

## Spike in ginger price flags chances of environmental degradation



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## Large tracts of ‘encroached’ land under ginger cultivation in Malnad region

Ginger price shooting up may have brought cheer to farmers, but environmentalists fear this would only lead to more areas coming under ginger cultivation, which could lead to environmental degradation.

The price of a quintal of ginger that was around 6,500 in March this year has touched 9,500 a quintal today. Market insiders say heavy rains in [Karnataka](#) between August and September 2018, caused fungal infections resulting in decline in yield. Srinivas, a ginger merchant from Anandapuram in Sagar taluk, said there was a mismatch between demand and supply, resulting in the spike.

In 2018, ginger was cultivated on 5,800 hectares of land in Shivamogga district. According to Department of Horticulture sources, the area under ginger cultivation is likely to go up to 7,000 hectares in the district this year as the commodity is turning lucrative.

It is well known that large tracts of land in the forests of Sagar, Sorab and Shikaripur taluks have been converted into cultivable land, some of it for ginger cultivation. According to sources, of the 2.04 lakh acres of forest land encroached in Karnataka, 81,501 acres is in Shivamogga district alone.

Akhilesh Chipli, Sagar-based environmentalist, told *The Hindu* that forests will bear the burnt of spike in price of ginger. Vrukshalaksha Andolana, an organisation in environment conservation, had lodged a complaint with the Forest Department that in April and May, trees on more than 50 acres of forest in Sagar taluk were felled for ginger cultivation.

Fertilizers and pesticides are used indiscriminately for cultivation of ginger in Malnad region. According to a study by the Centre for Ecological Sciences of the IISc., and Vrukshalaksha Andolana in 2014-15, land in Shivamogga and Uttara Kannada districts was becoming barren and water bodies, including Tunga, Kumudwathi and Varada rivers were getting polluted owing to excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in cultivation of ginger.

Even for processing ginger, chemicals such as sulphur and calcium hypochloride are used.

Mr. Chipli said that as the area under ginger cultivation is likely to grow, there was a need to create awareness on the harmful effects of chemicals in its cultivation and processing.