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## PROJECT TEAM

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## FOREWORD

Betel vine is commercially cultivated in Southeast Asian countries on scattered basis. Among them, India ranks first in its cultivation and production. Many states of India namely Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Assam, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh & West Bengal, etc., including Bihar, are known for betel vine cultivation. The peculiarity of this crop is that it generates steady income to the growers throughout the year with slight variations in quantum of production due to change in season. On the other hand, other crops generate income at the fixed period of time once or twice in a year. Despite technological improvement in the mode of cultivation, the farmers at significant scale in the state of Bihar have not adopted multiple cropping. From the viewpoint of unit-employment generation capacity too growing of betel vine crop has its distinct place. Since time immemorial betel vine cultivation enjoys superiority in respect of regular income and employment generation capacity for its growers and the people engaged in its trade and selling.

Betel vine in India and also in Bihar is a traditional crop. Despite its being most suitable for regular income generation and employment creation nature throughout the year, its cultivation and trade is confined to one particular caste, called. BARAI only in Bihar, which accounts for 90 per cent of the total labour force engaged in betel vine cultivation and trade. This crop is highly labour intensive, however, it requires considerable capital investment too. It is highly susceptible to change in weather conditions giving rise to greater degree of risk and uncertainty in its cultivation and trade. Such peculiarities of betel vine cultivation require appropriate management and provisions of proper and timely preservation technique. It poses a big task before farm scientists and economists to evolve the method enabling the farmers to earn maximum return on their labour deployment and capital investment from betel vine cultivation.

Keeping the above facts in view the Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Department of Agriculture & Co-operation, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India had entrusted the Agro-Economic Research Centre for Bihar & Jharkhand, T M Bhagalpur University, Bhagalpur to undertake this study.

The study finds that the expenditure on its cultivation is very high. The growers are economically very weak and technologically under aware. So they are unable to get desired remunerative returns from cultivation and trade of betel vine. It is a surprising fact that on the part of the State Government no concrete and comprehensive policy has been made for the development of this crop. The reason behind this situation lies in the growers and traders being scattered and unorganized, mostly illiterate and unaware of the changes day by day being brought about by the state as well as Central Governments for the betterment of farmers and agricultural labour.

The betel vine is a multiuse crop. Its leaves are scented and used for chewing in form of '**Khili**' and **Gilloury** (*as locally known*) by habituated and wealthy people. Offering betel leaf gillouri is a sign of respect, love and friendship. It is used as mouthwash after meal at family and also at community feast. On all religious and social occasions betel leaves are compulsorily used. In indigenous and AYURVEDIC system of medicine all parts of betel vine crop are used for preparing different types of medicine. Attempts need to be taken to commercialize the use of such property of betel vine for pharmaceutical uses.

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**(B K Jha)**

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