BULLETIN

ISSUED BY

THE INDIAN CENTRAL COCONUT COMMITTEE

Vol. 1 | ERNAKULAM, AUGUST 1947. | No. 1

GROW TWO COCONUTS WHERE ONE GREW BEFORE

The most urgent problem that the Indian Coconut industry has to face up to today is how best to fill the widening gulf between a more or less static production and a growing demand. Indian coconut production falls 30 to 40% short of the demand for coconut products, the industrial uses of which have multiplied in recent years.

The general reaction of the industrialists to this is: "Import from abroad as much as is required".

But imports are not as easy or as plentiful as they once were. There is a world shortage of oils and fats and coconut oil which has the unique distinction of being both an edible and an industrial oil is in demand all over the world. It cannot be had as abundantly as one would desire.

But even if it were possible to import, the moment the industrialist mentioned the subject, the grower would start up and say, "No; I shall be ruined!"

The obvious remedy, therefore, to meet the ever-increasing home demand for coconut products is to increase and step up the home production.

To make two coconuts grow where one grew before has thus become an imperative duty on the part of the coconut grower. It is a duty he has to discharge, not only from the point of view of his own self-interest, but from the point of view of the larger interests of the nation.

A few basic figures will not come amiss in this connection. The total area under coconut in India is 1.51 million acres. The total annual production is estimated at 3,000 million nuts. What we have got to do is to augment this output by 1,200 to 1,600 million nuts.

Increasing the area may immediately be ruled out. Almost all the available land in the principal coconut growing regions has been planted up. Even if more land could be had for planting, it would take 8 to 10 years before the new trees begin to yield. But we want to step up our production much earlier than that; in fact as early as humanly possible.

It, therefore, remains to make the existing trees yield more than they do.

How?

It is now firmly established that intercultivation and manuring are two sovereign prescriptions for increasing the yield of coconut trees.

Intercultivation.

Intercultivation or inter-tillage means the simple operation of digging or ploughing the spaces between trees in a coconut garden. But simple as it is, it gives very encouraging results. In the Coconut Research Stations on the West Coast, it has been proved that intercultivation alone, without the aid of manuring, could enhance the yield by about 100%. Unfortu-

nately, intercultivation is ignored by the bulk of coconut growers. They have now to bestir themselves and perform this operation regularly and consistently by any one of the following methods:-

(a) Digging the whole garden with mammatty (spade) preferably towards the end of the South-West monsoon rains and giving a ploughing or working a cultivator in summer to keep down weeds.

(b) Ploughing with an iron plough with the pre-monsoon showers followed by a second ploughing towards the close of the South-West monsoon and working a cultivator in the summer months to keep down weeds.

(c) Piling small mounds about 1½ to 2 feet in height towards the end of the South-West monsoon (August-September) and levelling them out in December-January. This is being adopted with benefit in the sandy soils of Cochin and Travancore.

Before regular intercultivation practices are adopted in coconut gardens, it is very necessary to provide suitable bunds at proper intervals to prevent surface wash and soil erosion during rains. This is particularly important for places subject to heavy rainfall and where the land is sloping.

Manuring.

The coconut soils of India are, in common with other soils, generally deficient in organic matter. It is especially so in the case of the laterite, sandy and sandy loam soils of the East and West Coasts of India and the uplands of Mysore. The best and probably the cheapest way to rectify this defect is to grow a green manure crop, preferably a legume, with the monsoon rains and plough it down towards the close of the rainy season. Cowgram

(Vigna catiang), Sunhemp (Crotalaria Juncea), Kolinji (Tephrosia purpurea) and recently Crotalaria striata have been found to come up well under shade in coconut plantations. Crotalaria striata in particular has given over 20,000 lbs. of green stuff per acre on the coconut research stations in Madras. This species occurs as a weed in most of the coconut tracts of India and appears to be a suitable green manure crop.

