

Agriculture plays a vital role in the Indian economy. Agriculture is the backbone of our country. It includes farming of crops, animal husbandry, pisciculture, agro-forestry etc. Over 58% of rural households primarily depend on agriculture.

Agriculture along with fisheries, forestry and other allied sectors contribute around 14% to the overall GDP of our country. The particular weather and soil conditions allow for crops in India uniquely suited to it. Let us take a look at the major crops in India!

Crop Seasons in India

India is the top producer of many crops in the world. There can be many ways to divide the types of crops (based on area, season, economic value etc.). Based on seasons, the crops in India are divided into three types; Rabi, Kharif and Zaid.

Kharif Crops

- Sown in June-July when rains first begin (Monsoon crop).
- Harvested in September-October.
- Requires lot of water and hot weather to grow.
- Example: Rice, Jowar, Bajra, Maize, Cotton, Groundnut, Jute, Sugarcane, Turmeric, Pulses (like Urad Dal) etc.

Rabi Crops

- Sown in October-November
- Harvested in April-May.
- Requires warm climate for germination of seeds and maturation and cold climate for the growth.
- Example: Wheat, Oat, Gram, Pea, Barley, Potato, Tomato, Onion, Oil seeds (like Rapeseed, Sunflower, Sesame, Mustard) etc.

Zaid Crops

- Grown between March-June between Rabi and Kharif crop seasons.
- Early maturing crops.
- Example: Cucumber, Bitter Gourd, Pumpkin, Watermelon, Muskmelon, Moong Dal etc.

Categories of Crops in India

The major crops can all be divided into four main categories depending on their usage.

1. Food Crops (Wheat, Maize, Rice, Millets and Pulses etc.)
2. Cash Crops (Sugarcane, Tobacco, Cotton, Jute and Oilseeds etc.)
3. Plantation Crops (Coffee, Coconut, Tea, and Rubber etc.)
4. Horticulture crops (Fruits and Vegetables)

Major Crops in India

Now let us look at the major crops in India in detail.

Rice

Rice is a tropical crop that can be grown almost throughout the year. It depends on atmospheric moisture and rainfall for irrigation. India is the 2nd largest producer of rice in the world. India has largest area in world under rice cultivation. Productivity is low compared to wheat because Green Revolution primarily boosted wheat production in India. The traditional rice fields are known as paddy fields and require to be flooded with 10-12 cm deep water in the early stages.

Type of Crop: Kharif, Rabi

Techniques Used: Transplantation technique, Japanese Transplantation technique,

new SRI technique

Varieties: Aman, Sali, Afghani, Aus, Boro, Palua

Temperature: ~ 24 °C

Rainfall: ~ 150 cm

Soil type: Clay/ Loamy

Major Producers: West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Bihar, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Haryana

Highest Producer: West Bengal

Highest per Hectare Yield: Punjab

Research Centres: Cuttack, Odisha



Highest Producing Country: China

Source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com>

Wheat

It is the 2nd most important food crop in India. It is a Rabi crop. India stands second in production of wheat worldwide. It is more flexible in terms of climactic and other conditions of growth.

Type of Crop: Rabi

Varieties: Kalyan Sona, Sonalika, Heera

Temperature: 17-20 °C

Rainfall: 20-100 cm (ideal ~75 cm)

Soil Type: Clay loam, Sandy loam

Major Producers: Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Uttarakhand

Highest Producing State: Uttar Pradesh

Highest per Hectare Yield: Punjab

Research Centres: Karnal, Haryana

Highest Producing Country: China



Image source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com>

Cotton

Cotton is a tropical and subtropical Kharif crop. It is a fibre crop and is known as 'White gold'. India ranks 3rd in the production of cotton worldwide. It is a dry crop but roots need timely supply of water at maturity.

