



## MACADAMIA: A POTENTIAL CROP FOR DIVERSIFICATION



The Macadamia plant belongs to the family Proteaceae and is native to the Australian subtropical rainforests. It is a medium sized tropical evergreen tree with shiny dark green leaves and can reach heights of 12 - 15 m. The tree is important for its fruit which is a nut. There are several species of macadamia, however, two species namely the *Macadamia integrifolia* and *Macadamia tetraphylla* and their hybrids are commercially cultivated. They prefer well drained soils and perform better in temperatures ranging from 25 to 35 °C. Macadamia orchards are most suitable for establishment in regions where avocados, papayas and bananas grow well. Maximum yield is reached when plants are at full maturity in about 13 years.

Macadamia nuts constitute a relatively small part of the overall nut industry when compared to almonds and cashews. Because the industry is still in its infancy, there is growing demand for macadamia nut consumption and a huge scope for the development of new markets. The promising prospects has seen macadamia production nearly quadruple to reach 190000 nut in shell metric tonnes in 2017 as opposed to about 50000 metric tonnes in mid 90s. With a projected increase in demand, macadamia production is expected to grow exponentially for the foreseeable future.

Recent reports indicate that the nut in shell macadamia fetched a price of about € 5/kg on the world market. With a yield of about 35 kg per plant (when fully mature), this represents an income of € 175/tree. For an orchard of about 115 macadamia plants per arpent (established at a spacing of 8 x 4.5 m), this would represent an income of € 20125. To generate income in the initial years until the trees become productive, farmers have the possibility to intercrop with short cycle crops. It is also possible to diversify production as part of an agroforestry strategy and to grow shade tolerant specialty crops such as vanilla.

