



PLENARY SESSION

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Report on Plenary Session of PLACROSYM V held on 18-12-1982

The plenary session of Placrosym V started with a discussion on the need for establishing a National Information Centre for Plantation Crops (NICPLAC), chaired by Sri S.V. Sangameshwaran, Head of the Division of Library Sciences, CFTRI, Mysore. In his opening remarks, Sri Sangameshwaran pointed out that as a result of the population explosion, the needs of the people had increased enormously. Similarly, with the information explosion, there has been a rise in R & D expenditure. He referred to the efforts of CPCRI to have a phased programme of library development to include documentation and information services which would cater to the needs of scientists working in this field.

The lead paper on NICPLAC was presented by Sri D. Kamalavijayan, Librarian & Documentation Officer of CPCRI, wherein he outlined the scope of a scientific library and the objectives of establishing NICPLAC to bring about greater co-ordination between different information centres on plantation crops and develop a data base which can be drawn upon by all the interested parties through a network of computerized information channel. Clarifying the objectives, the General Chairman Dr Bavappa said, that what is meant by this exercise is to have some loud thinking on organizing the available information on plantation crops so that it becomes easily available to the Scientists irrespective of their affiliation. It is by no means the idea to replace the existing system but only to supplement the efforts in this direction.

Dr P. K. Das was of the view that for the different category of users, the library should endeavour to make available more effective services rather than highly sophisticated computerized systems. Dr Powell, FAO Consultant in Microbiology at TNAU said that the TNAU Library receives over 700 periodicals, and considering this high level of acquisition, the retrieval of information did not seem to be as good. It may be worthwhile, therefore, to evolve a system of retrieval for a more effective use of this tremendous acquisition. Dr E.V.V.B. Rao referred to the Current Contents and ISI System, which he said, should be made full use of in the first

instance. Dr A.V. George of CWRDM, Calicut, presented a brief outline of the 'Bibliography on Irrigation for Plantation Crops' prepared by him. He said that such bibliographies would help in reducing what he called the 'irritation' in the research workers in gathering information.

The Chairmen of various Sessions presented the summaries of their respective Sessions, details of which are given below.

Dr P.K. Das presented the review of Session I; Dr. C.L. Powell summarized the group discussion on Mycorrhizae; Dr V.S. Sharma presented the review of Session II on behalf of Dr N.M. Nayar; Dr. M.R. Sethuraj reviewed Session III; Dr S. Ramaswamy reviewed Session IV on Technology & Processing on behalf of Dr. E.V. Thomas; Sri V. Ranganathan summarized Agronomy & Soil Science Session; Dr C. Rajendran presented the summary of Session VI on Plant Pathology on behalf of Prof P.V. Rai; Dr M.J. Chacko presented the Session VII report on Entomology, Nematology & Rodentology.

Finally, in his concluding remarks, the General Chairman expressed happiness at the heartening response to Placrosym-V from different workers in the field of plantation crops research. Although crop-wise and discipline-wise analysis of papers may not be relevant right now, such an effort should reveal the pace of research progress. Reviewing the highlights and future thrusts, the General Chairman said that with regard to economics, marketing, statistics and extension, the quality and market acceptance of all products are very important, and hence there is a need for quality oriented approach in all the programmes. He also referred to the importance of plot size for reducing cost of field experimentation and forecasting of yield, and cost-benefit-ratio analysis for R & D efforts. He also emphasized the need for formulating viable projects to attract investments from bankers and other agencies.

In the field of genetics and plant breeding, there was an increasing need for improved seed and planting-material for the whole country, and new crop varieties in plantation crops. He referred to the offer by the DDG (CS), ICAR for inter-organizational collaboration through All-India Co-ordinated Projects, and called for stepping up of seed production in coconut, pepper and cashew.

meet the demand of 50 million coconut seedlings for replanting at the rate of 5 million per year in Kerala alone, 2000 ha of seed garden is required. This showed the magnitude of the problem and calls for a very comprehensive action plan in this sector.

