

CONFERENCE OF COCONUT PRODUCERS' CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES

A Conference of representatives of Coconut Producers' Co-operative Sales Societies and Divisional Revenue Officers of the main Coconut growing districts was held at the Hostel of the Coconut Research Institute on September 13, 1952.

In the unavoidable absence of the Hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Food, Sir Oliver Goonetilleke, and the permanent secretary of the Minister—Mr. K. Somasuntheram was present on his behalf.

Among those present were :

Dr. A. W. R. Joachim, Chairman, Coconut Research Board ; Dr. M. L. M. Salgado, Acting Director, Coconut Research Institute ; Messrs. N. H. Keerthiratne, M.P., Col. W. G. Mack, O.B.E., E.D., C. A. M. de Silva and C. A. Abeyratne, J.P. (Members of the Coconut Research Board) ; Mr. T. P. Senanayake, Asst. Registrar of Co-operative Societies, N.W.P., Mr. M. Amerasinghe, Deputy Commissioner of Co-operative Societies ; Mr. O. B. M. Cheyne (Planting Officer) ; Mr. P. D. Laurence Fernando (Asst. Planting Officer), several Senior Officers of the Coconut Research Institute, Advisory Field Officers and Delegates from the Coconut Producers' Co-operative Societies and D.R.O.

Dr. Joachim declared the Conference open and invited Mr. Somasuntheram to preside.

Mr. Cheyne then addressed the Conference on the organisation and activities of the Advisory and Planting Division.

The main points of the discussion that followed are summarised below :—

I. Advisory Service

Ranges—Kurunegala District.—Wariyapola was considered as out of the way and it was suggested that the Advisory Officer should be stationed at Kurunegala Town.

Mr. Keerthiratne (M.P. for Kegalle) suggested that Kegalle District should be included in the range served by the Officer at Kurunegala.

Mr. Ismail (M.P. for Puttalam) pressed for the appointment of a separate Officer for the Puttalam District, which required special attention owing to the incidence of recurrent droughts.

II. Demonstration Centres

The Conference was in favour of demonstration centres being established in easily accessible centres throughout the Coconut growing Districts of the Island.

Several Coconut Producers' Co-operative Societies agree to offer suitable blocks of land for Demonstration plots and promised to communicate with the Coconut Research Institute.

III. Coconut Nurseries

Several Societies asked for more nurseries. It was pointed out, however, that some Societies had been unable to dispose of all their supplies of seedlings and that it should be possible to obtain supplies therefrom for *bona fide* members of other Societies who did not have their own nurseries.

IV. Propaganda and Publications

It was suggested that educational propaganda on the cultivation of the coconut palm should be done through the schools and by the offering of prizes for essays, etc.

Mr. Keerthiratne advocated the use of a film unit as a means of disseminating knowledge and information, and Mr. Amerasinghe said that the Co-operative Department Film Unit could be used for filming the coconut industry.

Dr. Joachim stated that Government practical schools which are shortly to be opened in coconut growing areas will include instruction in coconut cultivation in their curriculum.

V. Training Facilities

The present difficulty of providing accommodation at Bandirippuwa for more than one or two Trainees was pointed out.

With regard to training Animal Husbandry Dr. Joachim pointed out that the Department of Agriculture was in a better position to provide facilities for such training.

Mr. Keerthiratne in conclusion made an eloquent appeal to the Chairman to do all he could to help the coconut industry.

The proceedings concluded at 1.30 p.m. and was followed by a sumptuous lunch provided by the Coconut Research Institute.