

EXOTIC CROPS FOR AGRO-ECO TOURISM (AET) MODELS

M. Thangam¹, **Dr. Safeena, SA²** and S. Priya Devi³
ICAR-Central Coastal Agricultural Research Institute
Ela, Old Goa- 403 402, Goa
E-mail: thangam.m@icar.gov.in

¹-Principal Scientist (Hort.-Veg.Sci.)

²-Scientist (Hort.-Floriculture)

³-Senior Scientist (Hort.-Fruit Sci.)

Introduction:

Agriculture is the main stay of India and more than fifty per cent of workforce in the country is dependent on agriculture either directly or indirectly for their livelihood. But its contribution to the national GDP is around 18-20 per cent due to its subsistence in nature in general and lack of diversification for emerging demands and needs in particular. In this context, diversification in agriculture assumes greater importance. It can be crop based or market demand based or location based diversification to meet the growing demands. For example, "Agro-Eco Tourism (AET)" is a location and demand based diversification in agriculture which is widely practised in the West Coastal States of India. It can be broadly defined as integration of different crop components including natural flora and fauna for primarily showcasing to the urban tourist (domestic/foreign) on sustainable manner for income generation. The existing AET models integrates wide array of crops especially plantation and spices crops, indigenous preparations out of existing crops, organic agriculture, vedic agriculture, traditional agricultural tools, allied sectors like dairy, poultry, water sports etc. Likewise new avenues like Avian Tourism, Crop based Tourism, Adventure Tourism etc. to name few are gaining momentum.

Exotic crops as components in AET Models:

New crops forms the basis of any AET models since novelty and attraction are the main criteria for any agro eco tourism centres. In this context, introduction of exotic crops forms an integral part of AET models. Heliconia is one among them which was introduced from South America way back to 19th century by British to India. Heliconia belongs to the family Heliconiaceae under the botanical order Zingiberales. It contains eight families and there are

1. Marantaceae
2. Cannaceae
3. Zingiberaceae
4. Costaceae
5. Heliconiaceae