

The hill crop – pepper, thrives well in plains too

Pepper doesnot grow in the hills alone, if similar environment is created in the plains, it gives good yield here too.

Mr. Veerasingham, of villar village, Thanjavur is cultivating Coconut, Arecsnut, Ginger, Tippeli, and Cardamom in his farm named Vallalar Agricultural Farm.

Pepper, has medicinal properties and it has been utilized in Indian traditional food. Mr. Veerasingham ,experimented pepper cultivation in his farm Batlagundu as a challenge after seeing its growth in Kerela, Ooty and Kodaikanal.

The most important requirement for pepper cultivation is that the farm should be covered with trees. It is usually planted in July but it grows up well in any seasons. The cuttings are obtained at Ooty, Kodaikanal, Gudalore and Batlagundu.

If intercropped with coconuts, pepper cuttings should be planted 2 feet from the trunk. Pits of depth ½ feet should be taken. If intercropped with other trees ½ feet distance is enough. The pit should be filled with sand, ash and manure. Only one cutting should be planted near a tree. Life irrigation should be given immediately after planting. Within 10 days, the cuttings produce new shoot and by the 3rd month it attains good establishment. The vines should be trailed on the tree using banana fibre, the vines produce clinging roots which absorbs nutrients from the tree. This doesnot affect the tree in any way. Once the vine grows to 3 feet, it should again be supported by tying with banana fibres. All the dried leaves and farm wastes should be pressed into the soil to act as manure. Separate fertilizer application is not necessary for pepper.

Since pepper has medicinal properties, it is not attacked by pests. If intercropped with coconut, pepper doesnot require additional irrigation. Otherwise it should be irrigated once in a week. By one year, pepper gets well established to absorb all nutrients from the soil.

4 years after planting, pepper produces economic yield. It procuces pepper in 2 seasons (i.e) yielding period for 3 month and nonyielding period of 3 months likewise 2 seasons in a year. Pepper vines give good yield for 30 – 60 years. Large sized pepper with good fragrance earns Rs. 180 /kg. The average income is Rs. 150.

Mr. Veerasingham has planted 100 pepper vines. It started giving him 500kg/year from the 6th year. On a minimum of Rs. 150/kg, the additional income that he gets is around Rs. 75,000/-. If the expenditure for cuttings, maintenance and harvesting comes to Rs. 15,000/- the net profit will be Rs. 60,000/-. Pepper indeed grows well in plains and yields profits.

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