

48	Study on development of Banana Cluster at Darrangiri, Assam and its neighbouring areas	Centre for Humanistic Development, Guwahati	2004
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Executive Summary

India is the second largest producer of bananas in the world after Brazil. Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Gujarat are the largest producers of banana in India. Bananas are also cultivated on a large scale in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and some parts of other Northeast states. Use of saplings developed through tissue culture coupled with advanced production technology and drip irrigation has improved quality and productivity significantly.

The total area under horticultural crops in the state of Assam is estimated at 543,278 hectares which annually produce about 12.50 lakh tonnes of fruits and about 30.89 tonnes of vegetables including potato, spices, flowers, nut crops, etc. As the soil is largely fertile in nature, these crops seldom require any chemicals, fertilizers or pesticides.

□ Area under Cultivation and Production of Banana in Assam

	Area in hectare	Production (in MT)	Average yield in Kg/hectare
Assam	43,600	606,192	13,903

Types of Bananas

The ripe banana fruits are a source of carbohydrates and a fair source of minerals and vitamins, particularly of the B group. The composition varies with type and also the stage of maturity.

Analysis of the flesh of ripe banana gives the following values:

60.6 – 79.8 moisture

0.4 – 1.7 protein

3.6 – 24.6 reducing sugars

0.0 – 14.6 non-reducing sugars

0.1 – 16.4 other carbohydrates and fats

0.7 – 1.6 % ash

67 – 137 cal./100g caloric value

'*Musa Paradisiaca*' and '*Musa Sapientum*' are edible bananas of hybrid origin valued for their seedless fruits. They comprise of all the diploid, triploid or tetraploid clones, mainly hybrids of *M. Acuninata* and *M. Balbisiana*.

A larger number of edible clones are cultivated in India than in any other country. The great majority of them belongs to *Eumusa* whereas clones belonging to *Australimusa* are practically unrepresented in India, except *M. Textiles* (Manila Hemp) which has been experimentally tried in some areas.

The most popular variety of green skinned banana in India is 'Basrai', belonging to the Dwarf Cavendish family. Its average yield is 43-62 tonnes per hectare. The Jalgaon district in Maharashtra is known for its *Dwarf Cavendish* variety and is popularly known as *Bhusaval Keli*. Jalgaon accounts for a very high share in the total output of bananas in India.

Nendran is the leading commercial type grown in Kerala, while *Poovan* or *Champa* is popular in West Bengal, Bihar and Tamil Nadu. In Gujarat and Maharashtra, Basrai is extensively cultivated. However, in North Eastern part of India the most popular varieties are *Malbhog*, *Cheni-champa*, *Jahaji*, *Kashkal*, and *Athia*, etc.

Darranggiri and the Banana Market

Darranggiri is a small trading post on the national highway 37, 100 km west of Guwahati under Koshdhuwa Tribal Development Block of Goalpara district of Assam. It is also connected by railway.

The place is situated on the foothills of East-Garo Hills. The northern part of Darranggiri is valley whereas the southern part is surrounded by slopes and hilly areas. The slopes are gentle but uneven specially towards the Meghalaya part, and certain south bank tributaries of river Brahmaputra like Dudhnoi, Krishnai, Tulsi, etc. flows from these hill tracks.

In summer, the temperature of the area goes upto 27-30 degree centigrade and it receives an average annual rainfall of 2167 mm. The soil quality of the area varies from normal to slightly alkaline. These features alongwith the existence of the hilly slopes make the place conducive for banana cultivation.

The place, Darranggiri, has been traditionally a market hub of this area. Now it is also being referred as **the largest banana market in Asia**. Majority of produce of the banana marketed through the Darranggiri market comes from the foothills of East Garo Hills district of Meghalaya and the periphery villages of the market and other surrounding districts of Goalpara.

The annual banana 'export' (2003-04) sums upto 150 million Rupees (approx.) for 17,77,000 bunches. The maximum produces are 'exported' to the states of Bihar and West Bengal. Some of the banana is 'exported' upto the states of Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand, and a small portion are also said to be exported to neighbouring countries like Nepal.