

# BULLETIN

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THE INDIAN CENTRAL COCONUT COMMITTEE

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No. 2

## The Coconut Tree's Three Mortal Foes

**T**HE agriculturist has to contend with pests of many kinds. Every crop has its pest or pests which must be kept off by constant vigilance.

As far as the coconut is concerned there are three pests which are its mortal enemies. They are:—

- (1) The Rhinoceros Beetle (*Oryctes Rhinoceros*)
- (2) The Black-headed caterpillar (*Nephantis Serinopa*)
- (3) The rat.

We have described below how the damage caused by these pests could best be avoided. Great vigilance and alertness on the part of the grower are called for, but he will find his reward from a grateful tree which will yield abundant fruit.

- (1) *The Rhinoceros Beetle (Oryctes Rhinoceros).*

This is one of the most destructive pests of the coconut palm and is very common all over the coconut tracts. The adult beetle attacks

the crown, boring into the tender parts and damaging young flower bunches. The only effective and practical way to deal with the pest is frequently to search the crowns of coconut palms and extract the beetle by a sharp thin iron hook specially made for the purpose. (Please see illustration on next page). Periodical collection and destruction of the whitish grubs of the beetle from the manure and compost pits where they usually breed will also help to check the multiplication of the pest.

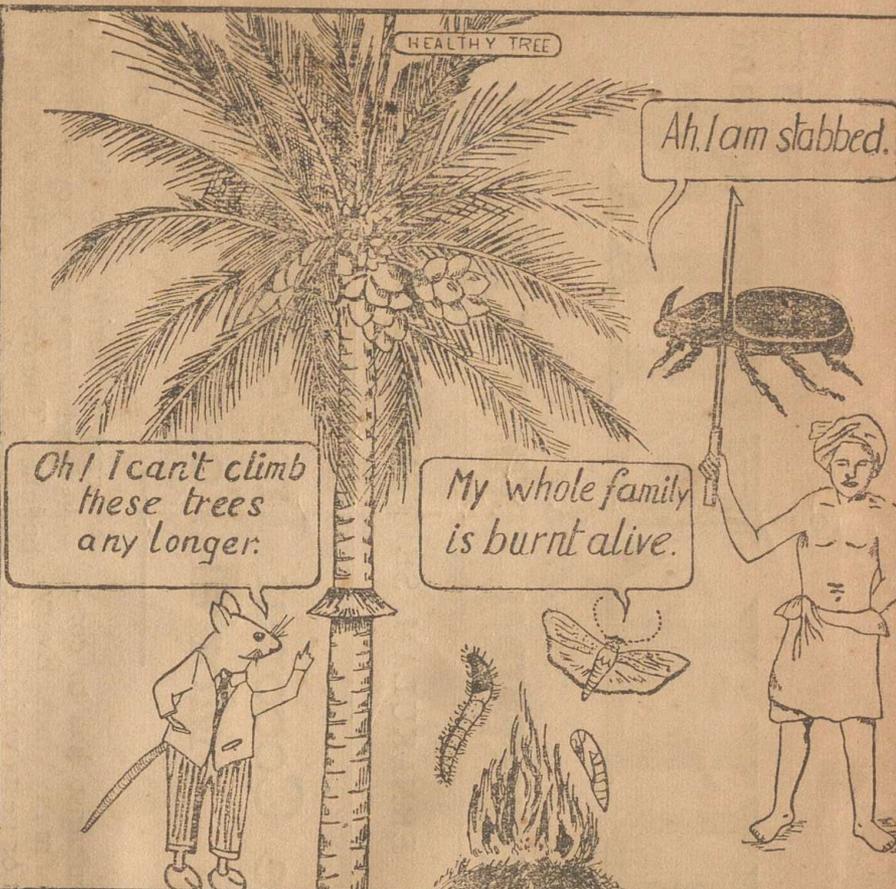
Whenever cattle dung is applied to your trees, see to it that it is properly ploughed in and not allowed to remain on the surface of the soil. In the latter case, it will provide an excellent breeding ground for the beetle.

- (2) *Black-headed caterpillar (Nephantis Serinopa).*

This pest, though sporadic in occurrence, causes serious damage to coconut plantations in certain years. The caterpillars of the pest eat away the leaves leaving the mid-rib bare

## FEAST IN NEGLECTED GARDEN

## TORTURE IN PROTECTED GARDEN



## PROTECT YOUR COCONUT GARDEN AGAINST

1. Rhinoceros Beetle- By removing it regularly from the crown.
2. Black-headed Caterpillar- By cutting and burning infested leaflets.
3. Rat- By banding the trees.