In places where growing a green manure crop is not practicable, large doses of cattle manure or compost at the rate of about 100 lbs. per tree may be applied preferably in shallow trenches and covered.

In addition to this an application of (i) about 10 lbs. of groundnut cake or 3 lbs. of ammonium sulphate, (ii) about 20 lbs. to 40 lbs. of well preserved ash or 1½ lbs. of potassium sulphate and (iii) about 1 to 2 lbs. of bone meal per tree per year to supply the required quantities of nitrogen, potash and phosphoric acid will result in increased production of nuts.

Application of prawn dust or fish-guano at the rate of 10 lbs. per tree per year has also proved useful for the coconut.

Burial of coconut husks at the rate of 1000 husks per tree in trenches 6 feet wide and about 1½ feet deep in between rows of trees, once in about five years, has been found to give enhanced yield of nuts. This practice can be adopted in the dry tracts where coconut husks are largely available and are not used for coir-making.

Tethering of cattle under coconut trees as practised in certain localities is very desirable as the trees are seen to be benefited considerably

by the dung and urine voided by the cattle.

Addition of tank or river silt to sandy areas, and sand to clayey soils of the back-water areas have also been found to enhance the yield of coconuts.

To improve the production and maintain it at a high level it is essential that the above practices, both cultural and manurial, are continued regularly every year. In the case of coconut it takes about three years for the beneficial effect of the cultural and manurial treatments to be felt on the yield of trees.

The coconut grower knows that there is money in coconut. But to be indifferent to his trees would be to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. Most of our growers have only a few trees to attend to. Let them take real pride in them and minister to their needs with genuine zeal. They are sure to be rewarded and they will have discharged their duty of growing two coconuts where one grew before.

In the next issue of the "Bulletin" will be described methods of controlling the pests and diseases of the coconut tree with a view to step up production.

BUY ONLY QUALITY SEEDLINGS.

Government Nurseries sell them cheap.

The coconut tree is one of the most useful of trees to men, and yet it is a matter for regret that its cultivation is deteriorating slowly instead of showing improvement. One of the reasons for this is that coconut growers do not bestow adequate care on the selection of the seedlings they plant.

The importance of planting seedlings of guaranteed quality cannot be over-emphasized. Until recently there was only one Government nursery in S.Kanara District and its output could only touch the fringe of the demand. And there are no reliable nurserymen who can supply reliable planting material. Besides it is not every nurseryman who can supply quality seedlings, for he does not have the necessary scientific training and experience. Nor does he want to take too much trouble in selecting ideal parent trees and harvesting seednuts of the proper quality at the proper season.

There is a very special reason why great care and judgment have to be exercised in the selection of coconut seedlings for planting. The coconut tree, as everyone knows, is one which easily lives up to about 80 years. But it begins to bear fruit only eight to ten years after germination. And it takes another four years before it comes to full bearing. Now, suppose you planted a seedling of whose pedigree you were not sure. The chances are that it may prove more a liability than an asset. After about twelve years of watering, manuring and other necessary attentions, the tree may prove to be a very sorry yielder. Having been in your garden for so many years, you may not feel like felling it to make way for a better one. It remains there like a wastrel son. It consumes its share of soil fertility but gives a very poor return. In the case of pedigree seedlings obtained from a responsible nursery, such a thing will not happen. Adapting the proverbial warning uttered to those who would rush into matrimony it may be said to intending coconut growers: "If you plant in haste, you will repent at leisure". Therefore, do exercise the utmost circumspection and care in the selection of your seedlings.

In order to help the coconut grower in a matter of such basic importance, the Indian Central Coconut Committee is financing jointly with the Provincial/

State Governments concerned schemes for running coconut nurseries in some of the principal coconut growing regions. These nurseries are situated at Vaikom and Kazhakuttam in Travancore, Pattukottai and Samalkot in Madras Province, Arsikere in Mysore State, Puri in Orissa Province and Irinjalakuda in Cochin State. Seedlings of guaranteed quality are sold from these nurseries to intending growers at the specially low price of 4 annas each. It is hoped that full advantage will be taken of these nurseries by growers.

