

Ceylon Cocon. Quart. (1967) 18,

REVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE C.R.I. ADVISORY SERVICES

C. A. WICKRAMASURIYA,

Chief Advisory Officer,

Coconut Research Institute of Ceylon.

OBJECTIVES

An Advisory and Extension Service in Agriculture, is meant to persuade the grower to farm more profitably and thereby increase not only his family income, but also contribute to the national development programme of a country.

Likewise, the object of this Division is to promote improved methods of coconut cultivation based on the findings of Research, by advice, demonstrations and publicity, with a view to increasing the production of coconuts in the country. In other words, the function of this Division is to enlighten owners of coconut land, on the proper methods of new planting, replanting, manuring, soil and moisture conservation; other cultural operations, control of pests and diseases and make such suggestions as will help them to increase yields and maintain their plantations in good condition. The Advisory Division in short serves as a liaison between the Research worker and the coconut grower.

DEVELOPMENT OF ADVISORY SERVICES

In March 1949 the Replanting Scheme commenced operations with the creation of a Planting and Advisory Division in charge of Mr. O. B. M. Cheyne. In the same year five coconut nurseries were established and three Advisory Field Officers were appointed. Thereafter the number of nurseries and Advisory Officers increased progressively so that by 1956 we had 17 Advisory Officers and 17 nurseries.

At the inception the Advisory Officers' duties were mostly confined to advising members of coconut co-operative societies to whom coconut seedlings were issued at concession rates. Later they began visiting small holdings and estates for advisory work.

In December 1957 the Planting and Advisory Divisions were separated into two distinct Divisions, namely the Planting Division and the Advisory Division. The functions of the former being to establish sufficient coconut seedling nurseries to meet the annual demand for replanting and that of the latter to advise and demonstrate to growers all operations connected with cultivation and management practices. In the same year Muhandiram E. A. Peiris was appointed Chief Advisory Officer and Head of the Advisory Division.

In 1958—there were 22 Advisory Field Officers appointed to different ranges in the country. Their work involved visits in connection with general advice and the control of pests and diseases. During this year the field staff actually visited 967 holdings to advise on pests and diseases and 5,609 lands for advice and demonstrations on other aspects of work.

In December 1959 when the writer took charge of the Advisory Division, the services rendered to coconut growers were diversified to cover Planting, Pest and Disease control and Service on Request. In 1966 a Crop Improvement Service was also introduced.

NATURE OF SERVICES

Planting Service

This includes a Pre-planting Service which is extended to those who intend carrying out new planting or replanting. Applications for seedlings are made in duplicate to the Planting Officer one of which is handed over by him to the Advisory Division, which is then directed to the respective range officer. On receipt of this, the field officer visits such lands by appointment, to demonstrate lining for planting, to advise on proper preparation of planting holes, method of planting and care of seedlings. Thereafter, the Follow-up Service (which is the second part of the Planting Service) is carried out by the field officer. In carrying this out the young plantation is periodically visited, by the field officer, to provide advice and guidance on the method of manuring, weeding and on any other matters considered necessary for the proper maintenance and after-care of the young plantation and for tracing drains for soil and moisture conservation, or draining of low lying areas.

Pest and Disease Control Service

This includes advisory visits and demonstrations pertaining to the prevention and control of pests and diseases. The Pest Control Service is however not completely handled by this Division as the Pest Control Unit consisting of power sprayers, tanks, etc., is in charge of the Crop Protection Division.

The Crop Improvement Service.—This service is rendered to those who have no knowledge of proper management practices. Such lands would be visited by the Advisory field Officer, en-route to or from a place of work. Again, on days the officer has not arranged any particular job of work, he would on his own arrange to visit such lands, along a particular route or in an area or village within his range. This service is specially meant for the small-holder. The officer would, after entering a land, ascertain from the person-in-charge, the name of the owner and explain to him the purpose of his visit. Thereafter, he will inspect the plantation make his observations and recommendations. Where the owner does not reside on the land, such observations and recommendations are despatched by post to the owner. Where however, underplanting or manuring is recommended, the necessary application forms for obtaining seedlings and fertilizer will be given along with advisory leaflets. Where soil conservation, drainage or replanting is considered necessary the land would be visited again by appointment, if the owner or the person-in-charge so desires, so that he or his representative could be shown how such work should be done.