**THEREBY** INCREASE YOUR YIELDS.

By courtesy of the Department of Agriculture, Madras.

and the trees, in severe cases of infestation, present a burnt appearance. The pest can be checked if, in the early stages of the outbreak, care is taken to cut and burn the affected leaves and leaflets. Growers must maintain a careful look-out for the pest and take prompt action to nip it in the bud. When the pest has spread over large areas the above procedure is rather impracticable and difficult to enforce. In such cases it is desirable to control it by releasing in large numbers its natural parasites such as *Eulophid* and *Bethylid* in the affected locality for two or three seasons. When the attack becomes widespread, the growers should immediately contact the Agricultural Officer of the locality or the Plant Pathologist, Quilon, and take instructions regarding the release of the parasites.

### (3) *The Rat.*

The ubiquitous rat does considerable damage to the tender nuts. A few million nuts in all are lost in this way. But the rat is helped in its predatory activities by the grower's own folly to some extent. The grower feels that if there are more trees to the acre, the better it is. Sometimes, as many as 100 trees to the acre are planted and the over-lapping leaves form one green canopy overhead. It is very nice to look at during the day, but during the nights the rats come out and find it so pleasant to travel from tree to tree and to work havoc on the tender nuts.

It has been estimated that there should be at least a space of 25 to 30 feet between tree and tree; that is, only about 70 trees to the acre should be planted not only to minimise the rat trouble but also to allow the trees to draw their normal share of sunlight and nourish-

## Improve Your Copra and Obtain Better Prices

**T**HERE is little attention paid to the production of quality copra in the country. The best qualities of copra are obtained by drying the cups in the sun for 7 days. But on the West Coast, copra is generally dried for 4 or 5 days only and often for lesser periods, especially in the case of that made in the villages. The quality of copra offered for sale is, therefore, anything but satisfactory. A high standard of quality was insisted upon, when there was an export trade in copra. Now that India is a net importer of coconut products and there is in the country an evergrowing demand from the mills for copra, the quality of copra marketed has deteriorated considerably.

Besides, unfortunately, there seems to exist an erroneous belief among  
(Please turn to page 4)

ment. (This subject of spacing will be dealt with at fuller length in a future issue of the "Bulletin").

The only manner to deal with the rodent is to trap it and kill it. Rat poison baits and cheap rat traps should be kept on the crowns of the trees. An excellent device to prevent the rat from climbing up the trees is to fix a piece of tin sheeting to the tree so that its lower edge projects round to form the base of a cone. (Please see illustration).

[The diseases that affect the coconut palm and the methods of combating them will be described in the next issue of the "Bulletin".]

producers that the buyers might overlook the moisture content in the copra or under-estimate it. This is mere wishful thinking as the purchasers are quite shrewd and detect the defect without difficulty. They generally exploit the situation by deliberately under-estimating the quality of the copra. They would assert that the copra contains a higher percentage of moisture than it really does and offer a price not at all commensurate with its quality. As it often happens, the middlemen, after purchase dry the copra further and make a profit out of all proportion to the services rendered by them and grow fat at the expense of the producers. On the other hand, if the copra-makers take the trouble to dry the stuff properly themselves, quite a good proportion of the middlemen's profit could legitimately be earned by them. It is time that the producers realise that they stand to lose more than what they expect to gain by offering insufficiently dried copra for sale.

Most of our copra is used for milling purposes. The mills usually like to purchase copra containing about 5% moisture, while that offered for sale contains as much as 15% moisture. Improperly dried copra is more amenable to attack by moulds and fungi. Oil extracted from copra so affected is inferior in quality and contains more of free fatty acids, and consequently fetches a lower price. On the other hand, if the copra were properly dried, it could be stored over a fairly long period without appreciable deterioration in quality.

Sun-drying produces a very good quality copra. But in India we are able to produce quality copra by sun-drying only for about 6 or 7 months in the year, because of the limitations imposed by the exigencies of un-

## The Indian Central Coconut Committee and its Functions

### I

**W**HAT sort of an organisation is the Indian Central Coconut Committee? Whom does it represent? What are its functions? What has it done so far? These are some of the questions we have been receiving of late, and we propose to give in this article an account of the purpose of the Committee and its functions.

