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TURMERIC: THE GOLDEN SPICE

In Erode, Tamil Nadu, a 100kg bag of turmeric now costs more than 8 gm of gold. The district has seen its turmeric trading prices shoot up 30 per cent over the past few months.



name is derived from the Latin *terra merita* (meaning ‘meritorious earth’) referring to the colour of ground turmeric, which resembles a mineral pigment. In many languages, turmeric is simply called ‘yellow root.’

India is the biggest producer, supplying some 20,000 tonnes each year. Turmeric enters the international market in the form of dried whole rhizomes or as ground rhizomes. The major importers of this spice are Iran, Sri Lanka, Middle Eastern and North African countries.

Global scenario

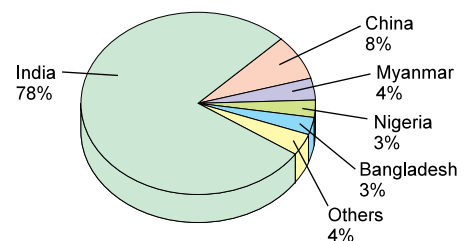
Accounting for about 78 per cent of world turmeric production, India is the largest producer of turmeric. It is also the biggest consumer and exporter of turmeric. Other producers in Asia include China, Bangla-

Turmeric is an ancient spice. A native of South East Asia, it is used from antiquity as a dye and condiment. Turmeric is cultivated primarily in China, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Java, Peru, Australia and the West Indies in addition to Bengal in India. It is still used in rituals of the Hindu religion and as a dye for holy robes, being natural, unsynthesised and cheap. Turmeric is in fact one of the

cheapest spices. Although use of turmeric as a dye is similar to saffron, culinary uses of the two spices should not be confused and turmeric can never replace saffron in food dishes.

Use of turmeric dates back nearly 4000 years to the Vedic culture in India where it was used as a culinary spice and had some religious significance. The

Percentage Share of Turmeric in Global Production



Source: Spices Board

desh, Burma (Myanmar) and Nigeria. Turmeric is also produced in the Caribbean and Latin America: Jamaica, Haiti, Costa Rica, Peru and Brazil.

Major importers are the Middle East and North African countries, Iran, Japan and Sri Lanka. These countries represent 75 per cent of the turmeric world trade, and mostly import from Asian producers.

Indian scenario

Production and productivity trend. The total area under turmeric increased gradually over the past decade, and at the same time the production has also risen. The yield has varied from year to year, rising and falling in alternate years.

Total area under turmeric in India rose gradually from 150 thousand hectares in 2002-03 to 186 thousand hectares in 2006-07. At the same time, the production increased from 522 thousand MT in 2002-03 to 837 thousand MT in 2006-07. The yield increased from 3479 kg/ha in 2002-03 to 4952 kg/

ha in 2005-06 and declined to 4501 kg/ha in 2006-07.

Statewise production. In 2006-07, India had approximately 186 thousand hectares under turmeric cultivation. Andhra Pradesh occupied the largest area coverage (36 per cent) with 47 per cent production share in India. That means Andhra Pradesh topped in both area and production of turmeric.

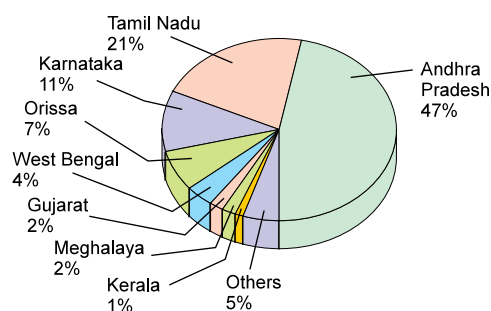
The second largest area is covered by Tamil Nadu at 16 per cent, with a production share of 21 per cent. Other major states where turmeric is cultivated include Orissa, Karnataka, West Bengal and Kerala.

Consumption. As mentioned earlier, India is not only the largest turmeric producer in the world but it is also the largest consumer. Domestic consumption accounts for 93-94 per cent of total production.

Tamil Nadu enjoys a higher yield of turmeric than most of the other states, though the state has witnessed sharp decline in total production due to shifting of area to other crops such as sugarcane on account of poor price realisation. Both Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu constitute major share in India's total production.

Major turmeric growing districts are Ka-

Statewise Production of Turmeric in 2006-07



Source: ICEX-Commodity Profile-Turmeric

rimnagar, Nizamabad, Guntur and Kadapa in Andhra Pradesh, Erode, Coimbatore, Dharmapuri and Salam in Tamil Nadu, Belgum and Chamrajnagar in Karnataka, Allepey in Kerala, and Sangli and Nanded in Maharashtra.

To sum up

India accounts for about 80 per cent of world turmeric production with about 150,000 hectares under cultivation. Andhra Pradesh occupies almost 47 per cent of area coverage and 63 per cent share in production. Domestic consumption accounts for 93-94 per cent of the total production. India exports this member of spices family for medicinal and other purposes to almost all the developed countries.

For most of you, it will be difficult to believe that in Erode, Tamil Nadu, a 100kg bag of turmeric now costs more than 8 gm of gold. Erode, the world's largest producer and most important trading centre of turmeric in Asia, has seen its turmeric trading prices shoot up 30 per cent in value over the past few months.

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Area, Production and Yield of Turmeric in India

Year	Area ('000 ha)	Production ('000 tonnes)	Yield (kg/ha)
1994-95	149.40	622.00	4,163
1995-96	139.30	462.90	3,323
1996-97	135.20	528.90	3,912
1997-98	139.70	549.20	3,931
1998-99	160.70	597.90	3,841
1999-2000	141.20	668.50	4,734
2000-01	191.70	714.30	3,726
2001-02	142.90	658.40	4,607
2002-03	150.10	522.24	3,479
2003-04	150.33	564.28	3,754
2004-05	157.79	712.59	4,516
2005-06	172.01	851.70	4,951
2006-07	186.00	837.20	4,501

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, New Delhi and State Departments of Economics & Statistics