With regard to Physiology & Biochemistry the General Chairman said that although isolated efforts are in progress, production physiology needs a more comprehensive approach in order to support other related disciplines. The 'Treephysindia' meeting held at Kottayam had generated a good deal of interest among tree physiologists, and hence, more such group meetings would be desirable.

In the field of technology and process engineering, particularly for the tropical belt, processing and packaging are vital for value added products. Citing the Sri Lanka experience with polythene packaging of spices resulting in loss of flavour and hence reduction in export prices, he said, this is a vital area requiring immediate attention. He also stressed the importance of intermediate exploitation of produces such as mushroom production and biogas generation, using plantation crop wastes. The gadgets such as tree-climbing devices evolved by the scientists are by no means meant to replace the climbers, but may be useful for the farmers and scientists alike in situations of labour shortage.

With regard to agronomy and soils research, he was of the view that the future of plantation crops was in the hands of agronomists. More realistic experiments are needed with regard to interaction between N, P, K and irrigation and varieties with different management inputs. It was significant that the D×T coconut hybrid yields much higher than WCT under identical conditions.

In the Session on plant pathology he referred to the interesting discussions held on bio-fertilizers, *Cercospora coffeicola*, and Thanjavur wilt of coconut. Use of neem cake needs to be investigated more deeply. With regard to diseases of uncertain etiology, he said that we should learn to live with these diseases and reduce the microbial load which is antagonistic to the host plant, coupled with good agronomic management. This is an inter-disciplinary area which calls for co-ordinated efforts.

In the field of entomology, nematology and rodentology, the use of attractants, nutritional requirements of pests, effectiveness of pyrethroids, and integrated pest management, are priority areas of work. The fact that there were not many papers on the integrated system of pest control and management, underlines the need for greater emphasis in this area.

In the special group discussion on Mycorrhizae, the future thrust area has been identified in respect of nursery and field surveys, to assess the extent of mycorrhizal association in different plantation crops. It was felt necessary to lay out field trials with phosphate application to make a direct assessment of the role of mycorrhizae in the productivity of these crops.

With regard to library and documentation, he said that our efforts are now directed towards making the present services more useful to the scientists wherever they are. Any facility available at CPCRI can be made use of by any scientist irrespective of affiliation, though there are some constraints with regard to space at present.

Commenting on the future outlook of Placrosyms, the General Chairman called for a careful assessment of the past five years of these meetings and suggested that future symposia should be planned accordingly. It was clear that there was a definite scope for improving the standard of papers and this has been taken stock of by the Standing Committee which decided to declare a holiday for Placrosym during 1983 and hold the symposium only once in 2 years on all the disciplines. Placrosym VI is scheduled for December 1984. It was pointed out that if high standards of papers are not ensured, it will discourage good papers from being sent to Placrosyms. The time schedule of printing of the Proceedings was also a vital factor for ensuring priority of publication for the authors.

Reviewing the benefits, he said the Placrosym movement has helped to foster a better understanding and interaction among researchers in plantation crops working in diverse institutions, and to assess and share the available facilities in different laboratories. There are about 400 scientists working on plantation crops and the Placrosym is a source of moral strength for all of them. He suggested

that for bridging the gap of two years between the Placrosyms, group discussions on specific area may be thought of. The Director of the concerned Institute may forward such proposals to the Standing Committee which will consider financing these discussions, that may be organized on the pattern of the one on Mycorrhizae which was held during the current symposium. He also suggested the instituting of awards for best papers presented in Placrosyms to promote healthy competition, which will be open to all disciplines.

A vote of thanks was proposed by Dr A. Ramadasan, to the General Chairman, Conveners and Members of the local Organizing Committee, who had toiled all along to make Placrosym-V a grand success. Dr M.R. Sethuraj offering thanks on behalf of the participants, said that all the arrangements for the Symposium were excellent.

The meeting came to a close at 1 PM.

R. D. Iyer