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Title: Regarding setting up of Institute of Tropical Horticulture under Kerala Agricultural University.

SHRI T. N. PRATHAPAN (THRISSUR): Kerala is the major producer of tropical horticultural crops such as coconut, rubber, pepper, cardamom, ginger, banana, cocoa, cashew, arecanut, coffee and tea covering 89.5 per cent of the total cropped area. Kerala's commercial horticulture is of national importance in terms of foreign exchange earned through exports. The Vazhakkulam pineapple, Chengalik Kodan banana and Malabar pepper of Kerala have been GI tagged and are very famous. We also export large quantities of vegetables, fruits and banana, foliage and flower crops. The State also has a vast wealth of medicinal plants and the Ayurveda industry in Kerala is growing fast. Value addition in horticultural crops is another sector which requires immediate attention. Horticultural crops have improved the livelihood security of the farming community. Kerala Agricultural University is catering to the agricultural education and research in the State but focussed research, education and development on horticultural crops are lacking. It is necessary to start a separate Institute of Tropical Horticulture under Kerala Agricultural University for improving the production/productivity in horticultural crops. This will improve the food, nutritional and livelihood security of the people. The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare may take necessary steps to start this Institute in Kerala considering the huge potential.

