

A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON CASHEW NUT PROCESSING TECHNOLOGIES IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

Cashew is one of the most important crops in Sri Lanka, concentrated in the dry regions, although a few trees can be seen cultivated in most of the districts. The main areas of cultivation are Puttalam, Batticaloa, Mannar, Vavuniya, Kilinochchi, Trincomalee, Jaffna, Kurunagala and Hambantota. It has high potential for growing in the dry areas of the Island due to its tolerance to moisture stress over a long period. According to the ministry cultivation Cashew has a value as an export crop but a large proportion of the production is consumed by the domestic market. The total extent of Cashew at present is about 32,873 ha producing a total of 6197 MT of nuts. The average annual kernel production is about 1200 MT of which over 1000 MT are locally consumed leaving only small quantities of about 147 MT for export. In comparison to the local production, India with its large extent of 683,000 ha produces 520,000 MT annually. The average production in India is 865 kg/ha compared to 250-300 kg/ha in Sri Lanka. India is also the largest grower and exporter of Cashew. In spite of its vast potential, Sri Lanka has not mobilised its resources to develop the Cashew industry.

Although the potential for expansion exists, very little effort has been made by the authorities to develop policies strategies and an operational frame work to develop the Cashew industry. At various deliberations on the development of the Cashew industry several constraints have been identified. Some of the major problems are lack of suitable high yielding clones, non availability of sufficient planting materials, lack of proper programme for management of pests and diseases, inadequate technical information on processing and value addition and high cost of production and marketing.

As far as the processing methodology of nuts is concern, traditional methods are widely used in Sri Lanka. However in Puttalam area semi-mechanised steps are introduced through SLCC. Improved techniques and mechanization process should be applied for further improvement on separation of nuts. For this purpose suitable technology can be transferred from other Cashew growing countries especially in India.

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In Sri Lanka, roasted shelling and raw shelling methods are widely practised. Primitive roasted shelling process specially observed in Batticaloa area. Here, there is no improvement on this primitive method. As a result, poor kernels are produced only for local consumption and there is no recovery of CNSL, this is valuable industrial oil and also used for medicinal purpose.

Improved method of roasted shelling process is not available in our country like India, due to small scale of cottage Cashew industries. However, in the case of raw shelling method, semi-mechanised processing steps are widely used in Puttalam and other areas of this country, where Sri Lanka produces quality kernels for export market.

In Sri Lanka fully mechanized processing steps are not available in both case of roasted and raw shelling methods.

Rate of Cashew nut production and the availability of mechanization will improve the Cashew industries of Sri Lanka. These efforts will fetch more foreign exchange and more employment opportunities to our country.

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