

COCONUT CULTIVATION IN PUTTALAM DISTRICT

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The people of Puttalam District, to a very great extent, depend on the income derived from coconut plantations.

Most of the coconut cultivation is done on land alienated by the Government. The few privately owned estates and small holdings are to be found on either side of the Colombo—Puttalam Road and in the Kalpitiya area. In recent years several thousands of acres of land have been alienated by the Government for the cultivation of coconuts. These lands form the major middle class colonization schemes, the lower middle class colonization schemes and the Peasant schemes.

In most of these holdings from the very outset the small holders heavily intercropped their lands and little manuring was done. The result was the outbreak of diseases such as Grey Blight in the middle class colonization scheme at Sirambiady and Leaf Blight in the middle class colonization scheme at Vannathavillu. By thinning of catch crops and systematic manuring these diseases have to a great extent been controlled.

In the Kalpitiya area on small holdings as well as on estates peasants do intensive intercultivation of chillies and tobacco. These crops are cultivated on a share or lease basis. The heavy manuring of these crops benefit both the coconuts as well as these crops.

In spite of the large amount of husks available very little husk burying is practised in this district. The bulk of the husks being sold to the several fibre mills in the district. But in recent years with prices of husks fluctuating, more and more people are beginning to adopt the practise of husk burying.

The dominant pests in the district are Black beetle and termites. In recent years Red Weevil has made its appearance particularly in the colonization schemes. Demonstrations and advise on the use of insecticides for the control of these pests are given wherever required and the use of these insecticides is becoming popular.

Waterlogging is another problem in some of the lands. Tracing of drains and advise on opening of these drains is given whenever requested.

Besides these demonstrations are held regarding lining for planting holes cutting and preparing them. The triangular system of planting has become very popular particularly in new lands.