Cropping pattern and crop diversification in Kerala, India – a spatio-temporal analysis

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The assessment of shift in cropping pattern is crucial for a good insight into the agricultural development of a region. The present study focused on the changes in the cropping pattern and the extent of crop diversification in Kerala, India. The results of the study revealed that the share of food crops to the gross cropped area substantially declined from 56.85% in TE 1987–88 to 40.73% in TE 2019–20, whereas the share of non-food crops increased remarkably from 43.14% in TE 1987–88 to 59.29% in TE 2019–20. The extent of crop diversification was higher in Idukki district, while crop specialization was prominent in Kozhikode district. Labour unavailability, high labour wage rates and climate variability were identified as the major constraints faced by the respondents in the study areas.

Keywords: Agro-ecological zones, constraints, crop diversification, cropping pattern, labour.

there has been a consistent shift to garden and plantation crops at the expense of food crops. In particular, land-use experts have observed a shift towards monoculture and traditional cash crop agroforestry at the cost of diversified homegardens[9–11]. A significant amount of Kerala's homegardens were converted to coconut and rubber plantations due to commercialization and landholding fragmentation[12].

After the formation of Kerala in 1956, the first elected Government passed the Agrarian Relations Bill in 1959 to reform the tenancy laws and set land ownership limits. This was replaced by the Kerala Land Reform Act of 1963. This Act, which came into effect in 1970, put a cap on landowners' total land holding size and reapportioned the surplus land among indigent peasants and landless labourers. According to Nair and Dhanuraj[13], the implementation of land reforms also led to landholding fragmentation and the subsequent loss of economies of scale in cultivat