Going through different studies on the effects of globalization it is found that no study has been done on the spice cultivators. Idukki District is a spice producing area depending upon the export income of these products and no study has been done about the problems of this group. So this will be a pioneering study into the problems of people who cultivate spices especially after globalization has been introduced.

CHAPTER III

PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

KERALA
INTRODUCTION

Kerala is the land of green magic, is a narrow fertile strip on the southwest coast of India, sandwiched between the Lakshadweep Sea and the Western Ghats. The landscape is dominated by rice fields, mango trees, cashew nut trees and above all coconut palms.

The Western Ghats, with their dense tropical forests, misty peaks, extensive ridges and ravines, have sheltered Kerala from mainland invaders and encouraged maritime contact with the outside world.

HISTORY

The early history of Kerala is documented in ancient tamils scripts and Hindu mythology. According to legend, Parasurama an incarnation of Vishnu threw his weapon from Kanyakumari across the sea. The sea subsequently receded to the point where the weapon landed and the land of Kerala was born.

The Kingdom of Cheras ruled much of present day Kerala up till the early Middle Ages. Its fortunes waxed and waned as it competed with empires, Kingdoms and small fiefdoms for territory and trade.

People have been sailing to Kerala in search of spices, sandalwood and ivory for at least 2000 years. Long before Vasco da Gama led the Portuguese to India, the coast had been known to the Phoenicians, then the Romans, and Later the Arabs, and Chinese. The Arabs initially controlled shipment of spices to Europe, which motivated the Portuguese to find a sea route to India to break the Arab monopoly. In those days (15th and 16th century) Kerala was not only a spice centre in its own right but a transshipment point of spices from the Moluccas. And it was through Kerala that Chinese products and ideas found their way to the west.
Such contact with people from around the world has resulted in an intriguing blend of cultures and has given the natives of Kerala the cosmopolitan look, coupled with a tradition of seeking their fortunes elsewhere in India or overseas.

When Vasco da Gama and his Portuguese fleet arrived on the Malabar Coast in 1498 the Zamorin of Calicut had established a wealthy bungalow based on the spice trade. Vasco da Gama’s arrival heralded an era of European contact with Kerala as Portuguese, Dutch and English interest fought the Arab traders and then each other for control of the spice trade.

The present day state of Kerala was created in 1956 joining Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. Malabar was formerly part of Madras State, while Travancore and Cochin were princely states ruled by Maharajas. The Maharajas of Travancore and Cochin paid considerable attention to the provision of basic services and education, and it was this early concern for public welfare which resulted in the post independence state being one of the most progressive, literate and highly educated state in India.

Another of Kerala’s distinction was that it had one of the first freely elected communist governments in the world (elected in 1957). Communists have been in and out of office in Kerala ever since. Kerala’s progressive social policies have had other benefits, infant mortality in Kerala is the lowest in India and the literacy rate of around 90 percent is the highest in the country. Traditionally Kerala is an agricultural state. More than 50% of the people are in the agrarian sector. The word ‘KERALA’ itself means ‘the land of coconuts’ The net sown area comes to 56.9% of the total. The principal food crops of Kerala are rice, tapioca, pulses, banana and the cash crops consisting of coconut, pepper, ginger, arecanut, rubber, tea, coffee etc. In the production of food, Kerala is a deficit state. She is producing only 40% of her requirements. She depends on other States for her food requirements.

Though Kerala is deficient in food crops production, she earns much from commercial crops. And these earnings enable her to pay for the food crops that come from other states.
KERALA - SOME IMPORTANT FIGURES

1. Location of Kerala : between 8º 18′ and 12º 48′ north latitude and between 74º 52´ and 72º 22´ east longitude

2. Geographical areas : 38.86 Lakh hectares.

3. Length of coastline : 590 Kms.

4. Average rainfall : 3125 mm

5. Total population : 31841374 (2001 census)

6. Area under forest : 10.82 Lakh hectares.

7. Cultivable areas : 24.46 Lakh hectares

8. Number of rivers : 44

9. Longest river : Bharathapuzha (251.1 km)

10. Total area of rivers : 85,000 ha

11. No. of reservoirs : 30

12. Total area of reservoirs : 29635 ha

13. Density of population : 819 sq. km

(Source: Kerala State Land Use Board Thiruvananthapuram)