Type of Crop: Kharif

Varieties: Long Staple, Medium Staple, Short Staple

Temperature: 21-30 °C

Rainfall: 50-100 cm

Soil Type: Black soil (Highly water retentive soil)

Major Producers: Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Orissa

Leading Producer: Gujarat (According to the 2015 report)

Research Centres: Nagpur, Maharashtra

Highest Producing Country: China



Image source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com>

Jute

Jute is a tropical plant that requires hot and humid climate. It is one of the most important natural fibres in terms of cultivation and usage. Almost 85% of the world's jute is cultivated in the Ganges Delta.

Type of Crop: Zaid

Varieties: White Jute, Tossa Jute

Temperature: 24-35 °C.

Annual Rainfall: 125-200 cm.

Soil Type: Sandy and Clay Loam

Major Producers: West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh

Largest Producer: West Bengal

Highest per Hectare Yield: West Bengal

Research Centres: Kolkata & Nilgunj, West Bengal

Highest Producing Country: India (but highest exporter is Bangladesh)

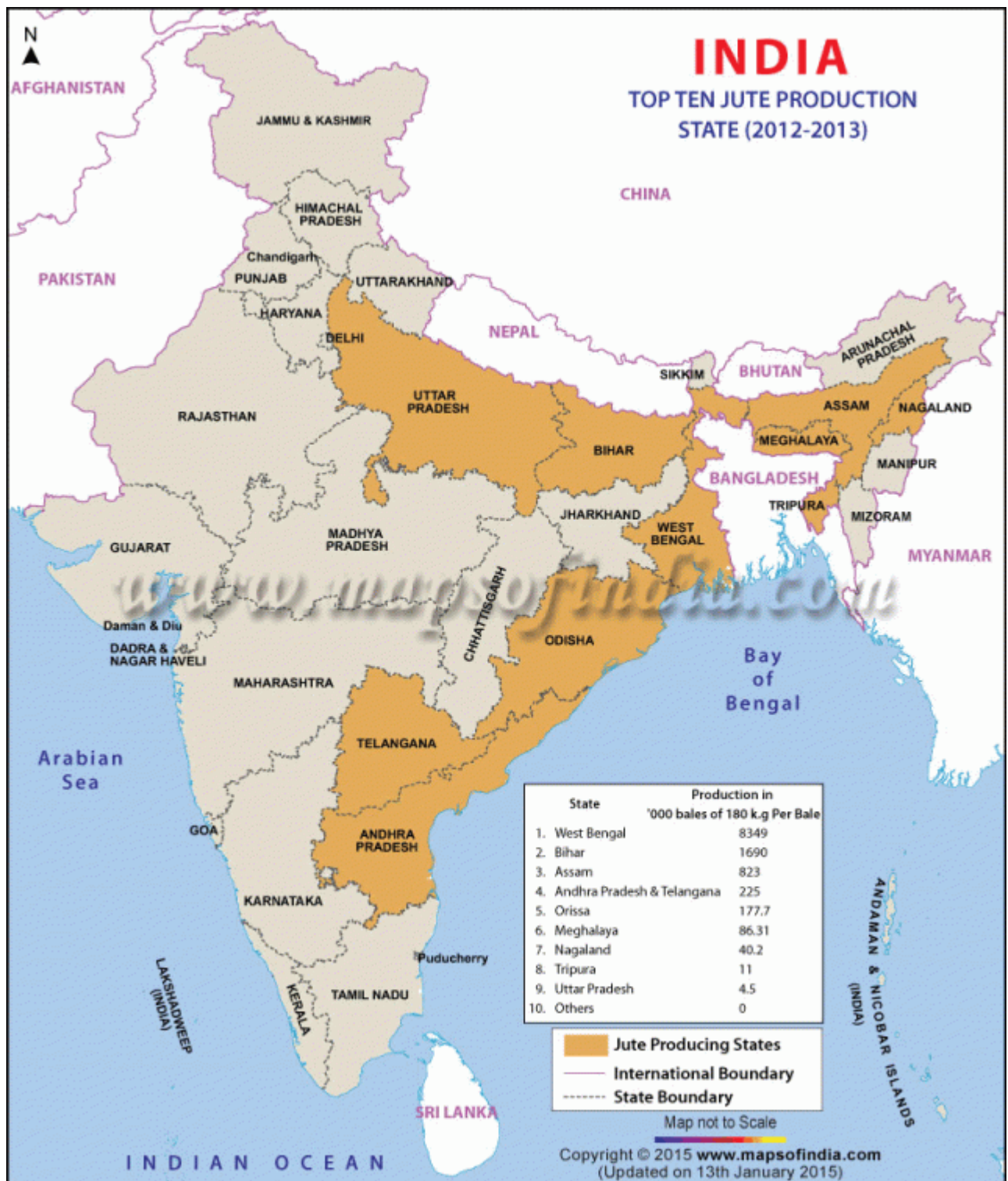


Image source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com>

Sugarcane

Sugarcane is an important cash crop. India stands at 2nd position among all countries in the world in its production. Sugarcane crop requires long rainy season of at least

7-8 months. Traditional Sugarcane Production was in North India but it has also shifted to South India. North India Sugarcane are of sub-tropical variety and so have low sugar content. Also sugar factories have to remain shut in winter seasons in North India. South India- Tropical Variety and coastal areas hence have high sugar content and high yield.

Type of Crop: Kharif, Rabi

Temperature: 20-26 °C

Rainfall: 75-150 cm

Soil type: Clayey Loamy Soil/ Black Cotton Soil/ Red Loamy Soil/ Brown Loamy Soil

