

Post-harvest Management of Cashewnut

CASHEW processing is deemed to be sunrise sector of the Indian economy owing to its exponential growth since its inception and socio economic impact, specifically on employment, income generation and gender equity. Industrialized agriculture and food production rely on efficient utilization of energy to carry out the desired operations and obtain high processing output through mechanization towards safe storage of agricultural products and conversion processes that create new forms of food. Cashew (*Anacardium occidentale* L.) is one of the horticultural crops and is often referred to as 'wonder nut' having potential to provide source of livelihood for the cashew growers, create employment opportunities and generate foreign exchange through exports. Cashew kernels are a high value commodity with sales growing steadily at an annual rate of seven per cent, with every expectation that the market will remain strong in future too. The cashew industry ranks third in the world production of edible nuts with world production during last fiscal at about 2.8 million tonnes of raw nuts and an estimated value in excess of US \$ 4.19 billion (FAO, 2012).

Traditionally, various processing operations were performed manually by the skilled personnel in India, the world's largest producer of cashew kernels. Although, various mechanized equipments were developed globally for different operations in the line of processing during 60's, it could not attract Indian processors primarily due to twin reasons *i.e.*, availability of adequate work force, possessing required skill to extract whole kernels which fetched premium price at consumer level and also due to lower performance of the processing machines. Cashew business expanded tremendously over a period of time, providing more opportunity for the new entrepreneurs to plunge in to this business. Spurt in the cashew value chain and employment creation in other sectors led to non-availability of skilled work force in this system and presently these industries are gradually progressing towards mechanization. This chapter encompasses post harvest management of cashewnut, opportunities for rural based microenterprise and by-product utilization. Besides, thrust areas have been identified to strengthen cashew value chain to anchor India's premier position in the global arena.

Harvesting and collection of nuts

Cashewnut is a seasonal crop and is harvested from March to May in the east and west coast and certain plain regions of India. Raw cashewnuts are harvested after natural drop or thrashed by sticks or shaking trees. Mechanization of harvesting cashewnuts is yet to be practised not only in India, but also in cashew