

## **Plant Introductions in the Maldives**

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Agriculture in the Maldives is based mainly on plant species introduced periodically from time immemorial. Information is provided on the manner in which agriculture is practiced in the Maldives, including people's attitude towards plant products. Several UN agencies made efforts towards the development of agriculture, horticulture and forestry by deputing consultants from time to time to advise the government on the suitability of different species for specific islands. While Mr Butany conducted field trials in several islands/atolls, using several species of field crops and vegetables, several other experts enlisted elite cultivars of tobacco, spices, tree species, fruits species and vegetables, for growing in specific islands based on their visits to different islands/atolls.

Dr Arora visited several islands/ atolls to study the diversity of different cultivated species and Mehra collected and evaluated several species of cultivated plants grown in different islands/Atolls.

Based on the reports of the consultants, the presentation discusses the achievements and opportunities for agricultural development in the Maldives especially related to the suitability of several introduced species, for household farming, community farming, crop-island development, development of un-inhabited islands, integrated agri-horticulture- forestry development, ornamental horticulture, fodder production, export crops and hydroponics.

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## **Indian Plant Genetic Resource Management System**

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Plants provide raw materials for food, feed, fibre, shelter and medicines and several other uses. Termed as plant genetic resources (PGR) these are recognized as tangible resources of as much importance as soil, water, oil and minerals. The PGR are characterized by unequal distribution on earth; with some geographical regions endowed with greater diversity and called as centres of diversity. Growth in agriculture throughout the world has been achieved through two important processes – selection for better traits and introduction of plants from different geographical regions. Introduction of plants like rubber, coffee, tea, oil palm has played an important role in the economies of many countries. In India, rubber, coffee, cashew, sunflower, soybean, and maize are some of the examples of introduced plants which have become major crops.

Since the industrial revolution when scientific plant breeding has markedly improved agricultural production, the role of systematic collection, evaluation, conservation and exchange of PGR has gained rapid strides.

Management of PGR is an important issue, especially for a country like India, which is predominantly an agrarian society and also richly endowed with PGR. Realizing the importance of PGR, the Indian Council for Agriculture Research established the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR) in 1976. The Bureau is the nodal institute working on survey, collection, exchange, quarantine, characterization, evaluation, conservation and documentation of PGR. It has played a pivotal role in crop improvement and development and diversification of agriculture in India through germplasm introduction from various foreign sources and germplasm collection from within the country and abroad, and germplasm supply to plant breeders and other users. International collaboration and infrastructural facilities were strengthened manifold during the 1980s. While a cold-storage module (with a seed storage capacity of 30,000) was established in 1983, the state-of-the-art technology National Genebank (NGB) was established in 1996 with a storage capacity of one million