Challenges in Coffee Cultivation in India

What is the issue?

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Coffee cultivation in India is being challenged with many issues affecting the sustainability of the plantation crop.

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What is the brief account on coffee cultivation in India?

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- Coffee is cultivated in the hill tracts of South Indian states, with Karnataka accounting for 71%, followed by Kerala with 21% and Tamil Nadu 5%.
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- Coffee plant requires hot and humid climate with temperature varying between 15°C and 28 °C and rainfall from 150 to 250 cm.
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- Coffee is generally grown under shady trees and dry weather iscrucial only at the time of ripening of the berries.
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What are the concerns with coffee production?

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- Recent estimates shows that there is an average decline of 20 per cent over the earlier post-blossom crop.
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- Coffee cultivation requires plenty of cheap and skilled labour for various operations including sowing, transplanting, and pruning, plucking, drying, grading and packing of coffee.
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- But in India there is an acute shortage of skilled plantation labour, which is evident from the thousands of unskilled workers from Bihar, Jharkhand and Assam, migrating to coffee planting areas.
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- Over the last few decades the loss of forest cover has resulted in environmental degradation and costs of inputs such as fertiliser, labour wages, pesticides and fuel has drastically increased.
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- There are also stagnation in bulk coffee prices which has pushed the small growers who constitute 98% of coffee production to other avenues like, coffee resorts, inter-cropping with pepper, etc.
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What measures needs to be taken?

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- Crop quality needs to be improved through quality hubs for superior processing, whereby even cherries will yield higher returns.
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- Small coffee growers needs to be supported with minimum support prices and subsidies as they face bigger challenges like global currency fluctuations.
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Source: Business Line

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