

Cashew Nut Cultivation and Processing Guide

Introduction Cashew nut (*Anacardium occidentale*) is a tropical tree crop cultivated for its nutritious nuts and by-products such as cashew apple and cashew shell oil. Cashews are a valuable export commodity and are widely used in food processing, confectionery, and oil production. Cashew trees thrive in warm climates with well-drained sandy or laterite soil and require proper care throughout their growing cycle to ensure high yields.

Steps to Harvest/Cultivate

1. **Selection of Variety:** Choose high-yielding and disease-resistant varieties based on climate conditions. Common varieties include VRI-3, BPP-8, and Goa-1.
2. **Soil Preparation:** Cashew trees grow best in well-drained sandy loam or lateritic soil with a pH of 5.5 to 6.5. Proper land preparation, including deep plowing and organic matter incorporation, improves tree establishment.
3. **Planting:**
 - Cashew seeds or grafted seedlings should be planted at the onset of the rainy season.
 - Maintain a spacing of 7-10 meters between trees to allow for canopy development.
 - Dig pits of 60 cm x 60 cm x 60 cm and fill them with a mixture of topsoil and compost before planting.
4. **Watering:** Young plants require regular watering, especially in dry conditions. Mature cashew trees are drought-tolerant and require minimal irrigation.
5. **Fertilization:** Apply nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium fertilizers along with organic manure to enhance tree growth and nut yield. Fertilization should be done at different growth stages.
6. **Pruning and Maintenance:**
 - Prune cashew trees regularly to remove weak or diseased branches and promote airflow.
 - Mulching around the base of trees helps retain moisture and suppress weeds.
7. **Pest and Disease Control:**
 - Common pests include tea mosquito bugs, stem borers, and thrips. Use neem-based sprays or biological control methods to manage infestations.
 - Prevent fungal diseases like anthracnose by ensuring proper spacing and drainage.
8. **Weed Management:** Manual weeding or mulching helps prevent competition for nutrients and moisture.
9. **Harvesting:**
 - Cashew nuts are ready for harvest after 3-4 years of planting, usually in the dry season.
 - Nuts are collected once they fall from the tree, separated from the cashew apple, and dried before processing.

Cashew Nut Processing Steps

1. **Drying:**
 - Freshly harvested nuts are sun-dried for 2-3 days to reduce moisture content and prevent spoilage.

2. **Roasting:**
 - The nuts are roasted either in steam or by open pan roasting to loosen the shell and facilitate easy removal.
3. **Shelling:**
 - The roasted nuts are cracked manually or using mechanical shelling machines to extract the kernel.
4. **Peeling:**
 - The thin outer skin of the cashew kernel is removed using hot air treatment or manual peeling.
5. **Grading:**
 - The kernels are sorted based on size, shape, and quality before packaging.
6. **Packaging and Storage:**
 - Cashew kernels are packed in vacuum-sealed bags or airtight containers to maintain freshness and prevent rancidity.
7. **Quality Control:**
 - Processed cashews undergo quality checks to ensure they meet export and market standards.

Conclusion Cashew cultivation and processing are profitable ventures when managed with proper agricultural and post-harvest techniques. With increasing global demand, cashew farming provides excellent economic opportunities for farmers while contributing to sustainable agricultural practices. Proper processing enhances the value of cashew nuts, making them a highly sought-after product in domestic and international markets.