The principle has been recognised for some time now that the improvement and development of any particular commodity of all-India importance are best brought about, by entrusting the work to a body on which would be represented all interests connected with that commodity, such as the growers, consumers, industrialists, scientists etc. Thus Committees were started several  
*(Please turn to page 5)*

favourable weather conditions. The question as to how this drawback may be met, will be dealt with in the next issue of the Bulletin. Suffice it here to state that experiments conducted in Malaya, confirmed by observations in Ceylon, have shown that carefully dried copra is the richest in oil and that the oil content of slowly dried copra is higher than that of the rapidly dried stuff. You should, therefore, exercise great care in the preparation of your copra. Dry it properly and well and you will get better prices for it. All the trouble you take in producing quality copra will be repaid by higher prices.

years ago for the improvement and development of cotton, jute, sugar-cane etc., and the good results obtained by their working have shown that there is no better way of promoting all interests whether agricultural, commercial or industrial, connected with an important agricultural commodity, than through the continuous association and co-operation of representatives of trade, industry etc., officials and non-officials, on a central body dealing only with that individual commodity. This encouraged the setting up of a similar Committee for coconut.

The Indian Central Coconut Committee was set up under an Act of the Indian Central Legislature in February 1945. It has a membership of 26 and its President is the Vice-Chairman of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. The Governments of Madras, Bombay, Bengal, Orissa, Mysore, Travancore and Cochin are represented on it, as also growers, oil millers and trade interests.

The following are the Committee's functions as laid down in the Act:—

(a) Undertaking, assisting or encouraging agricultural, industrial, technological and economic research;

(b) the supply of technical advice to growers;

(c) encouraging the adoption of improved methods of cultivation;

(d) carrying on such propaganda in the interests of the coconut industry as may be necessary;

(e) collecting statistics from growers, dealers, millers, and other sources on all relevant matters bearing on the industry;

(f) fixing grade standards of copra and its products;

(g) recommending the maximum and minimum prices to be fixed for copra;

(h) advising on all matters which require attention for the development of the industry;

(i) improving the marketing of coconuts in India and abroad and suggesting suitable measures to prevent unfair competition;

(j) assisting in the control of insects and other pests and diseases of coconut trees;

(k) promoting and encouraging co-operative efforts among the coconut growers and in the coconut industries;

(l) adopting such measures as may be practicable for assuring remunerative returns to growers;

(m) maintaining and assisting in the maintenance of such institutes, farms and stations as it may consider necessary.

The funds necessary for the discharge of the above functions are found by the levy of a cess of four annas on every hundredweight of copra (indigenous or imported) crushed in mills coming under the purview of the Factories Act, in India and the participating States.

[In the next issue of the "Bulletin" the activities of the Committee till date will be described.]

## NEWS & NOTES

The 15th August - Indian Independence Day - was observed with due ceremony by the Secretariat of the Indian Central Coconut Committee. The premises of the office were gaily decorated with flags and festoons and bunches of green plantains and gold-red coconuts. Exactly at 10-30 A. M. in spite of pouring rain, the Secretary and the staff assembled before a 30-foot mast for the flag hoisting ceremony. In a short but feeling address the Secretary said that they witnessed on that day the close of a dismal chapter in the history of India and the dawn of a great era of freedom and progress. Each one, he said, however humble his station in life, could best contribute to that progress by discharging his appointed duties honestly and conscientiously. He then hoisted the National Tricolour and beside it the Cochin State flag. The function came to a close with the singing of "Jana Gana Mana" and with "Jais" to Independent India, and Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest of the architects of our freedom.

x                      x                      x

We are glad to be able to report that the first issue of the "Bulletin" has had a good reception. Heaps of congratulatory letters have been received, but we would like to tell our readers and friends that the continued usefulness of the "Bulletin" depends as much upon them as upon us. Readers who send us short notes embodying their personal

experience of aspects of coconut cultivation and bring us their problems will be doing a distinct service. We shall be glad to publish such notes, with discrimination of course, and try to solve the problems with the aid of experts.

x                      x                      x

Inertia, apathy, lack of receptivity to new ideas - these are some of the besetting sins of the ordinary run of Indian agriculturists and not less so of the coconut growers. The best ideas would be wasted even by the loudest proclamation, if the inclination to translate them into action is wanting. It is, therefore, good to hear from Mr. C. I. Chakunny of Pavarratty, Chowghat (S. Malabar) that he has always followed the advice of the Agricultural Department in regard to coconut cultivation and with very gratifying results. Here is what he says :—

"In this place people are adopting only the hereditary methods of cultivation. I am one of the growers of these parts and I have been cultivating my compounds under the instructions of the Agriculture Department for the last 25 years and I find it a complete success. The ordinary growers are getting only thirty nuts per tree while I am getting sixty coconuts per tree".

