal problem with regard to land property rights. Most of the cashew growers in general are facing the problems from the forest department, which results in disinterest in maintenance and management of the cashew plantations. Efforts should be made to define the land boundaries through Department of Land survey.

Majority of the farmers in Goa are considering the agriculture as the secondary occupation. As a result, they are not taking up appropriate scientific methods of cultivation in cashewnut plantation, which in turn reduced the yield and income of the farmers. Efforts should be made to advise the farmers by demonstrating scientific methods of cultivation to realize the yield and income potentiality of cashew plantation to double their farm income.

wide fluctuation in prices of cashew nuts is another major obstacle faced by the cashew growers to expand area under cashew plantations. Efforts should be made to announce Minimum Support Prices well in advance and initiate procurement operations to protect the interest of the farmers in respect of price fluctuations.

The scientists of ICAR Goa Complex have developed various cashew bye products. Efforts should be made to enhance the income of the cashew growers by popularizing and Commercializing of the products through various media.

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