A country without sound agricultural system may not be capable of producing adequate food materials and other crops. Agriculture is the backbone for the survival of any economy. As in the case elsewhere, the people of Kerala also had been depending on agriculture for their livelihood and Kerala continues to be a predominantly agricultural state.
Declining profitability of crops, shortage of farm labourers, abnormal increases in land prices and high rate of conversion of agricultural land for other uses are the major problems in the state's agricultural sector. “Labour and fertilizer costs together account for more than 75 percent of the paid out cost of cultivation for all major crops cultivated in the state.”(1)

SPECIAL FEATURES OF KERALA AGRICULTURE

1. High density of population
2. Small size of farms
3. Concentration of plantation crops
4. Neglect of food crops
5. Commercialization of agriculture
6. Shortage of capital
7. Dependence on monsoon
8. Low mechanization and technology
9. High remuneration to agricultural labours
10. Low price for food crops
11. Transformation of arable land for other purposes

CURRENT PROBLEMS IN KERALA AGRICULTURE

Declining profitability of crops, shortage of farm labours, abnormal increase in land prices and the high rate of conversion of agricultural land for other uses are the important current problems in the state’s agricultural sector.
1. LOW PROFITABILITY

Labour and fertilizer Costs together accounts for all major crops cultivated in the state. Within a period of five years from 1990-91 to 1995-96 average daily wages of male and female farm labours in the state increased by 115.74 percent and 142.40 percent respectively. Meanwhile aggregate increase in farm prices of the major crops – paddy, coconut, rubber tapioca and cashew nut was 82.33 per cent, 9.97 per cent, 144.43 percent, 67.55 per cent and 95.65 per cent respectively. Rapid increase in the daily wages of farm labourers and fertilizer prices, along with relatively lower growth rates in the farm prices of agricultural products in the absence of any major improvement in farm technology, have adversely affected the profitability of crops. Within the last 15 years from 1981, indices of the cost of cultivation of crops and prices paid by farmers in the state have increased at annual rates of 10.44 per cent and 9.22 per cent respectively. Meanwhile, the index of prices received by farmers shows a relatively lower growth rate of 8.12 per cent. Parity index of prices received and paid by the farmers show that in all of the years, except in 1984 and 1987, it was unfavorable to them.

2. SHORTAGE OF FARM LABOURERS

In spite of the substantial increase in wage rates the gap between demand and supply in the agricultural labour market has been widening into recent years. Growing deficiency in the supply of farm labourers can be attributed to the following factors. First, the widespread implementation of various poverty alleviation programmes like IRDP, JRY, TRYSEM, DWCRA, SGRY and MNREGP in the state has rendered substantial employment opportunities to the rural people outside the farm sector. Second many small scale and ancillary industrial units are sprouting in rural and semi-urban areas throughout the state and their labour requirements are largely met by the rural people. Third, the hectic construction work going on in and around rural areas and the fast growing tertiary sector absorb a major portion of the new generation of rural labourers. Fourth, the large scale migration of rural youth to foreign countries and to other states has also reduced the supply of farm labourers within the state. Finally, the slow pace of
mechanization in the farm sector and the growing dislike of rural youth to take up farm labour as their full time occupation have worsened the labour shortage problem in the agricultural sector.

3. ABNORMAL INCREASE IN LAND PRICES

At present, agricultural land prices are so high in Kerala that if interest on land value is added to the paid out costs of cultivation, none of the major crops cultivated in the state is economically viable. Thus land is not always treated as a means of production in the state but is often regarded as an asset that can be used for speculative exchange. Therefore many speculative investors without any genuine interest in farming have already entered the land market as buyers. This observation is vindicated by the fact that immediately after the crash of the share market in the early 1990’s. Land prices in the state have gone sky rocketed. Again land is a safe asset with fair liquidity. A considerable portion of foreign remittance coming in to the state every year is used for the purchase of land which leads to a sustained increase in its price.

