

CEYLON COCONUT QUARTERLY

EDITORIAL

NEW EDITORIAL POLICY

In accordance with a decision of the Coconut Research Board, scientific material embodying the detailed results of scientific research will not be published in future in the *Ceylon Coconut Quarterly*. Such material will be published in an Annual, as well as in the form of Bulletins occasionally as and when the need arises.

Further the Journal will be published once in six months, two quarterly issues being combined into one number.

For a small organisation such as the Coconut Research Institute it is difficult to supply a regular series of articles based on our own investigations. We would therefore welcome articles from coconut planters based on their practical experience.

'The Bag' will be open to correspondents who wish to send letters to the Editor on interest. Our columns will be open as a forum of discussion.

Soil Management

Readers to the article entitled 'Notes on Soil Management on Coconut Estates' by Mr. Paltridge appearing in this number. Mr. Paltridge has been a member of the C.C.Q. since 1955, working as Agronomist under the Colombo Plan, sponsored by the Government of Australia.

Mr. Paltridge's experience in Australia under conditions of climate and agriculture different from Ceylon has led him to question the basis of some of our traditional methods of soil management on coconut estates.

The same topic by Dr. Salgado appeared in this Journal several years ago in the *Ceylon Coconut Quarterly*, (C.C.Q., Vol. V, No. 3, p. 153).

Soil management is both an art and a science. On its scientific aspects it will be difficult for the Coconut Research Institute to experiment and provide unequivocal data. The conditions under which coconuts are cultivated in Ceylon vary, both in climate and soil, and a method suitable for one area may not apply to another.

On some fundamental aspects of the coconut palm our knowledge is yet meagre. For example our knowledge of the root system of the coconut palm, the functions and physiology of the different types of roots is inadequate. Similarly the moisture relations of the coconut palm, problems of water economy in relation to dry areas where coconuts are grown yet remain to be investigated.

The Coconut Research Board has therefore recently decided to establish a new Division of Plant Physiology to investigate these aspects in co-operation with the existing Divisions of Soil Chemistry and Agronomy. These investigations will fill our gaps in fundamental knowledge without which systems of management will remain more in the realm of speculation.

The economic aspects of soil management methods must always be kept in mind. In any recommendations of new methods based on scientific data it must not be forgotten that nearly 65 per cent of the coconut estates are small holdings below 20 acres. As such while mechanical methods may suit the large estates, the limitations of the majority of the small holders must be kept in mind.

Coconut Rehabilitation and the Manure Subsidy

The article by the Commissioner, Coconut Rehabilitation entitled 'The Coconut Rehabilitation Scheme' and the corresponding article on 'Small Holdings and Coconut Rehabilitation' by the Acting Director and the Biometrician of the Coconut Research Institute should be read with topical interest.

It should be a matter of gratification that the response to the manure subsidy scheme should exceed all expectations. In 1956 permits were issued to over 2,000 estates covering just over 200,000 acres and to nearly 20,000 small holdings covering nearly 100,000 acres, the total acreage covering a little less than one-third of the total coconut area in Ceylon.

The response of the small holders is particularly encouraging. An analysis of the applications for subsidy by size of small holdings shows that in the Chilaw District, nearly half the applications (44.5 per cent) came from small holdings of less than 2½ acres.

Unfortunately the unprecedented drought we have been passing through during 1956 will to a disappointing extent, reduce the effects of manuring on anticipated crop responses. It is hoped that this should not discourage coconut estates from taking the fullest advantage of the generous subsidies provided by the Government.

Soil Fertility in the Tropics

In Volume VI, Nos. 1/2 of this Journal we had the privilege of publishing an article entitled 'Mineral Fertilisers and Tropical Oil Plants' by Prevot and Ollagnier of the Research Institute for Fats and Oils, Paris.

A more popular article entitled 'Principles Applicable to the Maintenance of the Fertility of Cultivated Soils in Tropical Countries' by M. Ferrand of this same Institute appears in the current number.

The observations made are based on extensive investigations carried out in French Tropical Africa by Sub-stations of the Institute on a variety of tropical crops, including oil palms and coconuts.

It is hoped to publish in future issues further articles of this nature, as there are lessons which planters in our own country can learn from these investigations.