Those interested may apply for seedlings to the following addresses:-

1) The Graduate Assistant, Government Coconut Nursery, VAIKOM, Travancore State.
2) The Graduate Assistant, Government Coconut Nursery, KAZHAKUTTAM, Travancore State.
3) Agricultural Assistant, Coconut Nursery Scheme, IRINJALAKUDA, Cochin State.
4) Assistant-in-charge, Government Coconut Nursery, Agricultural Research Station, PATTUKOTTAI, Tanjore District.
5) Assistant-in-charge, Government Coconut Nursery, Agricultural Research Station, SAMALKOT, E.Godavari District.
6) The Assistant Botanist, Government Coconut Nursery, ARSIKERE, Mysore State.
7) The Overseer, Government Coconut Nursery, Agricultural Research Station, CUTTACK, Orissa.

SELECTION OF SEEDNUTS AND SEEDLINGS

Points to remember.

SEEDNUTS.

Round Nuts proportionately contain more copra than those of other shapes.

Medium-sized Nuts are to be preferred to big or small-sized nuts because copra production per palm is maximum in medium-sized nuts. Therefore seednuts should be round and medium-sized.

SEEDLINGS.

High yield is correlated with large number of leaves. Seedlings with large number of leaves should therefore be selected.

Good girth at the collar of the seedling indicates large number of leaves, good height and large number of roots. Therefore the girth should be utilised in selecting the seedlings.

THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH EXPELLER CAKE

Coconut oil cake or punnac is an excellent food for cattle. Cows relish it immensely. The more milch cows are fed on it the better. The milk of punnac-fed cattle is of a better quality; the quantity of milk yielded by them is higher; the cream from their milk is firmer and the butter made from it is larger in quantity and possesses a better colour and flavour.

Now, there seems to exist an unreasonable prejudice among owners of milch cattle against expeller cake. They consider that the cake obtained after crushing copra in country ghanis is the best, that coming out of rotary mills is next best and that expeller cake is not good at all. This is a totally erroneous impression.

The only difference between ghani cake and rotary mill cake is that the former contains a higher percentage of oil than the latter. Expeller cake contains the least percentage of oil.

Now, is this oil in the cake an essential nutrient element? It has been proved definitely after a series of experiments in England and America that it is not, and that the oil in the cake is only wasted

when cattle are fed on cake containing oil and that expeller and rotary mill cakes are as good as ghani cake as cattle food, if not better.

It is, therefore, an act of folly to refuse to feed our cattle on expeller or mill cake especially when it is cheaper than the ghani cake.

It is a well known fact that our production of milk is hopelessly inadequate and that in consequence our children are under-nourished. Milch cattle must be given proper food if they are to yield more milk and it will not do to hold fast to meaningless prejudices which prevent the cattle from getting ample good food and the children sufficient milk.

There is another aspect to this matter. By encouraging, for no ostensible reason, the use of cake with a high percentage of oil we are only encouraging the wastage of a large quantity of oil. On the other hand if an extra percentage of oil is extracted from the cake it would release substantial quantities of oil which should be greatly welcomed in the present period of scarcity.

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that the prejudice against the use of expeller cake is given up immediately.

MARKET REPORT

The control on the prices of copra and coconut oil introduced by the Central Government was withdrawn on the 20th of June 1947. The general reaction to the decontrol was that the prices shot up considerably. On 20-6-1947 within about 4 hours of the receipt of the news that prices had been decontrolled, the price of coconut oil in Cochin market rose to Rs.1562/7 per ton from the control ceiling price of Rs.1390. The

same day transactions in Alleppey market were put through at Rs.1712/9 per ton of oil. The highest price quoted so far is Rs.2014 per ton of oil in Cochin market and Rs.1969/6 per ton of oil in the Alleppey market.

