

DEVELOPMENT OF THE COCONUT INDUSTRY TO BE BASED ON BETTER STATISTICS

The value of coconut crop to Ceylon's economy is too well known to need any emphasis. The increasing interest displayed by the Government in promoting the further improvement of the industry and betterment of living standards for the dependent population is obvious in the subsidy measures organised through the Coconut Rehabilitation Department and important responsibilities assigned to institutions like the Ceylon Coconut Board and Coconut Research Institute.

Still, the Government is seriously handicapped in correctly evaluating the impact of beneficial measures already initiated; and planning worthwhile projects for further improvement owing to the paucity of timely and authentic data on present levels of production, factors affecting the same and possibilities for further expansion of the industry, particularly in the small-holders' sector. The nature of data needed for this purpose and methods for securing the same are matters of technical detail which the government has decided to resolve by conducting a pilot sample survey in representative coconut areas under the joint sponsorship of the Department of Census and Statistics, Coconut Rehabilitation Department, Coconut Research Institute and the Coconut Board. This programme is being undertaken in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations which is now rendering technical advice on similar problems to other coconut producing countries of Asia and Far East.

The pilot survey will be conducted in the three districts of Colombo, Kurunegala and Chilaw, initially for 1½ years commencing around the middle of this month. The programme consists of physically listing all coconut plots in selected areas including estates, enumerating palms according to bearing status versus age-groups and varieties and ascertaining the agronomic, cultural and management practices which the present stand of palms are receiving in randomly selected coconut plots. In some of the plots, an objective measurement of area will be conducted in order to evaluate the prevalent planting densities and land area devoted to coconut in relation to other crops. For determining the present level of production and other factors correlated with the same, some bearing palms will be randomly earmarked in selected coconut plots and yield data will

be recorded by physical counting and weighment of husked nuts at successive harvests through special field arrangements in the presence of the survey staff.

The survey staff consists of 13 Statistical Investigators of the Department of Census and Statistics, 6 Inspectors of the Coconut Rehabilitation Department and 3 Advisory Officers of the Coconut Research Institute. All these personnel assembled for a period of five days at the Coconut Research Institute in order to receive training in the methods of selecting and enumerating sample plots and estates. All the data collected by them through objective weighment, count and measurement or supplied to them by cultivators will be immediately transmitted to the Department of Census and Statistics for critical analysis at Colombo. These data are to be considered as strictly confidential and the results of the analysis are meant to be used by the Government only in formulating measures for further development of the coconut industry.

It is hoped that the coconut small-holders and estate managers will realise the importance of this survey and render all assistance to the field staff.