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Title: Need to set up a Cashew Workers Welfare Fund Board.

SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH (MAVELIKKARA): India is the third largest producer of cashew nut in the world. The major cashew processing industries are located in Kollam district, Kerala. Now the industry has spread its activities in almost all the southern states of India Orissa, West Bengal, etc. The condition of workers engaged in cashew industry is precarious. 94% of the workers are women of whom almost all are from socially and economically backward communities. Scheduled Castes constitutes 35% among workers. The wages are very low and there is no guarantee of continuous work. The unhealthy working condition makes their life miserable. More than a million workers are engaged in cashew industry in its various activities. The service conditions of those who are working in the organized factories and companies are better, as they are getting EPF and ESI benefits. A huge chunk of workers are engaged in the unorganized cashew factories. They are not registered and functioning without licences. The workers in these factories are not getting any benefit. The workers in the organized sectors are also not getting any welfare scheme other than EPF and ESI. Hence, it is imperative that there should be a comprehensive welfare scheme for the cashew workers in all the sectors.

Hence, I request the Hon'ble Minister of Labour and Employment to consider the setting up of a cashew workers welfare fund board immediately.