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Moringa and Tamarind: Two Common Myths, Corrected

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Moringa and Tamarind: Two Common Myths, Corrected

Moringa and tamarind sit in Indian kitchens every day. Two popular facts about them are wrong. Which ones?

This lesson corrects the two myths, compares the trees, and explains the support-price scheme for forest produce.

The idea in brief

- Moringa is **not a legume**: family Moringaceae.
- Tamarind is native to **tropical Africa**.
- MFP MSP scheme: **10 items** (2013-14) to **87**.
- UPSC 2021 answer: **(c), 3 and 4 only**.

Two Myths, Two Different Trees

Is moringa a legume?

No. **Moringa oleifera**, the drumstick tree, belongs to its own family, **Moringaceae**.

Its fruit is a long pod with three ribbed lobes. A pod can reach **18 to 32 cm** and holds about 26 seeds.

The pod looks like a bean pod. That look is why people call the tree a legume. The family says otherwise.

Sources: ncbi.nlm.nih.gov; infonet-biovision.org

Where is moringa from?

Moringa grows naturally mainly in **Pakistan and northern India**. It is native to the Indian subcontinent.

It is now cultivated in Africa, South America, the Middle East and across Asia. India dominates the export market, with about **80%** of world production volume.

The tree tolerates drought. It grows from sea level up to about 1,400 m, and in some cases up to 2,000 m.

Sources: ncbi.nlm.nih.gov; pib.gov.in

> **Quick check 1.** True or false: moringa is a leguminous tree. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓



Moringa oleifera, the drumstick tree. Photo by Crops for the Future, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

Is tamarind native to India?

No. The true origin of **Tamarindus indica** is unknown. It is generally believed to be native to the drier savannas of **tropical Africa**.

It became **naturalised in tropical Asia** long ago. It was known in Egypt as early as 400 BC.

Its species name, *indica*, adds to the confusion. Old reports even called it native to India.

Sources: infonet-biovision.org; ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

Is tamarind a legume?

Yes. Tamarind belongs to the family **Fabaceae**, the legume family.

Here is the twist. Moringa looks like a legume but is not one. Tamarind is a legume, even though few people think of it that way.

So do not mix up the two trees when you answer an exam question.

Sources: infonet-biovision.org

> **Quick check 2.** True or false: tamarind is native to South Asia. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

How do the two trees compare?

Each tree defies the common guess. That is why examiners like this pair.

Point	Moringa	Tamarind
Scientific name	Moringa oleifera	Tamarindus indica
Family	Moringaceae, not a legume	Fabaceae, a legume

Point	Moringa	Tamarind
Origin	Pakistan and northern India	Tropical Africa, naturalised in Asia
Edible parts	Leaves, pods, flowers and seeds	Fruit pulp, young leaves and flowers

Sources: ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

Uses of Moringa and Tamarind

What is moringa used for?

Moringa leaves, flowers and pods are used as food. They carry **proteins, vitamins A, B and C, and minerals** such as calcium and magnesium.

The oil from the seeds is used in cosmetics. The tree can also be used to make **biofuel**.

Its residues can serve as an ecological fertiliser.

Sources: pib.gov.in; ncbi.nlm.nih.gov

What is tamarind used for?

The sweet fruit pulp makes a refreshing drink. It is also used as a spice in food.

Young leaves, seedlings and flowers are cooked as greens and in **curries in India**.

Tamarind is also processed at Van Dhan centres into **cake and pickle**.

Sources: infonet-biovision.org; pib.gov.in

Quick check 3. True or false: young tamarind leaves and flowers are cooked and eaten in India. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

The MSP Scheme for Forest Produce

What is the MSP scheme for minor forest produce?

The **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** runs the scheme through **TRIFED**, under the Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission.

It notifies a **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** for minor forest produce (MFP). It also gives revolving funds to states to buy MFP at that price.

It began with **10 items in 2013-14**. The list has grown to **87 items**.

Sources: pib.gov.in

How does the scheme help gatherers?

The aim is a **fair price** for tribal gatherers who collect, process, store and carry the produce.

In January 2021, **14 more items** were added, such as cashew kernel and dry wild mushroom.

Van Dhan Vikas Kendras add value. Each is a cluster of about 15 self-help groups with up to 300 members.

Sources: pib.gov.in

> **Quick check 4.** True or false: the MSP for minor forest produce list has grown from 10 items to 87. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

The UPSC 2021 Question

How do you solve the UPSC 2021 question?