4. CONVERSION OF AGRICULTURAL LAND FOR NON AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES.

Compared to the 1980’s annual rate of increase in the proportion of land put to non agricultural uses has been relatively higher since the beginning of the 1990’s. within a period of four years from 1990 -91 to 1994-95 absolute land area used for non agricultural purposes increased from 2,97,000 ha to 3,23,000 ha. and this increase was primarily responsible for the decline in net area sown in the state during this period. With the growing pressure of population and the development of the secondary and tertiary sectors agricultural land throughout the state is being converted for the construction of residential buildings, commercial establishments, roads, health and educational institutions etc., which in turn reduces the total area under cultivation.

In addition to this factors the poor achievements in agricultural research, drawbacks in the formulation and implementation of agricultural development programmes, environmental degradation, poor soil
management inadequate plant protection measures etc., have played their own roles bringing down the
pace of agricultural development in the state.

In 1970-71 the total cropped area was 8.74 lakh hectares and it has reduced to 2.74 lakh hectares. Though
there was development in the techniques of production and cropping pattern the net area cropped was
always reducing. People were moving away from the primary sector to the tertiary sector. Because of the
globalization and liberalization prices of fertilizers and chemicals were going up and profitability in
agriculture was never achieved and very often losses were quite often recurring.

THE RECENT AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS IN KERALA

On 14\textsuperscript{th} Jan 2009 the Chief Minister of Kerala, V.S. Achudanandan inaugurated the pilot project called
“All to the Farms”. On that day the Chief Minister, Ministers and M.L.As planted paddy in Mangilikkara
at Trivandrum. It was a grant function and all the media celebrated it.

Everyone expected something new is going to happen. Months passed and there was none to go to the
paddy fields to collect the crop. Even though there were promises about harvesting machine it was not
supplied by the government. Finally a few farmers did the whole work and the rice was given to the
Supply Corporation of Kerala. But the price of the produce was not given to the cultivators.

The expected return from the paddy field was 2000 kg per acre. But actual crop was only 1200 Kg. And
when the farmers stated that the paddy cultivation was a loss the agricultural department of Kerala wanted
to prove that it is profitable by doing it.

The Assistant Director of Agriculture Ms. Mini K Rajan started paddy cultivation in 50 cents of land
under the direct guidance of agricultural department. They spent Rs.11,800 and received only Rs.3,600. In
Kalliyoor, Agricultural Officer Ms. Chitra cultivated 85 cents of land, and it was also a big loss. All the
experience of the farmers proves that agriculture is a failure. But the political leaders and agricultural
experts may have a different opinion.
In 1961-62, around 753 lakh hectares of land were cultivated and it has reduced to 2.83 lakh hectares in 2009. Kerala is depending 80 per cent for its food on other states. Farmers of Kerala do not expect an abnormal profit but they want only a return that covers the cost. The government of Kerala is not doing anything to support the farmers those who are ready to cultivate.

In 1983 the agricultural labourers were getting only Rs.600 per month. In 2003 it has increased to Rs.6000 per month. When the wage has increased by 10 times the price of paddy has increased only by 2.74 times.

When Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand import coconuts in large quantities at a lower price as per the Asean Agreement, and palm oil - which has a lower price - comes to the market as a substitute for coconut oil, the coconut farmers of Kerala will have no choice but to leave the field.

The two important farmers who won award for coconut cultivation Thachappilly Aravindakshan and Palamattathil Sebastian have stopped coconut cultivation and moved to nutmeg and rubber respectively. Even the best farmers are facing financial crisis and the case of ordinary farmers who have selected agriculture as a basic means of subsistence is in the cross roads. A man who was doing agriculture as a way of life for his life time is forced to change all of a sudden and move to some other field has become a life and death problem in Kerala.
IDUKKI DISTRICT FOREST AREA
IDUKKI DISTRICT

This beautiful high range of Kerala is geographically known for its mountainous hills and dense forests. In 1992 Malankara Estate superintendent and his friend Thomas came for hunting in the dense forests of Idukki. An adivasi called Karuvallan Kolumban showed the mountains called Kuravan and Kurathi and the river that flowed in between. This has resulted in the construction of Idukki Hydel Project. In Munnar area another adivasi called Kannan Thevan showed the different hills and it resulted in the Tata Tea Limited in later days. And these mountains are called the Kannan Devan Mountains.

