

RESEARCH NOTE

A NEW TOOL FOR EFFICIENT COCOA HARVESTING

Cocoa pods are borne on soft cushions on main trunk and branches of cocoa trees. Cushions are specialised structures found on stems and flowers are produced there. If cushions are damaged in any manner, production of flowers on them is adversely affected in the subsequent years. Normally a knife or sickle is used for harvesting the cocoa pods. While the pods borne up to a height of about 2 m. on the stems are harvested easily, those which are above this height are harvested by climbing the trees or by using a step ladder. Sometimes, small sickles tied to a bamboo pole are used for harvesting. All these methods of harvesting pods often damage a few cushions.

Less often pods are harvested by twisting them with hand. This method eliminates the use of any tool and cushions are only rarely damaged, but it is time consuming.

The tool described here (Fig. 1) has been developed to harvest cocoa pods which are borne at more than 2 m. height. This eliminates the use of ladder for climbing the tree. The tool can also perform the function of a sickle or knife used for harvesting pods

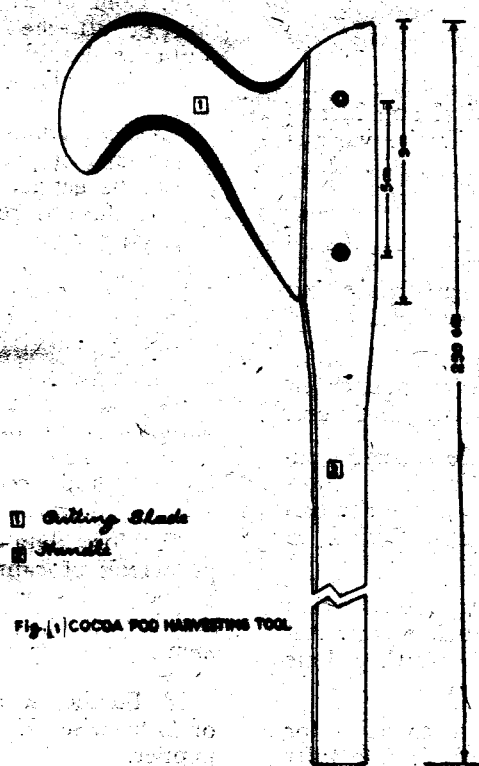
which are at the lower branches and main stem. The tool comprises a cutting blade (1) and a long handle (2). The blade is made of 3 mm. thick spring steel sheet. The handle is an aluminium tube 2.5 m. long, 15 mm. diameter. The blade is fastened to the handle at one end by means of two 6 mm. x 12 mm. full-threaded bolts and nuts which facilitate easy replacement of the worn-out blade. Sharp edge and suitable shape of the blade help in smooth and easy harvesting of cocoa pods. Total weight of the tool is about 500 gm. The cost of tool works out approximately to Rs. 20/- and cost of blade alone for replacement about Rs. 3/-.

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1 Cutting Blade
2 Handle

Fig. 1) COCOA POD HARVESTING TOOL