In the beginning of July the prices at Cochin of coconut oil, copra and cake were quoted at Rs.1884, Rs.1404 and Rs.359/10 per ton respectively and Rs.195 per thousand nuts, against Rs.1918, Rs.1370 and Rs.308/4 per ton of coconut oil, copra and cake respectively at Alleppey. On the 8th July the Madras papers published a report that the Government of India had decided to import coconut oil from the Philippines. A copy of the report is reproduced below:-

"The Government of India have decided to import through commercial channels 8000 tons of coconut oil or its equivalent in copra allocated to India from the Philippines by the International Emergency Food Council, says a Press Note.

"Prospective importers have been asked to apply before July 31, 1947 to the Director General, Industries and Supplies, New Delhi. After taking into consideration the requirements of the various applicants the Director General, Industries and Supplies, will decide what quantity each applicant should be permitted to import - A.P.I."

The news of the proposed imports combined with the scarcity of waggons caused a slight fall in the prices. Towards the middle of the month, however, the position of railway and shipping freight improved appreciably with the result the prices looked up again though slightly. In the last week of July the prices fluctuated considerably and on 29-7-1947 the prices at Cochin and Alleppey were quoted as follows:-

	Cochin	Alleppey
Coconut per 1000	Rs. 160	-
Copra per ton	" 1370	Rs.1250
Coconut oil per ton	" 1840/15	" 1755/5
Coconut oil cake per ton	" 248/5	" 222/10

Having regard to the steady demand for coconut and coconut products there is little chance of the prices of coconut and its products coming down in the immediate future. Moreover, we are still in the midst of the monsoonswhich is off-season for coconut and the arrivals in the market are comparatively poor.

About a fortnight ago the Cochin Government had in the interests of the consumers issued orders to acquire from the millers and dealers the quantity of coconut oil required for domestic consumption and sell it through ration shops at control prices. But after a few days this order was withdrawn by that Government.

OURSELVES.

News and Notes.

This is just the beginning of the planting season for coconut seedlings. July to November is considered to be the right season. Seedlings of guaranteed quality are on sale or will very shortly be at the nurseries referred to already in the article on coconut seedlings. The demand is keen and they may not get all that they apply for, but they may rest assured that whatever they obtain will be of guaranteed quality. More will be available for the next planting season.

* * * * *

Research is the life-blood of modern agriculture. Realising this the Indian Central Coconut Committee is starting two Central Research Stations of its own to tackle the problems of research connected with the coconut cultivation. One of these stations for fundamental aspects of research will be situated at Kasaragod in S.Kanara District. The other station for conducting investigations on the diseases of coconuts is

at Krishnapuram near Kayamkulam in Travancore State. The foundation stone of this station was laid on the 24th April 1947 by His Highness the Elaya Raja of Travancore. The station consists of a 55-acre coconut estate and the necessary laboratory and other buildings on it are about to be constructed.

* * * * * *

To facilitate the production of quality copra uninterrupted during the monsoon months, the Indian Central Coconut Committee has decided to set up two modern hot air kilns, one in the premises of the Vaikom-Shertallai Copra Marketing Co-operative Society at Vaikom (Travancore) and the other in the premises of the Coconut Marketing Society at Narakkal (Cochin). They are being constructed for demonstrational purposes, and it is hoped that private individuals and co-operative societies will set up kilns of their own when once the advantage of hot air kilns become apparent.

* * * * * *

The 6th meeting of the Indian Central Coconut Committee will be held at Ernakulam on the 27th September. Sardar Bahadur Sir Datar Singh, Vice-Chairman, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, and President of the Committee, will preside. The various sub-committees will meet on the previous two days.

ENQUIRIES

We shall be glad to receive and answer in this section enquiries regarding the coconut industry, where it appears that the replies will be of general interest.

Published by the Secretary, Indian Central Coconut Committee, Ernakulam. Title printed at the D.K.Press, Ernakulam.