Compared to other districts, Idukki has got many specialities. Idukki is rich in natural resources. The highest peak in South India ie. Anamudi which is 2817 metre high from sea level is in Idukki District. The rare species of Nilgiri Thar (varrai goat) and Neelakurinji that blossoms once in twelve years and sholai forests are also in this district.

High mountain ranges, steep gorges, plains, rivers, dams, forests, grass lands etc. make Idukki district beautiful and unique. And the Europeans used to call it the Switzerland of India.

History

The early history of the district is obscure and there is no clear evidence about the Paleolithic age. The burials in the high ranges date back to the Megalithic period. Some historians believe that Kuzhumur, the capital of Sangham age is the present Kumily in Peerumedu taluk. During 16 century Major portions of Idukki district came under the rule of Poonjar Raja.

The modern history of the district starts with the advent of European planters to this region. In 1877 Kerala Varma, the Raja of Poonjar sold 227 Sq. Miles of Kannan Devan hills to John Daniel Manroe, a
British Planter. The tract was largely unexplored and covered with thick forest. He formed the North Travancore Land Planting and Agriculture Society. The members of the society developed their own estates in various parts of highranges. Roads were opened, transport organized, houses and factories built and production rose rapidly in the succeeding years.

Idukki District was formed on 26 January 1972 as per government notification No.54131/C2/71/RD dated 24th January 1972. At the time of formation the district headquarters started functioning at Kottayam and from there it was shifted to Painau in Thodupuzha taluk in June 1976, where it is proposed to build a new planned forest township.

For the people of Kerala, Idukki is always associated with power generation. The Pallivasal Hydroelectric Project, the first hydroelectric project of the state was initially constructed by the tea companies for the industrial use. Planters were the first migrants to the high range region which was covered by dense forest. Deforestation process started in the high ranges with advent of the plantation industry by the end of the 19th century. Vast area of evergreen forests was destroyed in connection with the construction of several hydro-electrical projects, roads, factories etc.

**Administrative Divisions**

There are four taluks (Devikulam, Udumbanchola, Peermade and Thodupuzha) and 65 villages in the district. Munnar is census town. The largest village is Kannan Devan Hills of Devikulam taluk with an area of 557 sq.km and smallest kudayathoor village of Thodupuzha with an area of 21 sq.km.

There are eight community development blocks viz. Devikolam, Adimali, Nedumkandam, Azhutha, Kattappana, Idukki, Elamdesam and Thodupuzha. There are 52 Panchayaths in the district. Thodupuzha is the only Municipality and Idukki is the only township in the district. Kumily panchayath of Azhutha block is the largest in the district with an area of 795.28 sq.km. and Edavetty panchayath in Thodupuzha
block is the smallest panchayath of the district with an area of only 18.925sq.km. The district headquarters started functioning at Kottayam and shifted to Painavu in June 1976.

**Topography and Climatic Features**

Idukki, the hilly district of the state, has many unique topographical and geographical characteristics. The high ranges vary in altitude from 2500 feet above the mean sea level in Kulamavu to more than 5000 feet above the MSL in Munnar. There are eleven peaks in this district, which exceed a height of 6000 feet above the MSL. Two types of soil are found in the district. The Highland area is covered by forest soil (alluvial soil) and the other parts by laterite soil.

The climate in the district undergoes a sudden variation as we go from west to east. The highland region is having a comparatively cold climate. Munnar, Devikolam, Pallivasal, Vellathooval etc. are places getting high rainfall while Marayoor, Kanthalloor, vattavada, Thalayar etc. experience low rainfall. Marayoor and Kanthalloor are virtually rainshadow areas lying in the eastern side of Western Ghats.

