



## Exploring the Banana Market in Assam: A Fruitful Endeavor

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### Abstract

The study provides a comprehensive overview of Assam's thriving banana industry, highlighting its diverse facets and contributions to the state's agricultural economy. Assam's rich agricultural diversity and picturesque landscapes are complemented by a flourishing banana market featuring a wide array of varieties like Jahaji, Bar Jahaji, Chenichamma, Malbhog, Kanaibansi, Saapkal, and Garo Moina, each showcasing unique characteristics and soil preferences. These bananas serve multiple purposes, from being integral to Assamese cuisine and medicinal remedies to contributing to local beverage production and innovative uses in crafting buoyant structures for water travel. Darrangiri, Asia's largest banana market, plays a pivotal role in employment and export, generating substantial monthly revenue. Despite challenges faced by small-scale farmers due to weather variations, pest attacks, and infrastructure limitations, their traditional yet adaptive practices remain crucial in meeting local demands. The market dynamics, anchored by Guwahati, facilitate a robust distribution network that caters not only to domestic markets but also reaches international territories. While challenges like weather unpredictability and inadequate infrastructure persist, opportunities for growth abound through embracing advanced techniques and fostering market linkages. Collaborative efforts are essential to ensure sustainable growth and support for Assam's banana market, promising a prosperous future for the state's agricultural landscape.

**Key words:** Agricultural diversity, Market dynamics, Revenue

### Introduction

Assam, known for its lush greenery and fertile lands, is not just celebrated for its tea gardens but also for its thriving agricultural diversity. Among the array of crops grown in this northeastern state, bananas stand out as a significant produce, contributing substantially to the state's agricultural economy. The banana market in Assam has witnessed steady growth, presenting a promising landscape for both farmers and traders alike.

### Banana Varieties in Assam

In Assam, banana cultivation primarily encompasses varieties falling under AAA, AAB, and ABB genomes. Among the 15 to 20 available varieties, some notable ones include:

**Jahaji:** These banana trees are typically of short stature, requiring approximately 350 days for ripening and belong to the AAA category.

**Bar Jahaji:** Distinguished by their tall trees, these bananas take around a year or, in some instances, more than a year to ripen. They are classified under the AAA category.

**Chenichamma:** Neither too short nor too tall, these trees produce bananas that fully ripen within a year. They are categorized under the AAB variety.

**Malbhog:** With medium-tall trees, this variety takes about 370 days for the bananas to ripen. Ideal cultivation is in loamy soil, falling within the AAB category.

**Kanaibansi:** Trees of medium stature bear long bananas, taking roughly 400 days to ripen. They are classified under the AA category.

**Saapkal:** Thriving in the hills of Assam, these medium-tall trees yield mature bananas in about 400 days, falling within the AAB category.

**Garó Moina:** Also found in the hills, this variety features very short trees and falls under the AAA category.

The diverse range of banana varieties in Assam offers unique growth traits, durations for ripening, and soil preferences, contributing to the rich agricultural landscape of the region.

### Banana Uses in Assam

- ✓ Bananas play a crucial role as a primary ingredient in various Assamese dishes, while the "Kaskal" variety is specifically utilized as a vegetable.
- ✓ Khaar, a preparation derived from bananas, is employed to address digestive ailments and gastric issues, known for its medicinal properties.
- ✓ Traditional practices involve using banana tree leaves as serving platters, especially during ceremonial occasions like weddings.
- ✓ Additionally, bananas are used in the production of beer, contributing to regional beverage crafting.
- ✓ A unique utilization involves tying several banana trees together to create a buoyant raft-like structure locally referred to as "bhel," which is used for floating in water.

### Darrangiri: Asia's Largest Banana Market

Darrangiri stands as Asia's largest banana market, conveniently situated close to the National Highway located in the Goalpara district of Assam. Over 14,000 individuals are associated with this market, which extensively exports fruit to neighboring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh. During the peak months of September and October, the market witnesses the sale of around 40 to 50 lorries filled with bananas in a single day. The market's monthly revenue exceeds 4 Crore. Recognizing its potential, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has announced plans to establish the Assam Agricultural University in Goalpara, aiming to further elevate and expand the market's capabilities.

### Banana Market in Barpeta, Assam

The banana market in Barpeta, Assam, stands as a significant hub within the state's agricultural landscape. A few days ago, we visited the banana wholesale market in Barpeta.

Barpeta, renowned for its agricultural prowess, hosts a thriving market dedicated to bananas, showcasing the region's robust banana cultivation. This market serves as a vital trading center where local farmers bring their produce for sale. The market buzzes with activity as wholesalers, retailers, and buyers converge to purchase bananas in bulk. The presence of this market



Darangiri Banana Market of Assam

Source: [Click here](#)



not only caters to the local demand for bananas within Barpeta but also serves as a distribution point for neighboring regions. The market's vitality contributes significantly to the agricultural economy of Barpeta, emphasizing the crucial role of bananas in the region's agricultural prosperity.



