

INTRODUCTION

Kerala occupies second position in area and production of coffee in the country after Karnataka. As on 2000-01, coffee is grown in an area of 84,735 ha. comprising of 80,576 ha. of robusta and 4,159 ha. of arabica. Around 80% of coffee area is in Wayanad district and the rest is spread over in Nelliampathys (Palakkad) (5.5%) and Idukki & Kottayam (South Kerala) (14.5%). The average annual production of coffee is about 70,550 tonnes comprising of 68,800 tonnes of robusta and 1,750 tonnes of arabica. The average productivity of robusta holdings is 850 kg/ha and that of arabica 420 kg/ha.

The coffee areas in the state come under three distinct zones namely Wayanad, Idukki and Nelliampathys. In Wayanad zone, robusta is predominantly cultivated in smallholdings. In Nelliampathys both arabica and robusta are cultivated on an equal footing mostly in medium and large holdings. In Idukki zone, robusta is cultivated mostly in small and marginal holdings with few large plantations. The characteristic features of each of these zones are furnished in Annexure 1.

Following factors are found to be influencing the production of coffee in the state.

- ❖ Predominance of small and marginal holdings
- ❖ High density mixed cropping system especially in small holdings, causing thick shade effect and competition for nutrients
- ❖ Indiscriminate shade removal causing exposure in medium and large robusta holdings
- ❖ Practice of deep digging ('Kothu' operation) every year especially in Wayanad

- ❖ Improper bush management
- ❖ Lack of proper liming and fertilization practices
- ❖ Lack of irrigation facilities for robusta
- ❖ Poor organic matter status of soils
- ❖ Incidence of berry borer and white stem borer in arabica
- ❖ Mealy bugs, Shot hole borer, berry borer and black rot in robusta
- ❖ High labour wages
- ❖ Lack of proper drying facilities in estates

In view of the distinct nature of these zones and prevailing conditions the following three main types of packages have been suggested for coffee areas in Kerala.

- i) Intensive cultivation package for robusta for medium and large holdings
- ii) Sustainable production technology for small robusta holdings, and
- iii) Intensive cultivation package for arabica in Idukki and Nellaimpathys.