Assam located in the North eastern part of India is predominantly an agricultural state. Its unique geographical and climatic condition has endowed this land with a wide range of horticultural products. The rich and fertile alluvial soil of this region is very good for the growth of fruits and vegetables. Almost every home in Assam both in rural and urban areas has got some kind of vegetable and fruit cultivation. For example mango, Jackfruit, potatoes, Brinjals, tomatoes etc., though in a small scale are found almost in every home. So from this it can be said that Assam is a natural exchequer of fruit and vegetable cultivation which can serve as raw materials for fruit and vegetable based units of the state.

But inspite of the availability of the raw materials the fruit and vegetable processing industry in Assam is not prosperous and is still in its infant stage. Though some units have made their way to prosperity but such are quite few in number and their development are not organised and steady. It was understood from a preliminary survey of such units that their main problem is the marketing aspect of the finished products which is related to the financial and infrastructural problem.
This fact has primarily inspired me to take up the research topic for undertaking a systematic study of the fruit and vegetable processing industry of Assam. Although fruit and vegetable processing units are found in the state of Assam yet they are highly unorganised and in many cases they lack viability. Moreover, most of the horticultural products are wasted due to lack of adequate storage facility. Furthermore, due to lack of processing units most of the fruits and vegetables are subjected to free trade within and outside the state.

Taking in view the economic and social viability of this industry the government of Assam and NEDFI has considered food processing as the thrust area for development.

Though a few paper work has been done on organisational level in this field but such are not sufficient enough to discuss and proceed with the work. This is also on record that this work happens to be a pathfinder or pioneering work in the field of fruit and vegetable processing in an individual level. The thrust areas of the study are the various problems faced by the fruit and vegetable processing units in Assam especially marketing, their prospects and suggestions for future growth and development. Further the study also attempts to highlight the various government assistance given to such industries. Furthermore, the study also throws light on the
agricultural scenario of the state mostly the horticultural produce which serve as raw materials to this industry.

The methodology adopted for undergoing the study is governed mostly by the questionnaire distributed among the entrepreneurs, consumers and retailers of the fruit and vegetable processing industry. Moreover, personal visit has also been made to many units all over Assam. The researcher has also visited the various government and semi government institutions helping the fruit and vegetable processing units by their various assistance schemes. Further, the researcher in search of detailed information had visited many libraries within and outside the state of Assam. This includes the library of the Indian Council For Social Science Research (ICSSR) New Delhi, the library of of the Indian Institute Of Entrepreneurship (IIE) Guwahati, the library of the Assam Institute Of Management (AIMA), North East Institute Of Bank Management (NEIBM), District Libraries, Library of the Administrative Staff College, Small Industry Service Institute (SISI) and the K.K. Handique Library of the Gauhati University.

The study is an unique one and has its own significance which throws a tremendous impact on both the economic and social life of Assam. Apart from solving the
unemployment problem the growth of this industry brings a fair amount of revenue to the state. Therefore the outcome of this work is expected not only to develop the fruit and vegetable industry but also the standard of living of the masses and thereby enhance the economic and social upliftment of the state.

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