

# **ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ADMINISTRATION**

## **DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

### **Right To Information Act – 2005**

## **History of Agriculture in Andaman and Nicobar Islands**

Agriculture in these Islands is not very old. The original inhabitants of Andaman lived in isolation and depended for the food on forest products, fish and wild animals etc. for their survival. Cultivation of crops was unknown to them.

In Nicobar group of Islands, the Tribals have been growing plantation crops like coconut and arecanut for centuries. It is reported that they used to exchange coconut and arecanut for rice and cloth etc. with foreign shipper visiting these Islands from China, Malaysia and Indonesia etc.

In 1779 when a small colony was established at Chatham Island, the conventional agriculture in a small area was taken up to support the population to meet the demands of vegetables and also a few tropical fruits etc. However, this project was subsequently abandoned due to aboriginal menace and diseases.

With the establishment of penal settlement during 1857 and with gradual increase of settlers by repatriation, land distribution started in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, providing, each settler about 2 ha. Paddy land, 2 ha. Hilly land and 0.4 ha. of homestead land. This marked the initiation of agriculture in these Islands. Thus by and large the history of agriculture dates back to a little more than a century, although plantation of coconut and arecanut in Nicobar group of Island goes as back as 7<sup>th</sup> century.

The Department of Agriculture was established in 1945 to develop agriculture in these Islands in a systematic and scientific line.

After Independence, major stress was under area expansion in agriculture development, and land for agriculture expanded upto the end of 4<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (1969-74). However, with the report of Mc Vean in 1976 on "Land use in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands", which emphatically indicated these Islands as essentially forest terrains and not suitable for large scale agricultural settlement and agro-based enterprise, the thrust was diverted from area expansion to intensive agricultural practices in the existing area. As on date, agricultural activities are therefore confined to an area of about fifty thousand hectare.