Service on Request.—This is given to those who request for information pertaining to any particular problem or problems relating to coconut cultivation. Such a request is generally made direct to the Field Officer or to the Head Office by the interested party.

Besides the above, the Field Staff carry out inspections of coconut land for the Commissioner of Coconut Rehabilitation, where Fertilizer has been purchased by small holders to manure their plantations. In doing so, the Field Staff will advise owners or their representatives on other aspects of work which they consider necessary for the well being of the plantation.

The Field Staff also deliver talks on correct management practices at meetings within their ranges. The Division also participates in agricultural exhibitions which are periodically held by Government Agents or Divisional Revenue Officers in various districts.

Apart from demonstrations given on cultivators' lands, Demonstration Centres have also been established by the Institute at Koggala, Pallai, Mundel, Alampil and Mylambavelly. These centres have been found effective in impressing coconut growers of the advantages of adopting improved methods.

Statistics pertaining to advisory visits by the Field Staff (during 1959-66) under the different services are shown in Table — I.

TABLE I

No. OF LANDS VISITED BY THE FIELD STAFF FROM 1959 - 1966

Year	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966
1. No. of Advisory Field Officers at the end of the year	25	23	23	23	21	21	22	19
2. On Planting Service (Pre-planting and Follow-up) ...	552	1847	1450	2235	1750	1090	1365	1262
3. On Pests and Diseases								
(a) Red Weevil	169	356	376	1118	918	1071	901	716
(b) Black Beetle	869	933	810	1041	842	770	563	703
(c) Caterpillar	299	56	76	248	204	150	100	143
(d) Termites	430	758	664	770	628	591	627	925
(e) Grey Blight	195	214	164	128	62	133	220	174
(f) Scale Insect	—	36	16	142	71	81	24	60
(g) Other Pests and Diseases ...	388	301	110	146	172	334	378	332
4. On Service on Request (General Advice)	7801	8467	6276	5676	5737	4471	5464	6003
5. On Crop Improvement Service ...	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2766
6. On Manure Subsidy Inspections for Commissioner	1120	628	583	652	1411	1374	635	262
GRAND TOTAL	11823	13596	10525	12156	11795	10065	10277	13346

At various times during 1960-63 certain Advisory Field Officers were utilised for work under the Subsidy Scheme for planting coconut in citronella lands.

During 1961-1964 certain Advisory Field Officers helped the Dept. of Census & Statistics on the Pilot Coconut Survey.

During 1965 the Advisory Field Officers were engaged for two months on enumeration of "Leaf Scorch" declining palms in their ranges under the direction of the Colombo Plan Nematologist.

CITRONELLA SUBSIDY SCHEME

A Scheme for subsidising the planting of coconut on citronella lands of 20 acres and under in extent, in the Matara and Hambantota Districts was initiated by Government in 1959. Work in connection with this scheme commenced towards the latter part of the same year. The Scheme envisaged the planting of an estimated extent of approximately 25,000 acres of citronella lands with coconut. This work, with the exception of the payment of the annual cash subsidy, (which is being done by the Commissioner of Coconut Rehabilitation), was an additional responsibility entrusted to the Chief Advisory Officer. Seedlings for distribution under the scheme were to be supplied by the Planting Officer. For the purpose of implementing the scheme additional staff comprising a District Coconut Instructor, Advisory Field Officers, Field Attendants, Clerks and an Office Attendant were recruited on a temporary basis.

Under the Scheme, in the first year of planting; coconut seedlings, fertilizer and Aldrex (for the control of Termites) have been issued free of cost to applicants. A cash subsidy at the rate of -/50 cts. per plant per year, for plants that are satisfactorily maintained on the land is also paid to every applicant. Such payment is made annually from the year of planting and up to the 8th year of planting. Applicants under the scheme who own 10 acres and under are also given free fertilizer for their coconut seedlings during the 3rd, 5th and 7th years of planting. This assistance is, however, not given to those persons who own and have planted over 10 acres, as they are expected to obtain their requirements of fertilizer under the Fertilizer Subsidy Scheme at half the cost. A Follow-up Service and inspections of the planted lands are being carried out by the field staff to render necessary advice; apart from recommending the payment of the annual cash subsidy.

