

FIELD DAY FOR KURUNEGALA PLANTERS' ASSOCIATION

The members of the Kurunegala Planters' Association led by its Chairman Mr. E. H. van der Poorten, participated in a Field Day organized for them at Bandirippuwa Estate, Lunuwila, on 1st February, 1971.

After an introductory talk by the Director of the C.R.I., Dr. W. R. N. Nathanael, the party was conducted round the field by Mr. C. A. Wickremasuriya, Chief Advisory Officer.

The planters first visited the experimental plots maintained by the Soil Chemistry Division. Here, Mr. T. S. Balakrishnamurti, Acting Soil Chemist, drew attention to the visual symptoms that were evident in certain plots that had not received specific nutrients. In this connection, special attention was drawn to the "No potassium plots", where significant depressions in yield had been recorded. Field demonstrations were given of certain radio-isotopic techniques that are being used by the Division of Soil Chemistry for the evaluation of the efficiency of fertilizer placement in studies on the nutrition of coconut.

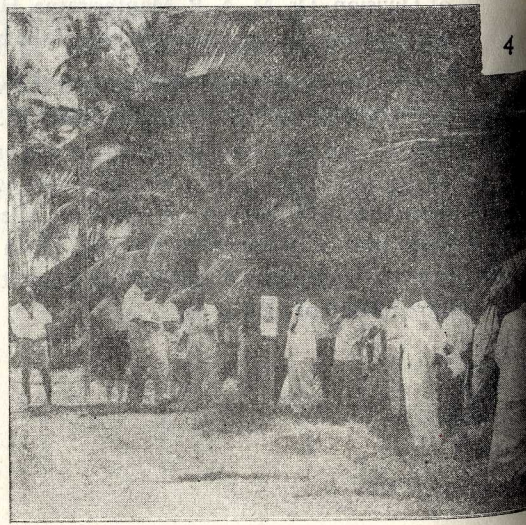
The planters were taken round next by Mr. D. E. F. Fernandez, Officer-in-Charge, Agrostology Division to the experimental plots maintained by this Division. They were shown the pasture experiments in progress at Bandirippuwa and the methods of their economic management under coconut were discussed. Field demonstrations were given of the actual method of pasture establishment and the operation of suitable machinery for cutting grass. Mr. Fernandez described the rotational cross-breeding programme that has already been initiated with the foundation cattle at Bandirippuwa, with the object of producing a satisfactory dairy animal for the Coconut Triangle, acclimatised for tropical conditions.

On proceeding to the Botanist's field trials, the visitors were met by the Head of Division, Dr. M. A. P. Manthiraratne. He described the breeding experiments in progress and the yield potentialities of the hybrid strains raised at the C.R.I.

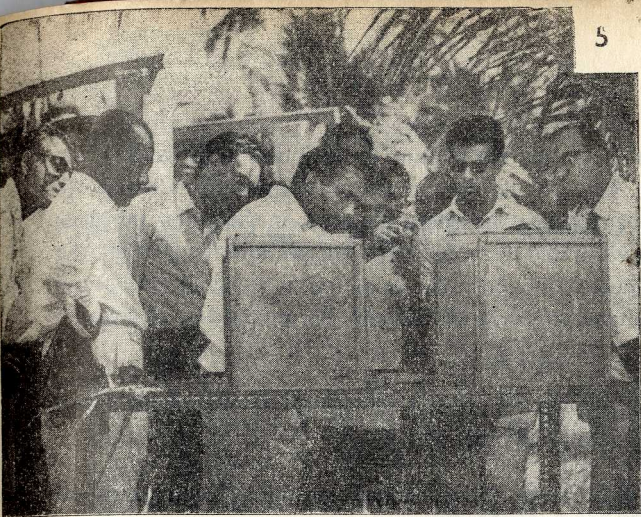
In the Crop Protection Division the visitors evinced considerable interest in the biological control of coconut pests. Dr. U. B. M. Ekanayake, Crop Protection Officer, drew their attention to the work in progress on a new predator for the control of the Red Weevil, and a trap of simple design now being employed for catching these weevils in the field. He also drew attention to a new pest of coconut that has been detected in the Dehiwaia area. Much concern was expressed by the planters over the inadequacy of satisfactory quarantine measures to prevent the inadvertent introduction of such pests.