**Demography**

The total area of the district is 4499 Sq km with a population of 11.28 lakhs. The district accounts for 12.91 per cent of the geographical area of Kerala State, while the population of the district is only 3.7 of the state. Since most of the parts of the district are covered by dense forests and plantations there is lesser area for habitation compared to other district in the state. In 1901 the population was nearly 48000 and during in 1991, it has grown up by 22.46 times. On a comparison of the growth of population of the district with that of the state it can be seen that growth rate of the district has shown a higher percentage increase than the corresponding state increase.
Since 1901 the rate of growth of population are given below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901-11</td>
<td>108.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-21</td>
<td>92.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-31</td>
<td>72.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-41</td>
<td>30.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-51</td>
<td>35.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951-61</td>
<td>74.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-71</td>
<td>31.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-81</td>
<td>26.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981-91</td>
<td>10.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-01</td>
<td>04.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coming to the Taluk wise growth of population, Udumban-chola taluk has the largest population increase during 1921-71 with 4069.89 percent. During 1941-1951 it was 40.61 per cent. But the decadal increase during 1951-61 is 675.75 percentages. In the three decades prior to 1951 census, as compared to other Taluks, Peerumade Taluk had the highest decenial growth rate but during post 1951 census period, Udumbanchola taluk had the privilege of having the highest growth rate among the other Taluks of the District.
The migration to the highland region started before the formation of Kerala at the end of 19th century. Tamilians came as plantation workers of the European planters in Peerumedu and Devikolam Taluks. Since most part of the district is covered with dense forests and plantations, there is lesser area for habitation. A large scale of conversion of forest area into arable lands resulted in the increase in population in the Udumbanchola and eastern part of Thodupuzha Taluk due to the establishment of gigantic hydroelectric projects and as a consequence to the “Grow More Food Campaign” in the state.

**ANNALS OF MIGRATION TO IDUKKI FROM OTHER PARTS OF KERALA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Reason for Migration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1890-1920</td>
<td>There was small scale migration because of the starting of plantations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920-1930</td>
<td>Because of the World War I and consequent poverty many people migrated to Idukki District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933-1947</td>
<td>Because of the Pallivasal power generation project some people migrated to Idukki District for employment purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>Forest area was given to 2000 families</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1950  Jawans retired from the army was given forest lands

1951  1000 people were given 1500 acres for the project “Grow More Food”

1952  Farmers were given 5 acres of 1000 blocks

Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population assume some important positioning the district. As per 2001 Census 14.11 per cent of the total population belongs to SC and 4.51 per cent belongs to ST group. On Block wise comparison it is seen that 28.51 per cent of total SC population is highly concentrated in Devikulam, Elamdesam and Idukki blocks.

Urban population in this District is only 4.1 per cent of the total population. Density of population is 1306 Sq.Km. in Thodupuzha Municipality. Vattavada panchayath has the lowest density of 75/sq km.

Transport and Communication

There are twelve state high ways passing through the district. There are two National Highways, namely NH-220 and NH-47 pass through the District. The Railways does not pass through the District and nearest railway stations are at Ernakulam, Kottayam and Alwaye. Nearest port is Cochin and the International Air port is near to the northern boundary of the District. Transport and communication, medical and educational facilities are poor compared to other Districts.
Agriculture is the main resources of the District and above 50 per cent of the revenue earnings of the district is from the above sector.

