

## COCONUT PASTURE PROJECT

Address delivered by

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*General Manager, National Milk Board at the Meeting of the  
Chilaw/Negombo Planters' Association held on 24th June 1967*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have been honoured on this occasion in being invited as the Chief Guest at your Annual General Meeting. The honour personally for me although very great, is greater still in that an Association of your standing should have conferred this signal honour to the National Milk Board.

The National Milk Board is on the brink of undertaking projects which, in my opinion, should have been in existence already. The Condensed Milk Factory at Polonnaruwa, for instance, should have been in operation some years ago; fortunately now instead of recriminating I have to inform you, gentlemen, that the Condensed Milk Factory will be producing sweetened condensed milk—the entire requirements of the country—from early next year. The National Milk Board is also now investigating the possibilities of setting up a Spray Drying Plant in our temperate climes at Nuwara Eliya for the manufacture of Spray Dried Milk powder. When these two projects come into operation, one could look back and say, at least in regard to milk, that we have now taken a forward step, and ere long, Ceylon will become self-sufficient and will be in a position to stop the importation of all milk foods and milk products thereby saving foreign exchange which our country can presently hardly afford to meet.

The Condensed Milk Factory at Polonnaruwa will require all the milk which will be produced in the Polonnaruwa, Batticaloa and Amparai Districts. The milk produced in the up-country districts will be absorbed by the Spray Drying Plant. Therefore, gentlemen, we have, with your co-operation, to produce milk to feed the liquid milk market in Colombo and its suburbs. At present, the National Milk Board markets around 37,000 pints of milk daily in Colombo and its suburbs. Of this quantity, around 30,000 pints is transported from the up-country districts. This 30,000 pints will have to be produced in the coconut areas to maintain the present market. Our experience over the past few years is that with intensive advertising and the introduction of the milk drinking habit among the school children, the demand for milk is increasing rapidly. I foresee that in a year or two the Board will require a minimum of 50,000 pints of milk daily from the coconut areas. We have, therefore, launched on a third project appropriately termed "The Coconut Pasture Project". The success of this project will depend in a very large measure on the co-operation the National Milk Board will receive from Associations such as yours in the coconut planting districts.

Of the 1.1 million acres under coconut, at least 300,000 acres in the Wet Zone are reported as suitable for pastures. The Coconut Research Institute has carried out trials, and it has recommended that coconut land in the West Zone could carry a good pasture for profitable milk production without adverse effect on the coconut plantations. I am indeed fortunate today to meet those gentlemen who are planting in the Wet Zone. The fact that I have been invited as Chief Guest at your Annual General Meeting, which incidentally is held at the Coconut Research Institute, argues well for the success of the Coconut Pasture Project.

Perhaps you gentlemen are anxious to know something about the assistance the Milk Board will extend to you for the production and disposal of milk. The Milk Board works in very close co-ordination with the Department of Agriculture. The field staff of the Milk Board and the Department of Agriculture are always at your service for advice and guidance on the establishment and management of pastures, the breeding, feeding and management of cattle and economic milk production. Suitable cattle could be obtained for you from the Department of Agriculture. Artificial Insemination centres are available at Negombo, Marawila and Chilaw.

The Milk Board has almost finalised a Cattle Insurance Scheme with the Insurance Corporation. Once this scheme is in operation, it will be possible to have your cows and stud animals insured. The People's Bank will provide financial assistance to milk producers under a loan scheme the Milk Board has initiated and worked out with the Bank. The Agricultural and Industrial Credit Corporation of Ceylon grants loans for animal husbandry including the establishment of dairy farms. We also expect assistance in this sphere from the World Bank which is very much interested in the Coconut Pasture Project. The Milk Board has taken up with the authorities the question of a regular supply of cattle feed at regulated prices.

You gentlemen, I am sure, are aware of the tax concessions allowed for animal husbandry. These tax concessions are allowed on both capital expenditure and maintenance expenditure.

All the milk produced in the coconut plantations in the Districts of Negombo and Chilaw will be purchased by the Milk Board. We already have milk collecting centres at Chilaw, Nattandiya, and Minuwangoda. By the end of this year, a centre will be opened at Giriulla. With the development of Dairy Husbandry in the two Districts, the Milk Board envisages the opening up of more collecting centres.

The only way we can reach the small farmer is by the formation of Co-operative Milk Producers' Associations, or Societies and it is my firm belief that, the Small Holdings Officer of the Coconut Research Institute is the best person to meet the small holders and get them together to form Co-operative Societies for this purpose. In doing so, very small farmers with over two head of cattle could contribute to this National venture, and also, benefit himself to the extent of stepping up dairying in his own dairy.

Before I conclude, I must refer to the report read by the Secretary of the Chilaw/Negombo Planters' Association. He said that, when cattle were required by the members of his association the purchasers had to go up to Bopathalawa or Ambawela Farms, see the cattle, select and then make payment to the Kachcheri and go up a second time to transport the cattle and if the intended purchaser required only one cow, the cost of transport was very high and such purchases were not only inconvenient but also most uneconomical. In answer to this, I have to point out that, there appears to be some misconception regarding the set up for the purchase of cattle from the Government Farms. It was for three or four intending purchasers to get together, and go up to Ambawela together for the selection of their cattle. Payment could be made through the Milk Board or to the Department of Agriculture and one lorry or vehicle could bring a full lorry load of cattle for several purchasers, thereby making the entire transaction not tedious and not uneconomical.

I thank the members of the Association for extending me this opportunity of meeting the members and also giving me a patient hearing. I hope I have clarified matters to the present dairy owners of your Association, and also to intended dairymen and suppliers of milk to the Milk Board, that, the Milk Board is quite prepared not only to accept their milk but also to assist them in dairying, pasture growing and whatever other needs that these dairymen would require and that with the services available with the Department of Agriculture, close co-ordination could be maintained to give the Association and its members every assistance they need.

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Title	Grass under coconut	Manufacture of Coconut todody vinegar by the Generator process	Cause for the deterioration or spoilage of Copra	Coconut Shell Charcoal	The importance of Pest and Disease Control	Services rendered by C.R.I. for Pest and Disease Control	Estate Sanitation.

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