

## CENSUS OF PALMS

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All are familiar with a census of population but not in relation to a coconut estate. An operation which needs a little attention, if neglected can affect the total yield of a plantation to a considerable extent.

In a coconut estate great attention is given to times like manuring, soil and moisture conservation measures, drains, weeding, pests and diseases. All these measures, together or independently, can affect the total yield of an estate. The census of an estate is rarely done, or not much of importance is given to this; but to obtain maximum yield from an estate maximum land use must be made. To bring about this, one has to periodically or yearly in case of young plantations take stock of the situation or obtain a census of palms.

In obtaining a census of palms various factors should be carefully considered. In the case of old palms—those that have passed their period of peak production and are not of economic value—however much the manuring or great the attention, the response will not be the same as in the case of young palms. Periodically one may come across a good number of old palms especially in a replanted estate.

All palms in an estate will not be of the same stand or condition. The careful observer will occasionally come across tapering palms. This is characterised by the unsymmetrical and untidy crown, the lower leaves turning yellowish green with a yellowing or a rusting at the tips of the leaflets and the development of a black band just below the crown. Later the sturdy trunk develops an obvious tapering and shows a marked diminution in diameter just below the crown. If detected early there is a possibility of saving the palm; otherwise it is best that it be removed.

One is also bound to come across palms that have been affected by lightning and palms with very narrow stems and poor yield—the rest of the stem wasted away due to an injury or other external causes. These palms are a waste on the land.

As mentioned that all palms would not be of the same stand, there are likely to be a number of weak palms and poor yielding palms. The weak palms should not be difficult for a planter to detect. The general appearance of the palms will present an unhealthy look, with small crowns, poor foliage and few nuts on them. Poor yielding palms also commonly appear sickly, of course with exceptions. Where individual

palm records or block records are maintained, these palms can easily be identified. All attempts should be made to rehabilitate these palms and make them more productive, but if no response is noticed, it is best that these are removed.

On inspecting an estate for obtaining a census for the first time one is liable to notice occasional vacancies, caused by various reasons. This, is another cause for the wastage of good land.

Some of the facts mentioned above should help one to make a very comprehensive census of his estate. This will give him the exact amount of land wasted and the result may be sometimes alarming. To overcome this a constructive programme should be drawn up.

Attempts must be made to remove all unhealthy, poor yielding, tapering, and palms affected by lightning. These palms should be removed out of the estate or cut and burnt, as otherwise, the dead trunks may serve as breeding places for Black Beetle. This operation should be carried out well ahead of the planting season. Healthy seedling of good stock should be planted at the correct season in the vacancies created by the removal of old or unhealthy palms.

By taking a census of an estate regularly one can in a few years time be well satisfied that no land is wasted and be the proud owner of a healthy and productive estate—an asset to every planter.