

## A Preliminary Report on the Occurrence of Kerala Root (Wilt) Disease of Coconut in Tamil Nadu

The root (wilt) disease of coconut in Kerala is the cause of heavy loss to the economy of this important crop. It is a debilitating systemic disease occurring in Southern and Central Districts of Kerala (Pillai *et al.*, 1972) and is slowly spreading both towards north and south. The etiology of the disease is not fully understood. The cause of the disease was considered to be a mechanically transmissible pathogen, resembling a virus (Nagaraj and Menon, 1956; Shanta *et al.*, 1964). *Rhizoctonia solani*, a root rot fungi seems to aggravate the diseased condition (Menon, 1961). The west coast tall variety of coconut is highly susceptible to the disease. Some diseased coconut trees were observed

in Thirunondikarai village, near Kulasekaram in Kanyakumari district, Tamil Nadu with symptoms resembling those of root (wilt) disease, during December, 1972. The coconut trees 25 to 30 years old extending from Ealakara to Kothukadam situated in a hill slope surrounded by paddy fields were found to be severely affected by this disease. During 1971 in Sengottai area seedlings aged 5 to 6 years were found to be affected by this disease.

The disease was again observed during June, 1973 and from the symptoms it was suspected to be root (wilt) disease. The diseased trees aged 25 to 30 years produced general yellowing

and drooping of the outer whorl of leaves, flaccidity and ribbing and necrosis of leaflets. The affected leaflets showed a large number of chlorotic streaks which became brownish and necrotic. Reduction of immature nuts was another symptom. The size of nuts was markedly reduced. The growth of roots was also affected. The endocarp and mesocarp were very thin and uneven in thickness. Brown longitudinal streaks were noticed in the roots and rootlets. They were found to dry from the tip.

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