The 2021 paper gave four statements. Moringa is a leguminous evergreen tree: **false**. Tamarind is endemic to South Asia: **false**.

In India, most tamarind is collected as minor forest produce: **true**. India exports tamarind and moringa seeds: **true**.

The answer is **(c), 3 and 4 only**.

See the question in the 2021 paper.

Sources: ncbi.nlm.nih.gov; infonet-biovision.org

> **Quick check 5.** True or false: UPSC 2021 treated both myths, moringa as a legume and tamarind as native to South Asia, as false. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Exam Traps

Moringa is in Moringaceae, not a legume.

Tamarind is a legume (Fabaceae) from tropical Africa.

Moringa is native to the Indian subcontinent.

MSP for MFP: 10 items in 2013-14, now 87.

PYQ 2021: pick option (c).

Practice MCQs

1. Moringa oleifera belongs to which plant family?

A. Fabaceae

B. Rosaceae

C. Moringaceae

D. Poaceae

See answer ↓

2. Where does moringa occur naturally?

A. Only Australia

B. Only Brazil

C. Only Madagascar

D. Mainly Pakistan and northern India

See answer ↓

3. Roughly what share of world moringa production volume does India supply?

A. About 8%

B. About 80%

C. About 20%

D. About 50%

See answer ↓

4. Tamarind is generally believed to be native to which region?

A. South Asia

B. Antarctica

C. Tropical Africa

D. The Arctic

See answer ↓

5. Tamarind belongs to which family?

A. Orchidaceae

B. Cactaceae

C. Fabaceae

D. Moringaceae

See answer ↓

6. The MSP scheme for minor forest produce began in 2013-14 with how many items?

A. 25

B. 10

C. 50

D. 87

See answer ↓

7. Which agency implements the MSP scheme for minor forest produce under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs?

A. TRIFED

B. NAFED

C. NABARD

D. FCI

See answer ↓

8. UPSC 2021 asked about moringa and tamarind. What was the answer?

A. 1 and 2 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 3 and 4 only

D. 1, 2, 3 and 4

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **C.**
   Moringa has its own family, Moringaceae. It is not a legume.
   Sources: Frontiers review, Moringa oleifera (PMC) · Infonet-Biovision (ICRAF), tamarind.
   ↑ Q1
2. **D.**
   The review places its natural range mainly in Pakistan and northern India.
   Sources: Frontiers review, Moringa oleifera (PMC) · PIB, MFP procurement, Feb 2026.
   ↑ Q2
3. **B.**
   The review says India dominates the export market, with about 80% of production volume.
   Sources: Frontiers review, Moringa oleifera (PMC) · Infonet-Biovision (ICRAF), tamarind.
   ↑ Q3
4. **C.**
   It is believed native to the drier savannas of tropical Africa and was naturalised in Asia long ago.
   Sources: Infonet-Biovision (ICRAF), tamarind · Frontiers review, Moringa oleifera (PMC).
   ↑ Q4
5. **C.**
   Tamarind is in Fabaceae, the legume family. Moringa, in contrast, is not.
   Sources: Infonet-Biovision (ICRAF), tamarind · Frontiers review, Moringa oleifera (PMC).
   ↑ Q5
6. **B.**
   It began with 10 items and has grown to 87.
   Sources: PIB, MFP procurement, Feb 2026 · PIB, 14 new MFP items, Jan 2021.
   ↑ Q6

7. **A.**
   The Ministry implements the scheme through TRIFED.
   Sources: PIB, MFP procurement, Feb 2026 · PIB, 14 new MFP items, Jan 2021.
   ↑ Q7
8. **C.**
   Statements 1 and 2 were false. Statements 3 and 4 were true.
   Sources: Frontiers review, Moringa oleifera (PMC) · Infonet-Biovision (ICRAF), tamarind.
   ↑ Q8

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** Moringa belongs to Moringaceae. Its bean-like pods fool people, but it is not a legume. ↑ 1
2. **False.** Tamarind is believed native to tropical Africa. It was naturalised in Asia long ago. ↑ 2
3. **True.** They are cooked as greens and in curries, besides the better-known fruit pulp. ↑ 3
4. **True.** The scheme began with 10 items in 2013-14 and now covers 87. ↑ 4
5. **True.** Statements 1 and 2 were false. The answer was 3 and 4 only. ↑ 5

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