Verily Mr. Chakunny is growing two coconuts where only one grew before.

x                      x                      x

# MARKET REPORT

(a) *General.*

The principal feature of the price trend of coconut and coconut products during the month of August 1947 was that there was a definite tendency for the prices to decline slowly and steadily. This happened in spite of the arrivals of copra in the markets during the month being 20 to 30% lower than those in the previous month. The restricted arrivals have been partly brought about by the heavy rains during the month. Chief among the contributory causes for the decline in prices were:—

Under the joint auspices of the Committee and the Government of Madras a coconut nursery is being started on 19-10-1947 at Pattambi to serve the needs of growers in S. Malabar. A nursery, too, will be started in North Kanara District of Bombay Presidency jointly by the Committee and the Government of Bombay. A proposal has also been received for the establishment of a nursery in Assam.

X X X

Readers will be interested to learn that a Malayalam edition of the "Bulletin" is already being issued, which has also had a very warm reception from the public. Those who would like to receive copies of the Malayalam edition may apply to the Secretary, Indian Central Coconut Committee, Ernakulam early as there is rush for copies. The annual subscription inclusive of postage is six annas.

(1) Extremely difficult supply position of caustic soda which reduced the output of the soap industry to a considerable extent. As a result of curtailment of the demand for coconut oil from the soap manufacturers comparatively little business was put through.

(2) The difficulty of obtaining railway wagons also slowed down the movement of oil considerably. The position of transport by sea was none the better. Steamer facilities were inadequate and irregular with the result that the export of oil to Calcutta and Bombay was below the mark. The trading conditions in the coconut oil market were still dull with the price trends tending to show a slight steady undertone as we were going to press.

(b) *Details.*

The month opened with the prices quoted as follows:—

	Cochin	Alleppey
Coconut per 1000 Rs.	153	...
Copra per ton	1356-5-0	Rs. 1138
Coconut oil per ton	1823-13-0	1768
Coconut oil cake per ton	239-12-0	222-10-0

The prices evinced a definite decline during the next week. The prices at Cochin, Alleppey and Calicut on 7-8-1947 were as shown below:—

	Cochin	Alleppey	Calicut
Coconut per 1000 Rs.	154		Rs. 127
Copra per ton	1233	Rs. 1147-6-0*	1200**
Coconut oil per ton	1678-4-0	1695-7-0	1790
Coconut oil cake per ton	205-8-0	198-10-0	

\* Rai Munq quality.  
\*\* Dilpasand quality.

The following week registered a further drop in prices. The level of prices on 14-8-1947 was as given under:—

	Cochin	Alleppey	
Coconut per 1000			
Rs. 150	...		
Copra per ton	1198-12-0	Rs. 1164-8-0*	Rai Mung quality
Coconut oil per ton	1712-8-0	1661-3-0	
Coconut oil cake per ton	205-8-0	184-15-0	

There was an improvement in the tone of the market during the week that followed and the prices pulled up slightly. On 21-8-1947 the prices were reported as follows:—

	Cochin	Alleppey	Calicut
Coconut per 1000			
Rs. 150	...		Rs. 138
Copra per ton	1209	1250-2-0	1280
Coconut oil per ton	1763-14-0	1746-13-0	1824
Coconut oil cake per ton	205-8-0	214-1-0	...

There was a set-back during the next week and as we were going to press on 27-8-1947 the following prices were quoted.

	Cochin	Alleppey
Coconut per 1000	Rs. 148	
Copra per ton	1198-12-0	Rs. 1181
Coconut oil per ton	1729-10-0	1668
Coconut oil cake per ton	214	214

# BULLETIN ISSUED BY THE INDIAN CENTRAL COCONUT COMMITTEE

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Secretary,

**Indian Central Coconut Committee.**