

# Litchi in India

## An origin with a future

With production of 300 000 tonnes, India has true litchi export development potential. Since the first 40-tonne shipment to the northern European market in 1998, exports have increased steadily and 100 tonnes is forecast this year. Good plantation management and the mastery of conservation techniques are all assets that already ensure the arrival of high quality litchis in Europe.

Indian litchi production totals approximately 300 000 tonnes grown on 375 000 ha in the three states Bihar, Uttranchal and Bengal.

A great number of varieties are observed but those most frequently grown in orchards are Shahi and China in Bihar and Rose Scented and China in Uttranchal.

Cultural practices have developed in recent years and are now very well mastered (planting distance, pruning, irrigation, organic and chemical fertilisation, crop protection treatments, etc.). Harvesting starts in the east in May in the Calcutta region and finishes in the north in Uttranchal at the end of June.

However, high temperatures of between 35°C and 50°C and relative humidity of 25 to 40% cause a number of problems with regard to fruit quality in the orchards:

- scorching of fruits by the sun;
- cracking of the shell;
- colouring difficulties for early varieties because the day/night temperature gradient is too small.

Litchi — Production calendar											
Month	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
China											
Thailand											
India											
Vietnam											
Taiwan											
Mauritius											
Reunion											
Madagascar											
South Africa											
Zimbabwe											
Australia											
Israel											

The first exports started in 1998 and increased steadily from one year to the next: from 40 tonnes in 1998 to 100 tonnes in 2002. The exports were supported by APEDA (the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority), a body reporting to the Ministry of Trade, and CIRAD-FLHOR expertise.

Exports to Europe are by air and by container ship, with the main destinations being the United Kingdom, Belgium and the Netherlands.

In spite of the 45 days that elapse between harvesting and marketing, the quality of the fruits shipped by sea is perfect thanks to the precautions taken during harvesting and packing. Post-harvest sulphur treatment is well mastered by some exporters.

The local market is also good for fresh litchis and also for dried and sulphur-treated fruits ■

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Litchi — Area and production in India by state  
1998-1999

State	Area in hectares	Production in tonnes
Bihar	25 800	309 600
West Bengal	3 670	36 020
Tripura	4 700	26 600
Assam	4 028	16 815
Orissa	3 200	13 200
Punjab	2 300	13 200
Uttranchal	8 800	13 700
Other states	3 700	4 580
<b>Total</b>	<b>56 200</b>	<b>428 900</b>

Source: Cebeco India Private Limited

Litchi — Area and production in India  
1991 to 1999

Year	Area in hectares	Production in tonnes
1991-1992	49 300	243 800
1992-1993	53 500	260 900
1993-1994	55 500	313 400
1994-1995	56 500	333 200
1995-1996	48 600	364 600
1996-1997	52 200	377 700
1997-1998	57 800	454 700
1998-1999	56 200	428 900

Source: Cebeco India Private Limited