**Banana Market in Barpeta, Assam**

Source: Original Source (Dr. Arunima Konar) place: Barpeta Assam, Date: 27/12/23

### **Role of Small-Scale Farmers**

Small-scale farmers are the driving force behind the banana industry in Assam, embodying its backbone. Operating within limited land holdings, these farmers are pivotal in cultivating bananas across the region. Their agricultural techniques blend traditional wisdom with modern practices, ensuring a sustainable approach to cultivation. Despite their modest scale, these farmers make substantial contributions to the overall production output, playing an indispensable role in fulfilling the local demand for bananas. Their dedication and expertise underscore the resilience and significance of small-scale farming within Assam's thriving agricultural landscape.

### **Market Dynamics and Distribution**

The banana market in Assam thrives within a well-structured network encompassing local markets, wholesale avenues, and retail outlets. Among these, Guwahati emerges as a pivotal urban centre, serving as a critical hub for the distribution of bananas throughout the state and neighbouring regions. This bustling city acts as a focal point for the aggregation and dispersal of bananas, catering to both local and regional demands.

Within this market ecosystem, various intermediaries play essential roles. Wholesalers and commission agents serve as linchpins, facilitating the seamless movement of bananas from farms to different market segments. Their involvement ensures an uninterrupted and efficient flow of bananas to meet the diverse needs of consumers. This encompasses the demand for raw consumption as well as industrial usage in processed food products, reflecting the adaptability and versatility of bananas as a commodity.

Moreover, Assam's bananas are not limited to local consumption; they contribute significantly to the export market. Countries like Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh are recipients of Assam's quality bananas, showcasing the fruit's reach beyond national borders. Domestically, states such as Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh serve as primary markets for Assam's bananas, indicating a robust interstate trade network that reinforces the fruit's popularity and demand across India. This comprehensive distribution network underscores the significance of Assam's banana industry within both local and wider markets, highlighting its pivotal role in the regional agricultural economy.

## Challenges Faced by the Industry

The burgeoning banana market in Assam confronts a spectrum of challenges that impede its full potential. One significant obstacle revolves around the region's unpredictable weather patterns, posing a constant threat to banana cultivation. Variations in rainfall, temperature fluctuations, and natural calamities disrupt crop cycles, affecting both quality and quantity of banana yields. Pest attacks emerge as another pressing concern, as infestations jeopardize entire banana plantations, causing substantial losses for farmers.

Furthermore, the industry grapples with inadequate infrastructure, hindering the efficient transportation and storage of bananas. The lack of proper facilities for cold storage or preservation exacerbates post-harvest losses, impacting the availability of bananas throughout the year. This deficiency in infrastructure also hampers the market's competitiveness and limits the scope for export potential, constraining the industry's growth trajectory.

Limited access to modern agricultural technology and practices stands as a significant hurdle for small-scale farmers in Assam. The absence of technological advancements and sustainable farming methods restricts their ability to enhance productivity and resilience against challenges like pest outbreaks or adverse weather conditions.

Moreover, the absence of robust marketing strategies remains a critical challenge. Despite the superior quality of locally grown bananas, inadequate marketing initiatives and promotional efforts inhibit reaching broader consumer bases. This shortfall in effective marketing campaigns restricts the visibility and market reach of Assam's bananas, hindering their potential to penetrate national and international markets effectively.

Addressing these challenges demands comprehensive interventions, including investments in infrastructure development, provision of advanced agricultural techniques, pest management strategies, and the implementation of effective marketing campaigns. Resolving these impediments will not only fortify the banana industry in Assam but also bolster the livelihoods of small-scale farmers while consolidating the region's position in the agricultural landscape.

## Opportunities for Growth

Despite challenges, several opportunities exist for the expansion and enhancement of the banana market in Assam. Embracing advanced farming techniques, promoting organic cultivation, and introducing value addition methods such as banana-based products or processing units could significantly boost the market.

Moreover, establishing better storage facilities, transportation infrastructure, and market linkages can help in reducing post-harvest losses and ensuring a steady supply of quality bananas throughout the year.

## Future Prospects and Conclusion

The banana market in Assam holds immense potential for growth and development. With a concerted effort from the government, agricultural bodies, and private enterprises to address the existing challenges and capitalize on opportunities, the market can thrive further.

Efforts towards research and development, capacity building among farmers, and fostering sustainable practices will not only enhance the livelihoods of small-scale farmers but also contribute to the overall economic prosperity of the state.

In conclusion, the banana market in Assam stands as a symbol of the region's agricultural richness. With the right interventions and support, it can continue to flourish, meeting local demands while making its mark in the larger agricultural landscape of India.

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