

Pepper prices hit record low

Farmers demand minimum floor price of ₹500 a kg

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The prices of pepper hit record low in six years, falling to ₹350 per kg at the main market at Kattappana on Saturday. The prices were on the decline after the season started in January.

The prices per kilogramme of pepper in 2013 reached over ₹400 and it went up to ₹ 730 in 2016. However, the farmers expected the prices to go up by June with the poor arrival in the market.

Farmers say that a minimum price of ₹500 needed to compensate for the high wages and prices of pesticide and fertilisers. Pepper

is a major crop in the High Range and the small-sized pepper is considered to be of better quality. It is said that the big-sized pepper arriving from Karnataka has more takers than the small-sized in the general market. According to Pavithran, a farmer at Erattayar, it was their long-standing demand to declare a minimum floor price of ₹500 a kg of pepper. He said that the Spices Board had already stopped subsidy given to the pepper farmers. Many farmers had shifted to other crops after diseases affected the crop nearly a decade ago. It was only a few years ago that new pepper vines were

planted after an upward trend in its prices.

It is alleged that the low-priced pepper from Vietnam has flooded the market which caused the poor demand for the pepper produced here. Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi are the main domestic market for pepper. James Joseph, a farmer at Kattappana, said that there was much difference in cost of production here compared to Vietnam. The government should take steps to prevent pepper from Vietnam reaching the domestic market. He said that the government should announce a minimum floor price of ₹500 a kg.