

Title: Regarding plight of the areca-nut farmers of Kerala.

*SHRI T. GOVINDAN (KASARAGOD): I would like to draw the attention of this House and the Commerce Minister to the miserable plight of the arecanut farmers in Kerala due to the drastic fall in its prices. A good number of small farmers in my constituency Ksaragod, depend solely on arecanut cultivation as a means of subsistence. But, to their dismay, it is fetching the lowest of prices it ever had. Arecanut is fetching them a meagre Rs 38/- kg this year whereas it was Rs 75/- kg last year and two years back it was priced at Rs 160/- kg. Now, the price has crashed to a historically low level.

*English translation of Speech originally delivered in Malayalam

Sir, the farmers are not in a position to employ agricultural labourers in their farms or to use fertilizers as such activities are not found cost effective. Even the preventive medicinal doses for the major disease of arecanut 'Mahali' have become unaffordable to the farmers. Many of them are forced to commit suicide. The Mangalore based co-operative agency 'CAMPCO', meant to procure arecanut from farmers, too is in a crisis due to stockpiling. The private traders' lobby, while trying to fish in troubled waters, cater to further depreciation in the market. Their aim is to scuttle the future of CAMPCO. Adding to all these is the import and smuggling of arecanut into the country. Hence, I urge upon the Government to effectively curb these illegal activities to protect the interest of the farmers and to ensure fair price for their produce.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Ahamed, I have allowed you to associate with him.

...(Interruptions)