Major Producers: Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Punjab

Largest Producer: Uttar Pradesh

Highest per Hectare Yield: Tamil Nadu

Research Centre: Lucknow

Highest Producing Country: Brazil

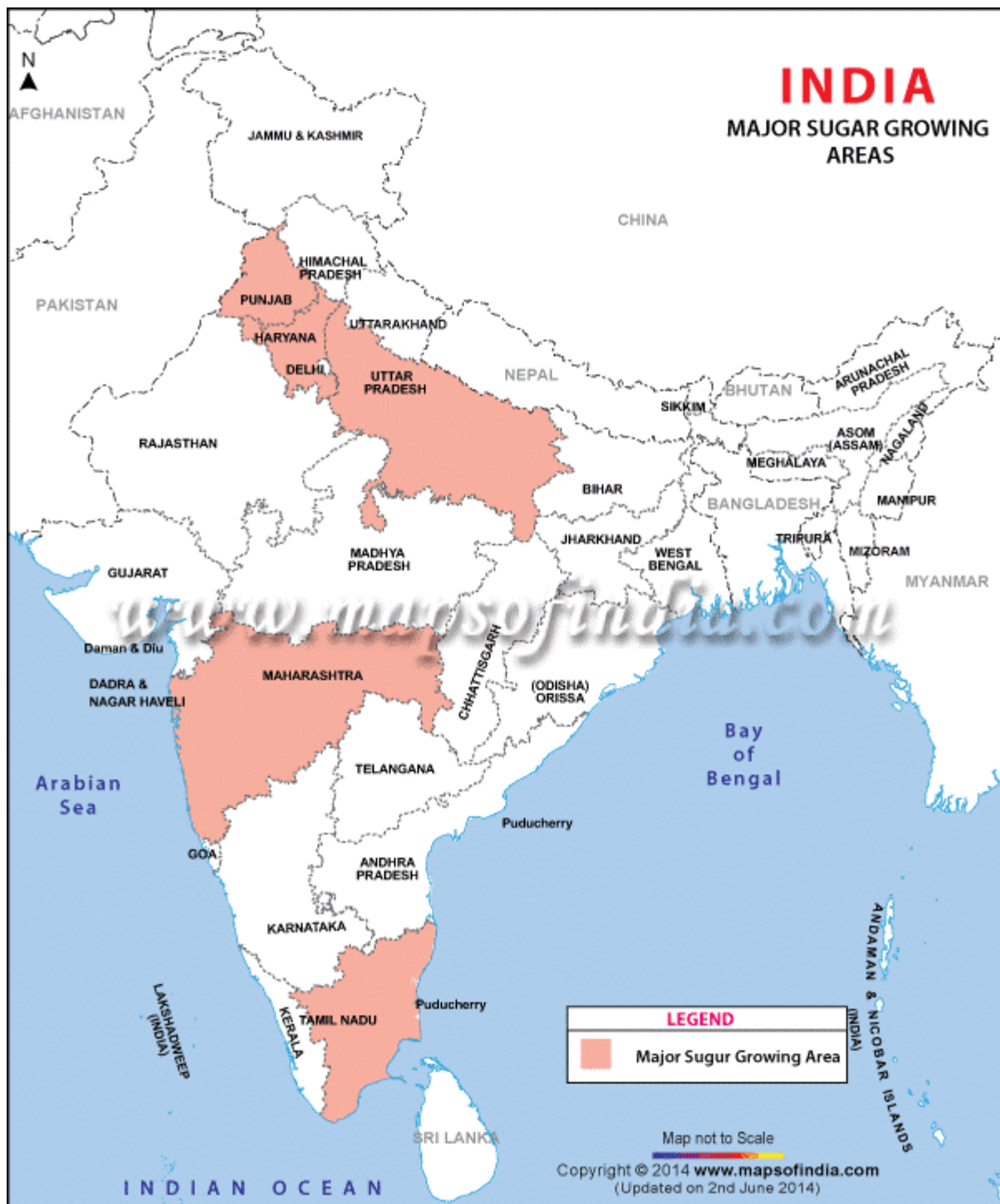


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Tea

Tea is an evergreen plant that mainly grows in tropical and subtropical climates. Tea is a labour intensive crop and 50% of the labourers are women. It grows faster under light shade. Commercial cultivation of tea started in India from British era. India is the

2nd largest producer and the largest consumer of tea in the world. Tea plants require high rainfall but its roots cannot tolerate water logging. Hence, it requires sloppy areas.

Temperature: 20-30 °C

Rainfall: 150-300 cm

Soil type: Loamy soil which is acidic in nature and rich in organic matter.

Major Producers: Assam, Darjeeling (West Bengal), Meghalaya, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka

Highest Producer: Assam

Research Centres: Tocklai, Assam

Highest Producing Country: China

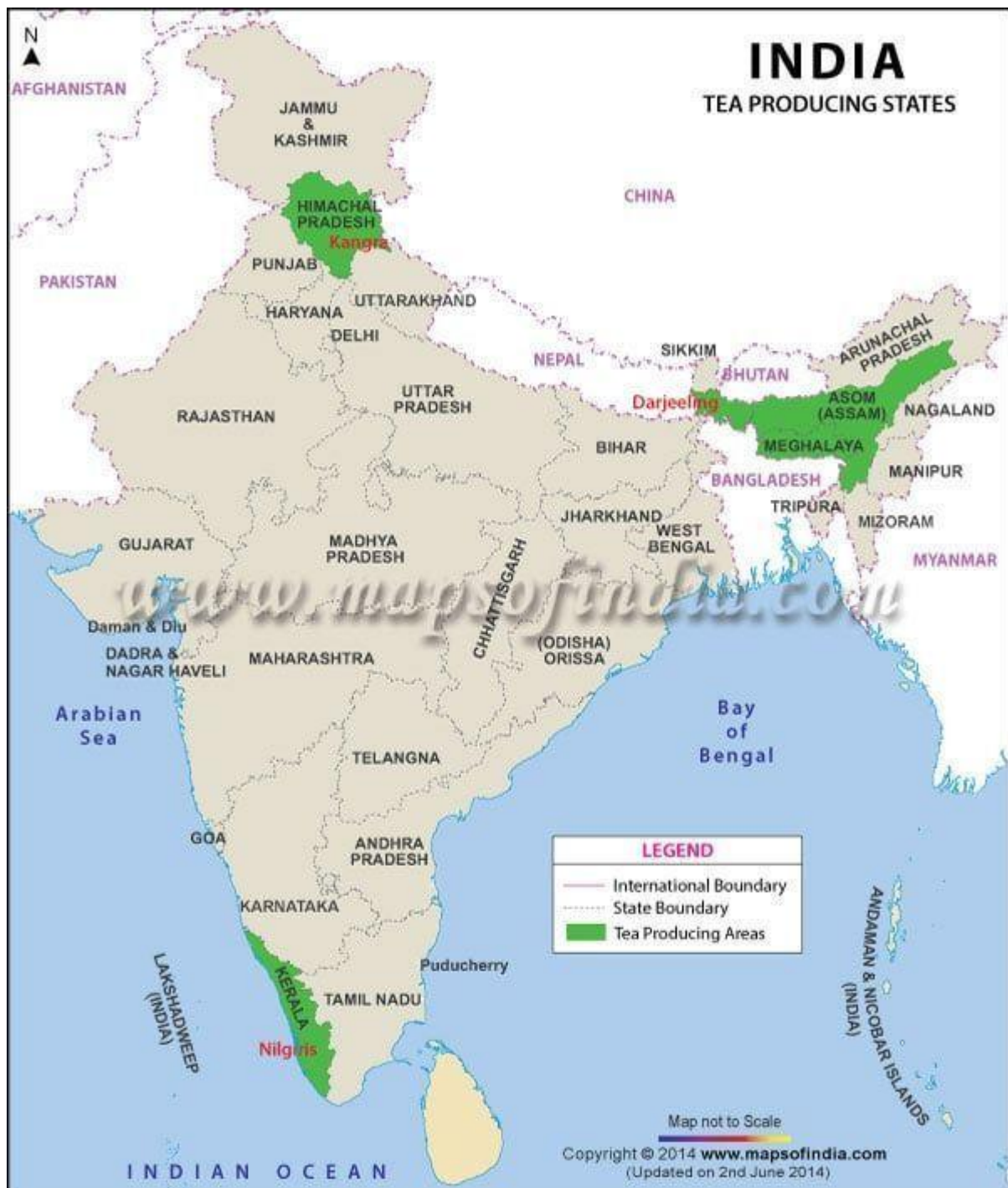


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Coffee

Coffees are grown in shade and commonly with two tiers of shade. Growing altitudes of coffee range between 1,000 to 1,500 m above sea level for Arabica (premier coffee), and 500 to 1,000 m for Robusta (lower quality). Both varieties are planted in well-drained soil conditions that favour rich organic matter. Coffee plantation is done

along hilly slope. Slopes of Arabica tend to be gentle to moderate, while Robusta slopes are gentle to fairly level.

Varieties: Arabica and Robusta

Temperature: 16-28°C

Rainfall: 150-250 cm

Soil type: Well-drained forest loam

Major Producers: Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland

Highest Producer: Karnataka

Highest Producing Country: Brazil



Image source: <http://www.mapsofindia.com>

Spices

India has been known for its spices since ancient times.

Cardamom (Queen of Aromatic Spices) – Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu

Pepper (King of Spices) – Kerala

Chillies – Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan

Turmeric – Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu

Nutmeg – Kerala

Arecanut – Kerala, Karnataka, Tripura, Assam

Coconut – Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh

Cinnamon – Kerala

Clove – Kerala

Ginger – Kerala, Meghalaya, Sikkim

Temperature: 10-30 °C

Rainfall: 200-300 cm

Soil type: Loamy soil/ Lateritic soil

Location: 1000-2000m altitude of Western Ghats and other hilly areas

Major Producers: Kerala, Karnataka,

Highest Producer: Kerala