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Title: Need to set up a Cashew Board with its Headquarters in Kerala-Laid.

SHRI A. SAMPATH (ATTINGAL): The Cashew industry occupies the prime position among the traditional industries of Kerala. It employs more than 3 lakhs workers, 98% of whom are women, who are hailing from the lower strata of the society especially SC/ST communities. As you are aware, our country earns about Rs. 2,700 crores per year through export of cashew kernel. Domestic sales account for another Rs. 3,000 crore. 75% of the cashew processing in our country is being carried out in Kerala, mainly in Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram Districts. There are a total of 648 cashew processing units, in Kerala.

Cashew industry in India requires about 12 lakhs metric tons of raw cashew nuts. Out of this only 5.5 MTs are produced in India. We are depending on import from African countries, Brazil and Vietnam. But unlike the past, those countries also have started large scale processing of cashew and Vietnam has emerged as a close competitor to India. USA and European countries are the prominent buyers of cashew kernel from India. Now Vietnam has also started export of cashew kernel to the above countries. Thus Cashew industry is facing a severe competition. Unless substantial support is provided the existence of the industry would be in peril. It is in the above background that the demand for the setting up of a Cashew Board.

Hence, I urge upon the Government to accomplish the demand for the setting up of a Cashew Board with Head Quarters in Kerala.