Geographical Distribution

Cashew nut is produced in almost all the continents but cultivated only in some limited countries. The cultivation has been distributed in Asian countries such as India, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, West and East African countries, and Brazil. The nut is also cultivated in some packets of Sri Lanka, Australia, etc.,

The above Figure-1 indicates the major cashew producing countries in the world. It clearly gives an idea that it has been cultivated in the lower half of the globe i.e., nearer to the equatorial line. Cashew trees can thrive in hot humid regions and hence are distributed in countries near the equatorial region. It is also noted that most of the cashew producing countries are mainly concentrated in coastal areas.

Among the cashew producing countries, the Asian countries contribute about 42 percent of global production followed by African countries, which contribute 54.5 percent of the total production in 2015-16.

The global cashew production during 2015-16 was nearly 3.25 million tons. It can be seen from the Figure-2 that West Africa ranks first in global production (45 percent) followed by India (22.65 per cent), Vietnam (11.97 per cent), East Africa (9.44 per cent). Brazil, Indonesia, Cambodia and other minor countries contribute rest of the production.

The cashew nut has been introduced into India in 16th century in order to prevent soil erosion only. Later the kernels from this nut become a major source of income for most of the people in coastal tropical regions of India.

Though the African countries are producing more cashew nuts, due to their backwardness in processing makes them to export more than 80 per cent of their produce to India< Vietnam and other South-East Asian nations for processing. But off late Africa is aiming to process more cashews internally in the coming years and they are taking steps to encourage cashew processing in African countries, which will generate more employment and much needed foreign exchange going forward.

During 2015-16 Brazil crop which was forecasted much higher when compared with 2014-15, but finally due to adverse climatic conditions crop came in at 104650 tonnes. In 2014-15 Brazil produced 107713 tonnes of RCN.
Cashew growing regions in India

In India the area under cashew cultivation stood at 10.34 lakh hectares (1.034 Million hectares) during 2015-16, with an estimated production of 6.70 lakh tonnes (0.67 million tonnes).

Cashew nut acreage is highly concentrated in East coast regions (Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, West Bengal and others) i.e., about 56 percent of area under Cashew than West coast regions (Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, and Maharashtra) contribute 44 percent of acreage. With respect to output, the West coast regions contribute nearly 54 percent of the total production compared with merely 39% from the East coast region. The reasons for this gap between area and production were more acreage under senile plantation in East Coast regions and availability of high yielding varieties in West Coast regions like Goa and Maharashtra.

Apart from the traditional Cashew-growing states, Cashew is also being grown to a certain extent in states like Gujarat, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Meghalaya and Assam.

Among all these states Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Tamilnadu and Karnataka have the major share of the total area under Cashew cultivation and occupy about 80 percent of the total cultivated area.

In terms of production the Indian state of Maharashtra ranks the first with a production estimate of 220,000 tonnes in 2015-16, followed by Andhra Pradesh and Odisha at 95,500 and 80,500 tonnes respectively.