Issues made under the Subsidy Scheme for planting coconut in citronella lands are given in **TABLE — 2.**

PROBLEMS AND DIFFICULTIES

The Advisory Division of this Institute actually functions as a two way channel. In the process of providing the knowledge; advice and/or demonstration to the coconut grower, the Field Staff also bring home to the Institute various problems and inquiries for which no definite answers are available. Such problems, from time to time, have been referred to the Director of this Institute for discussion at Staff Research Conferences.

There have been complaints that our services are inadequate. This criticism seems to be justified to a large extent. The chief reasons for this being shortage of staff, insufficient funds and the lack of sufficient facilities to provide wide scale extension and publicity. Coconut in this country is a widely distributed crop consisting of a total acreage of approximately 1.11 million acres. The bulk of this acreage is comprised of small holdings, with the result that the total number of coconut holdings in the island are quite large. To operate this area there are only 24 Advisory Field Officers and 2 District Coconut Instructors. The result has been that each Advisory Field Officer has to work an area varying from approximately 35,000 acres to 55,000 acres depending on the District. Such a picture in contrast with other institutions in the country, that operate an extension service, obviously indicates the gross inadequacy of our field staff. A further deficiency is the lack of necessary equipment for group and mass contact, owing to lack of funds. In 1947 Government granted Rs 150,000/- for advisory work. This grant was exhausted in 1950. In 1950 the rate of research cess was increased and the cost of advisory work was thereafter charged to the Institute's funds. In 1962 the Government gave a grant of Rs 100,000/- for advisory work, and since 1964 an annual recurrent grant of 3 lakhs of rupees is being given for advisory work. For the present set up this sum of money is considered to be just sufficient to meet the annual expenditure of the Advisory Division. The financial position therefore does not permit an expansion in the Advisory and Extension Services, to provide a more vigorous extension and propaganda drive for the benefit of a wider coconut planting public.

TABLE—2

CITRONELLA SUBSIDY SCHEME

POSITION OF ISSUES SINCE THE INCEPTION OF THE SCHEME IN DECEMBER, 1959.

Season of Issue	No. of Applicants who took Delivery of Seedlings and Fertilizer		No. of Seedlings Issued	Acreage according to Permits			Fertilizer Issued @ $\frac{1}{2}$ Cwt. per Acre			Aldrex 2 Issued in Ounces (@ 6 ozs. for One Acre i.e. 75 Seedlings)
				A.	R.	P.	T.	Cwt.	Lbs.	
May/June, 1960) ...	1954		139,713	1864	2	28 1/2	46	12	56	36,859 1/2
Oct./Nov., 1960)	3920		247,232	3295	1	12 1/2	82	10	14	
May/June, 1961 ...	822		189,237	2552	2	10 5/6	63	01	98	21,372
Oct./Nov., 1961	1384		266,276	3549	1	08	88	15	00	
May/June, 1962 ...	2208		156,596	2090	1	01 1/2	52	04	70	12,535 1/2
Oct./Nov., 1962	4708		280,832	3761	3	28	93	14	00	
May/June, 1963 ...	810		149,279	1991	2	00	49	15	28	11,943
Oct./Nov., 1963	1321		205,190	2773	0	01	68	07	14	
TOTAL ...	11333		1,634,355	21848	2	10 1/3	542	00	56	122,603 1/2

POSITION OF FREE ISSUE OF FERTILIZER TO APPLICANTS FROM 1964 to MAY/JUNE, 1967.

	No. of Applicants		Tons	Cwts.	Lbs.
May/June, 1964	1517	186	18	0 1/2
Oct./Nov., 1964	2764	814	18	70
May/June, 1965	1855	226	13	28
Oct./Nov., 1965	2018	361	01	14
May/June, 1966	2465	575	10	28
Oct./Nov., 1966	2930	1378	03	28
May/June, 1967	1932	380	06	14

It should be relevant to point out that owners of coconut land are only being given fertilizer and seedlings at subsidized rates whereas owners of tea and rubber plantations are being paid attractive replanting cash subsidies. Owners of paddy land on the other hand are provided such facilities as credit, crop insurance and guaranteed prices. Such incentives are added advantages for an extension service to persuade growers to adopt scientific methods of cultivation and management practices quickly and more effectively. It is to be hoped that Government will remedy these limitations in the near future to enable the Advisory and Extension Services of the C.R.I. to function with greater usefulness to the Industry.

