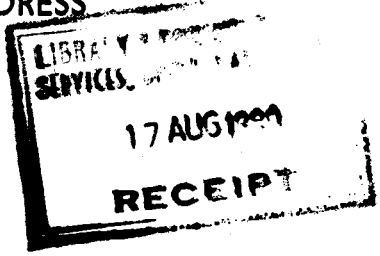


RP 857

INAUGURAL ADDRESS



BY

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AT

**THE IXth WORKSHOP OF ALL INDIA CO-ORDINATED
RESEARCH PROJECT ON PALMS HELD AT THE
CENTRAL PLANTATION CROPS RESEARCH INSTITUTE
KASARAGOD**

ON

NOVEMBER 6, 1989

Mr. Kabbali Range Gowda, Chairman, Coconut Development Board, Dr. K. L. Chadha, Deputy Director General, I. C. A. R., Dr. M. K. Nair, Director, CPCRI, Dr. Rethinam and Dr. Nagarajan, Assistant Director Generals of ICAR, distinguished scientist delegates, participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me immense pleasure to be able to come here and spend some time with you this fine morning during the IX Workshop of All India Co-ordinated Research Project on Palms. In fact when Dr. Nair, Director of CPCRI approached me with a request to inaugurate this workshop. I readily agreed mainly because I thought I can have an opportunity to know about the latest technology emerging out from different centres of research on palms. It is a matter of great gratification that around 120 scientists from all over the country involved in research and development of coconut, arecanut and oilpalm have assembled here today to deliberate at length the improved agro techniques for increased production and productivity of these crops.

I was told by Dr. Nair that this is the Fifth time that the Workshop on palms is being held in Kerala. Earlier the Workshops were held in Kasaragod, Trivandrum (twice) and Trichur. In the land of coconut, that is Kerala, it is only apt to hold such Workshops attended by experts and experienced scientists to discuss the research and development of palms especially coconut. I congratulate the organisers for selecting Kasaragod as a venue of this Workshop.

The importance of coconut and arecanut in the economy of the country as a whole, and Kerala in particular, needs no emphasis. For a Keralite, coconut is his very mainstay. Out of the 1.428 million ha of coconut in the country, Kerala has 0.864 million ha contributing an annual production of 3669.5 million nuts. The average oil yield of coconut is only 1.5 tonnes per ha. But I understand that some of the high yielding hybrids and types released recently are reported to record 3 to 3.5 tonnes of oil per ha. I was also told that vigorous efforts are being made to establish seed gardens all over the country with a view to multiplying these elite materials so that cultivators are assured of quality planting materials. I hope this Workshop also will be discussing and releasing a few high yielding varieties with high oil content for use in different regions.

Whenever one talks about coconut in Kerala, the problem of root (wilt) comes uppermost in his mind. I am particularly concerned with this malady of coconut in Kerala. The disease causes an annual loss of 968 million nuts to Kerala. Thanks to the concerted effort of the Scientists of Kayamkulam Centre of this Institute, the causal agent has been identified as MLOs. Even though efforts have been made to improve the productivity of disease affected palms through management practices, much remains to be done for popularising this amongst the cultivators. I am happy to note that recently research scientists of CPCRI and Kerala Agricultural University met and decided to work hand in hand with the officials of the Agriculture Department to give a fillip to such programmes in the root (wilt) affected areas.

The root (wilt) disease is seen now in North Kerala upto Cannanore District. Every effort is being made to eradicate the disease affected palms from these mildly affected regions on a collaborative venture of the CPCRI and Deptt. of Agriculture, Kerala. Only by such programmes, the

disease can be contained to the Southern Kerala so that no further spread takes place in North Kerala. If the eradication is not done in time, the time is not far off when the Northern Kerala also will face the same fate of South Kerala. Due to prolonged drought followed by heavy rains in the monsoon season, the productivity of coconut in North Kerala is already very low. One can imagine the condition if disease like root (wilt) also occurs in this area. I think that mass media have a great role to play in projecting the good work done by these research Institutes and in helping the researchers and developmental people to educate the farmers so that they co-operate with the eradication programme in the North Kerala.

I understand that a similar programme of eradication will be launched in the bordering districts of Tamil Nadu after assessing the disease incidence in a survey to be started in December, 1989, so that the root (wilt) disease does not spread to Tamil Nadu. By a similar programme it is envisaged that the Thanjavur wilt prevalent in Tamil Nadu is contained in the State and prevented to enter Kerala. I congratulate the Coconut Development Board, CPCRI, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University and Oilseeds Department Tamil Nadu for this timely action.

In all these diseases, the long term measures of control is evolving resistant types. Hence every effort must be made to breed resistant/tolerant types to disease and pests and also drought. Though during this year we are blessed with abundant rains, the nature often is unpredictable and drought conditions often prevail in the coconut regions of Kerala, Karnataka etc. Hence, the strategy should be to tide over such conditions by relevant management practices. The need for developing suitable techniques like drip irrigation is pertinent at this point. I am glad that this Workshop will be discussing these programmes during the deliberations.

Yet another aspect of research which has not received much attention is the biocontrol programmes of pests and diseases. In a State like Kerala with high density of population, use of pesticides continuously brings in all problems of health hazards and environmental pollution. It is imperative that concerted efforts must be made to give a boost to biocontrol programmes so that the balance of nature is kept without affecting much the economy of the farmers so that in the long run the overall benefits will be to the advantage of the farming community.

In order to meet the shortage of edible oil requirement in the country, as a long term measure, Government of India has identified suitable areas in different states for oilpalm cultivation. I was also given to understand that four centres for oilpalm research have been started under the Co-ordinated Research Project on Palms in the States of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. Oilpalm cultivation has been started on a commercial scale first in Kerala in the country. Recently it has been shown by some enterprising farmers in Kerala that oilpalm cultivation will be more remunerative than rubber. It is under consideration whether oilpalm cultivation will be a feasible proposition if taken up on a large scale in "KARINILAM" areas. Oilpalm is generally grown under rainfed conditions. However, in countries like Malaysia, there is a well distributed pattern of rainfall so that moisture stress is seldom experienced. The proposal to grow oilpalm in the four States where rainfall is not abundant and drought often prevails, every effort must be made by the experts to evolve suitable agro techniques to raise oilpalm under these stress conditions.

I am happy to know that CPCRI has already identified some elite lines in oilpalm. With improved scientific management and evolving high yielding lines in oilpalm and control of major pests and diseases, I am sure that the

oil production can be enhanced considerably to compare well with the International standards. It is a happy augury to know that CPCRI has already commissioned a small scale oil mill which can cater to the need of plantation of about 150-200 ha. extent. Effort must be made to develop small scale milling units so that oilpalm cultivation can be extended to small holdings.

I see in this august gathering scientists and officials representing various development agencies like Coconut Development Board, Oilpalm India, Arecanut & Cocoa Development Directorate, State Departments of Agriculture/Horticulture and some progressive farmers. My only appeal is that the collective effort of all of you gathered here should pave way for developing programmes leading to increased production of these important plantation crops, while at the same time making their cultivation more remunerative.

I would urge you to devote attention to some of the important points I have raised viz. evolving high yielding varieties in coconut and oilpalm, developing suitable agro-techniques, generation of adequate planting materials, bio-control of pest and diseases etc. I shall be looking forward to valuable and useful suggestions and recommendations emanating from this Workshop.

I wish you all the best in your research and development endeavours.

With this few words I have great pleasure in inaugurating this Ninth Workshop of All India Co-ordinated Research Project on Palms.

Thank you.