

TODDY TAPPING INDUSTRY-PRESENT SITUATION

A survey on toddy tapping was initiated by the Coconut Research Institute in early 1995, in order to study the present position of toddy tapping industry, economical aspects and the future prospects.

A detailed questionnaire was prepared to facilitate data collection. Information was then collected from the owners of toddy tapping lands, the toddy tappers themselves and the producers of toddy based products (treacle, vinegar etc). The survey was carried out with in the districts of Galle, Gampaha, Kalutara, Kurunegala and Puttalam using a randomly selected sample of approximately 100.

Over 85% in the sample surveyed stated that toddy tapping generated a higher income over nut production. The main reason being the continuous income obtained on a daily basis. Considering the cultural practices, adopted in the areas surveyed, it revealed that more than 50% of the toddy tapping palms in each district received fertilizer annually, and most of the land owners used chemical fertilizers. It was observed that the most damaging pest of toddy tapping palms is red weevil.

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This survey clearly indicated that, in all districts, the tappers are in high demand but are not readily available. The highest availability is in the Kalutara District which accounts for 45% where 55% is still in need. Most tappers are not suitably trained in this vocation and it is further observed that more than 64% demand for the trained tappers in all the surveyed districts. Most of the land owners involved (more than 50%) are in a position to send 1-4 young men to the CRI for a proper training.

Therefore the re-establishment of the Toddy Tappers Training Centre at the Coconut Research Institute has now become a necessity.

More than 50% of toddy that is being produced is sold to the distillery companies in all districts except Kurunegala and some parts of



Skilled tapper on ropes

Puttalam. The toddy in these two districts is mainly purchased by other regular buyers. In all districts surveyed more than 50% of the owners receive a toddy yield of 1-2 litres per palm per day. It was also revealed that the entire quantity of toddy can be sold each day, obviating any extra storage facilities in the tapping sector.

one of the contributory factors for the decline of the toddy industry. At instances when the tappers fail to turn up for daily tapping, the land owners are forced to employ other tappers at extra costs ranging from Rs. 250-400/= per day depending upon the number of palms. The owners of toddy



Toddy is being collected by the tapper

The cost of tapping incurred by land owners are the wages of tappers which is around Rs. 4000/= or more per month depending on the number of palms and the cost for implements worth about Rs. 1000/=.

This survey revealed that the price paid for toddy by the distilleries is now reduced, compared to the past due to the importation of foreign "Silent Spirits" which are low in price. These are used for blending and marketing in Sri Lanka and is

tapping palms face many other constraints out of which the capital required for paying as lease for palms being the most important. Limitations and reduction in prices paid to toddy producers tend to discourage them from further investment. If the coconut land owners who are interested in the tapping industry are given a free hand and a guaranteed price, this industry will further develop and the availability of good quality toddy will increase, yielding a healthy drink for consumers, high standard raw material to the big and small industrialist, and a substantial revenue to the country.