Electricity and Power

In the heart of the District lies the Idukki Dam – Asia’s biggest Arch Dam of 555 metres height proudly standing between the two mountains – Kuravanmala (839 metres) and Kurathimala (925 metres). The Periyar River and its tributaries provide the required infrastructure for generating power.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Kerala</th>
<th>Idukki</th>
<th>% share of Idukki</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pepper</td>
<td>56546 ton</td>
<td>21328 ton</td>
<td>37.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardamom</td>
<td>5380 ton</td>
<td>4869 ton</td>
<td>90.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>64801 ton</td>
<td>49473 ton</td>
<td>76.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turmeric</td>
<td>474560 ton</td>
<td>230079 ton</td>
<td>48.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lemongrass oil</td>
<td>97 ton</td>
<td>66 ton</td>
<td>68.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber</td>
<td>474556 ton</td>
<td>38356 ton</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocoa</td>
<td>3537 ton</td>
<td>685 ton</td>
<td>19.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>45000 ton</td>
<td>9100 ton</td>
<td>20.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pineapple</td>
<td>57316 ton</td>
<td>7856 ton</td>
<td>13.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginger</td>
<td>46372 ton</td>
<td>5547 ton</td>
<td>11.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>871361 ton</td>
<td>10578 ton</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Farm Guide, 1999
# AREA CULTIVATED IN IDUKKI DISTRICT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Kerala</th>
<th>Idukki</th>
<th>Percentage share of Idukki</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coconut</td>
<td>902104 ha</td>
<td>19261 ha</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber</td>
<td>448988 ha</td>
<td>37240 ha</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>34606 ha</td>
<td>23402 ha</td>
<td>67.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginger</td>
<td>13199 ha</td>
<td>1564 ha</td>
<td>11.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>82348 ha</td>
<td>11908 ha</td>
<td>14.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pepper</td>
<td>182887 ha</td>
<td>47712 ha</td>
<td>26.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tapioca</td>
<td>120387 ha</td>
<td>7268 ha</td>
<td>6.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cashew</td>
<td>97089 ha</td>
<td>1086 ha</td>
<td>1.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banana</td>
<td>78079 ha</td>
<td>4386 ha</td>
<td>5.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>430826 ha</td>
<td>5099 ha</td>
<td>1.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardamom</td>
<td>44248 ha</td>
<td>32547 ha</td>
<td>73.5 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Farm Guide 1999
## Land Holding Pattern of Idukki District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land in ha.</th>
<th>Nos.</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>00 - 0.02</td>
<td>16.98 %</td>
<td>00.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.2 - 0.50</td>
<td>47.62 %</td>
<td>15.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5 - 1.0</td>
<td>16.98 %</td>
<td>21.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 - 2.0</td>
<td>14.02 %</td>
<td>32.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 - 4.0</td>
<td>3.52 %</td>
<td>15.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0 - 10</td>
<td>0.69 %</td>
<td>6.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 and above</td>
<td>0.19 %</td>
<td>7.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Department of Economics and Statistics
Rice

In Idukki there is paddy in 5099 hectares. Per hectare yield is 2000 kg. The major problem is that experienced labourers are not available for rice cultivation.

Pepper

Pepper is cultivated in 47712 hectares. Pepper from Kerala has got a monopoly in the international market. It was called the black gold since it was bringing much gold from abroad. Because of soil erosion and intensive cultivation the fertility of the soil is reduced much. The resistance power of pepper plant against diseases is also nearly lost.

Cardamom

It is called the queen of spices. Cardamom is cultivated in 32547 hectares in this district. In the past the main problem was pest and diseases. But now the problem is acute competition from foreign countries. Formerly they were only importers but now they have become better producers of this product.

Ginger

It is cultivated in 5547 hectares. The famous brand of ginger called “Maran” is from Idukki.

Some of the other important spices cultivated in Idukki district are Cinnamon, Nutmeg, and Vanilla.
Fruits
The major fruit items that is produced in Idukki is Banana, Plantains, Mangoes, Orange, Mangostin, Avocado, Pomegranate, Papaya, Jackfruit, Sappotta, Guava, Passion fruit, Cherry, Strawberry, Plum, Peach, Apple, Egg fruit, Grapes, Apple etc.

Floriculture
The climate of Idukki is very good for floriculture. At present Orchid, Anthurium, Jasmine, Tulip, Gladiolus, Tuberod, Chrysanthemum, Asther etc. are cultivated here. Marketing facilities are the major problem that these farmers face.

Vegetables
Kerala is buying vegetables from other states. It amounts to 1200 crores. In Idukki vegetables are cultivated in 14636 hectares. The major item is bitter guard, and it comes about 968 hectares. In Idukki Carrot, Cabbage, Beetroot, Potato, Beans, Cauliflower, Green piece are also cultivated. These items are the monopoly of this state. In no other district of Kerala, such items are cultivated except in Wayanad.

Medicinal Plants
In the past Idukki was an abode of rare medicinal plants. The advent of the cash crops resulted in the death knell of these species of plants. Now the Panchayaths have taken initiatives to start the planting of medicinal plants.
Latest Developments

Asean Agreement is signed on 1 Jan 2010. Therefore there is a chance for free flow of rice, coconut, rubber, milk, cardamom, and nutmeg to the Kerala Market. Pepper and Coffee also will be imported to Kerala. Any import of the above mentioned items will be the last straw that will break the camels back unless sufficient protective covers are given to the farmers.

The central government has started employment guarantee programme. According to this programme anyone who has no work at all can register their name and get employment for hundred days. Per day a labourer will get Rs. 150. A farmer who has lost his entire crop can depend on this programme for his daily bread for the time being.