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1. Planters examine a field soon after a demonstration of establishing grass under coconut.

2. Demonstration of spraying against Coconut Scale in progress.

3. Mr. Balakrishnamurti, Acting Soil Chemist, speaking on manurial experiments in the field.

4. At the Hybrid Palm Block—Dr. Manthirratne, Botanist (third from left), discussing progress in hybridisation work.

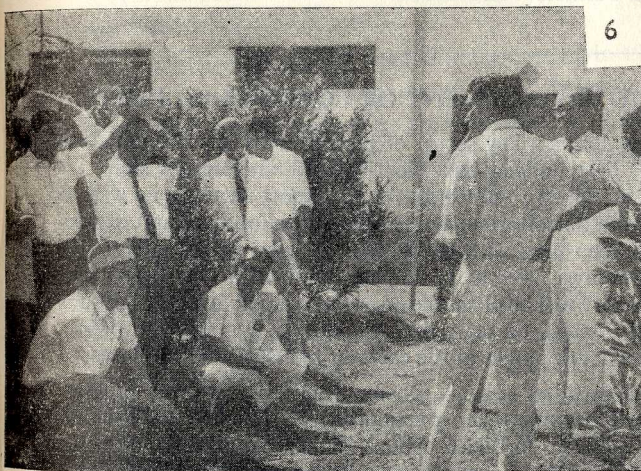
5. Planters have a close look at the parasites bred by the Crop Protection Division. Dr. Ekanayake, Crop Protection Officer (fifth from left) describes the latest developments in crop protection work.

6. Mr. Asoka de Silva, Research Assistant explains a point in the field.

7. Mr. Fernandez, Officer-in-Charge, Agrostology Division, speaks on the cattle breeding programme now in progress at the Institute.

8. Planters take a look at the Pot Culture Experiment in progress.

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Planters VISIT THE COCONUT RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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The visitors were next shown the Pot Culture Experiments in progress in the Chemistry Division by Mr. M. A. T. de Silva, Research Assistant in Charge. He explained that whilst work in the past had been focussed on the major nutrients nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and to some extent calcium and magnesium, the time has come for the Institute to conduct studies to establish the significance of the micro-nutrients-iron, manganese, copper, molybdenum, boron and zinc in coconut nutrition.

The proceedings in the field climaxed with a demonstration of spraying palms for the control of the coconut scale and other pests.

After lunch at the Guest House, the Field Day terminated with a General Meeting of the Kurunegala Planters' Association.

PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF COCONUT INDUSTRY

The coconut industry which is a key sector of the economy has been allowed to decline for many years. Past policies have clearly failed, and urgent steps are necessary to rehabilitate this industry vital both for its export earnings as well as for its importance in the domestic consumer budget. Both the fertilizer and replanting schemes have failed to keep pace with needs, and policies with regard to the enforcement of these programmes have to be implemented on a new basis. The Coconut Development Authority will be given the power to compel owners of estates to carry out approved programmes of manuring, replanting and inter-cropping. The policies proposed for the development of the coconut industry are as follows:—

- (a) Under the coconut fertilizer subsidy scheme a selective fertilizer application programme will be undertaken giving priority to coconut lands which would respond rapidly to fertilizer. About 250,000 additional acres are estimated to come into this programme and the annual fertilizer intake of the coconut industry is planned to increase from the present 60,000 tons to 120,000 tons annually.
- (b) The coconut subsidy scheme whereby seedlings are issued to growers at a subsidised rate and where a subsidy is given for the block replanting of coconut land will be continued.
- (c) One of the main problems in the coconut industry has been the neglect of coconut small-holdings which are about 65 per cent of the total coconut land in the country. The Coconut Development Authority will give high priority to improving credit and marketing facilities, and management practices in this sector.
- (d) The extension and advisory services will be strengthened by a doubling of the present cadre and the establishment of divisional offices in coconut growing areas.

Ministry of Planning and Development, 1971.
The Five Year Plan. P. 43. Colombo:
Department of Government Printing.