

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE

**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 4889**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 01<sup>ST</sup> APRIL, 2025

**DECLINE OF PEPPER CULTIVATION IN KERALA**

4889. DR. M P ABDUSSAMAD SAMADANI:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE कृषि एवं किसान कल्याण मंत्री be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is aware of the decline in pepper cultivation in Kerala;
- (b) the details of major reasons for this decline, including climate change, pests and low prices;
- (c) the details of impact of reduced pepper production on farmers' income and exports; and
- (d) the steps taken by the Government to support pepper farmers, including price stabilization, research and promotion of high-yielding varieties?

**ANSWER**

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE

कृषि एवं किसान कल्याण राज्य मंत्री (SHRI RAMNATH THAKUR)

(a): The area under pepper cultivation in Kerala has declined from 85,431 hectare in 2014-15 to 72,669 hectare in 2023-24. During the same period, pepper production also declined from 40,690 tonnes to 30,798 tonnes.

(b): The factors that were identified as the major reasons for the decline in pepper production in Kerala are as under:

- Incidence of pests, Pollu and diseases such as foot rot and slow decline, poses significant challenges in black pepper cultivation. In Kerala, the estimated yield reduction due to these factors ranges between 8% and 10%.
- The unprecedented flood situation faced by the State during 2018 and 2019 affected several crops including black pepper. The floods occurred at a time when the price of the commodity was low. This led to a lack of interest by farmers in the crop resulting in poor management and low yields. The low prices continued in the subsequent years till 2021-22 during which the area under black pepper declined further.
- Lack of sufficient soil and moisture conservation measures resulting in deterioration of soil nutrition and moisture.
- Fluctuation in pepper prices and incursion by other lucrative crops with better price.

(c): In Kerala, mainly observed cultivation system for pepper is an “extensive homestead cultivation” where pepper cultivation is taken up interspersed with several other crops. It is also cultivated as a mixed crop on shade trees in coffee plantations. In the mixed crop system, the farmer is supported by income from other crops. Further, pepper price trend in the past shows a cyclic pattern. The very long shelf-life of pepper provides farmers with the advantage of waiting for remunerative prices without going for the distress sale.

The export of black pepper has shown a fluctuating trend, mainly influenced by the availability of pepper in other producing countries and the price of Indian black pepper. Usually, the price of Indian black pepper is higher compared to that of other producing countries and finds its niche market where Indian pepper by virtue of its quality is preferred over the produce of other countries.

(d): Government of India, under MIDH, implements programmes through Kerala State Horticulture Mission to enhance production and productivity of horticulture crops including pepper. The major components among them are, distribution of quality planting materials, area expansion/establishment of new garden, rejuvenation and rehabilitation of senile gardens, promotion of IPM/INM, Post-harvest management, Development of market yards, Human Resource Development etc.

The Directorate of Arecanut and Spices Development (DASD), Kozhikode, DA&FW also directly implements certain critical programmes through Kerala Agricultural University and ICAR-Indian Institute of Spices Research (IISR), Kozhikode in the State.

The major programmes taken up by DASD for pepper are

- Production and Distribution of Quality Planting Materials.
- Setting up of hi-tech nurseries to ensure a steady supply of high-quality planting materials of spices including black pepper.
- Accreditation of black pepper nurseries in both the public and private sectors,
- Rehabilitation programme for Pepper Gardens.
- Supporting ICAR-Indian Institute of Spices Research for developing a scientific technique for varietal authentication of black pepper.

The ICAR-IISR, ICAR-All India Coordinated Research Project (AICRP) on Spices and Kerala Agriculture University (KAU) have successfully developed 21 high-yielding, disease-resistant black pepper varieties. These varieties currently occupy nearly 70% of India's black pepper production areas, significantly enhancing productivity.

The ICAR- IISR, Kozhikode, in collaboration with Kerala Agricultural University (KAU), has also made significant advancements in black pepper cultivation through targeted research and technology development with regard to propagation techniques, Soil, Nutrient and Water Management, Disease & Pest Management and Organic & Sustainable Farming Practices.

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