INCREASE INCOME IN COCONUT LANDS BY BEE KEEPING

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Bee keeping in coconut lands can be satisfactorily maintained, and is a promising venture for pleasure and extra income. The main contributory factor in a coconut land is the continuous availability of coconut pollen throughout the year which are mostly required to build up bee colonies. Honey bees entomologically termed *Apiscerana indica* perform a significant role directly and indirectly in the pollination process. There are various economic benefits in bee keeping under coconut. The honey bees associate with effective pollination increasing nut yield, and profits thereby. Although there are other insects that assist pollination, it is the honey bee that contributes mostly in pollination of coconut flowers.

The main objective in beekeeping although is honey yet in coconut lands this objective is extended towards an increase in nut production. One would have observed hives in coconut lands, under natural conditions inside tins, coconut husk heaps, pots or in tree cavities Such media do not give good results. Infact these colonies should be scientifically maintained by breeding them in Bee boxes especially designed for the proper management of colonies, and with this method pure bees honey could be systematically obtained. One additional advantage is the propagation of colonies and the possibility of marketing the colonies in lots. The only known method of extracting honey from a naturally exsisting colony or hive is by squeezing, and pressing the hive, and this manual exercise destroys all

developing eggs, larvae and pupae of this beneficial insect.

This process do not yield pure honey, and also reduces the available insect population causing decline in pollination and colony propagation. Bee keeping requires bee boxes especially made for rearing these insects. The Department of Agriculture has introduced a rearing box suited to bees habitating our country. For effective and satisfactory production of honey it is required to have other trees such as coffee, gliricidia,weeds etc. as well in combination with coconut. Further it has ben observed that coconut tapping sites are very suitable for beekeeping, and also mixed plantations with coconut and rubber. Coconut in forest areas have been found to be still better. Apart from wood, bee boxes could also be made from other material, but the boxes should conform to the required standards. Beekeeping could start at a suitable site on the land, using the standard boxes. To begin with, healthy bee colonies will have to be either collected from a naturally available site, or purchased from a successful beekeeper. It has to be emphasized that the success of bee keeping depends upon the farmer's knowledge on the life pattern of the bees, and the management skills in its proper maintenance.

Question :

I have a coconut plantation 10 ac in extent. Since the day of purchase of this property I am experiencing the following problems.

i. **Immature nut fall including button nuts**

ii. **The drooping of fronds**

Answer :

In brief, immature and button nut fall, drooping of fronds are attributed to moisture stress. Conservation of soil moisture is a very important agricultural practice that has to be adopted during wet weather. Coconut Research Institute recommends various methods of soil moisture conservation. Such as husk or fibre dust burying, in pits, contour drains, mulching manure circle and establishment of cover crops. These are described in the CRI advisory circulars A5 to A9.

Also important is the application of the CRI recommended fertilizers as given in CRI advisory circular A4.