

Coconut Research Institute: Quarterly Seminars

The third seminar of the CRI Quarterly seminar series was held on 5th September, 1984 at the Coconut Development Training Centre. The theme of the seminar was "Fertilizer usage in Coconut".

Mr. M. Jeganathan and Miss M. B. M. N. Dias of the Coconut Research Institute presented the first paper titled "Review and Development of Fertilizer for Coconut". It was revealed that the first fertilizer trial was conducted in 1935 at Bandirippuwa Estate, the objective being to recommend economic fertilizer use. In achieving this emphasis had to be made on the following factors; (a) Dosage (b) Form of fertilizer (c) Placement (d) Frequency and time and (e) Quantitative relationship between yield and fertilizer. Classification of soil types in the coconut growing areas of Sri Lanka has shown that the soil types vary from lateritic, sandy, loamy to alluvial but about 80% of the coconut lands come under sandy and lateritic soils. It was further stated that the results of the fertilizer experiments have lead to a change in the proportions of different inorganic compounds in the fertilizer mixtures from time to time. The aim of continuing fertilizer trials is to determine a cheap and an efficient manure/fertilizer mixture. Miss Dias spoke on recommendations of fertilizer mixtures for young palms. The composition of the mixtures and rate of application to young palms were also given. It was also mentioned that the fertilizer recommendations should be made according to the climate and soil types; for example, gravelly or sandy soils have to be fertilized with CU1 or CA1 while loamy or clay soils with CU2 or CA2 fertilizer mixtures. The importance of the placement of fertilizer within a confined area from the bole of the palm was emphasized.

The second paper on "Economic analysis of fertilizer usage in coconut" was presented by Mr. K. Karunanayake of the Coconut Cultivation Board who pointed out that the majority of the cultivators do not use fertilizers and about 40% of them think that use of fertilizer is not economical. He stated that the fertilizer recommendations should be feasible, economically viable and socially acceptable. From the observations made on a fertilizer trial in three estates from 1975 to 1983 he said that yield has not shown to be much correlated with fertilizer application but more with weather. However, this may be due to a higher interaction of yield with weather than with fertilizers.

Mr. A. R. W. Jayasekera of the JEDB spoke on the "Practical and environmental difficulties of fertilizer usage in coconut as experienced on JEDB estates". He mentioned on the importance of fertilizer usage as the virgin conditions of land is undergoing rapid deterioration. His observations were that the yield response to fertilizer was not reasonably good specially in estates around Puttalam. The major problems appeared to be the unreliable South West monsoon, the North East monsoon may be short, prolonged storage of fertilizers in the estate until rain comes, shortage of labour to fertilize the estates soon after the rains, within a very short period, and non availability of sufficient materials for mulching fertilizer circle.

The presentations were followed by a discussion during which the minimal nutrient requirement for a coconut palm, improving the fertility of the land by free grazing cattle, fertilizer amounts required for underplanted estates and the best time and method for fertilizer application were discussed.

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