

Integrated Sustainable Production Systems for Coffee in India

Y. RAGHURAMULU¹, R. NAIDU²

¹Head, Division of Agronomy, Central Coffee Research Institute, Coffee Research Station –
577 117, Chikmagalur District, Karnataka, India

²Director of Research, Coffee Board, Bangalore – 560 001, India

SUMMARY

Coffee in India is grown under well-established mixed shade canopy comprising of evergreen, leguminous trees. Major coffee growing regions are situated in the ecologically sensitive forest hill tracts of the Western Ghats. In these areas, coffee is often cultivated with inter-crops like pepper, cardamom, orange etc. India is a major contributor of both arabica and robusta coffees, because of highly suitable growing conditions. Thus, the economy of plantation districts in south India is intricately linked to coffee.

The economy of coffee plantations has suffered a setback in the recent past owing to unattractive prices for coffee and associated crops and escalation in the cost of cultivation. The situation at present is quite alarming with coffee prices plummeting to all time low with no signs of immediate recovery due to global surplus. If this situation persists for few more years, there is every possibility of growers abandoning the plantations and resorting to large-scale timber extraction. This could be disastrous for the fragile ecosystem of the coffee growing regions. Thus, there is an immediate need to resurrect and sustain the economy of coffee plantations on one hand and to preserve the ecological balance of the Western Ghats on the other.

Coffee areas in India are suitable for diverse agricultural activities such as production of spices, horticulture crops, mulberry for silk production and other animal husbandry practices like bee keeping, dairying, fisheries etc. Integrating these diverse activities would go a long way in sustaining the economy of small coffee growers besides preserving the fragile ecosystem in the coffee growing regions. In this paper, an approach for Integrated Sustainable Production Systems in Coffee is being discussed with few case studies on the successful diversification attempts in the coffee plantations in India.