

FOREWORD

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This publication is the fifth volume in the PLACROSYM series of annual symposia, covering all the disciplines of plantation crops research held at Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Kasaragod. Like the earlier four symposia, this symposium also provided a common platform to a sizeable proportion of researchers and developmental agencies in the country working on different plantation crops to present their works and share their thoughts with fellow workers. In this symposium, a total of 91 papers were presented of which 58 were oral presentations spread over 7 Technical Sessions and the remaining were poster presentations.

Eventhough plantation crops contribute significantly to the Indian economy by way foreign exchange earnings, import substitution, and generation of employment, it has to be admitted that the attention paid to research efforts in this sector, particularly in the case of smallholder plantation crops, such as coconut, areca-

nut, cashewnut, cacao, black pepper and cardamom, has not been adequate. The productivity of these crops and their declining trend in recent years have become matters of great concern to research workers and planners. In contrast to this, the production and productivity in tea, coffee, and rubber have shown a steady increase. All the same, the researchers in these crops used to have very little chance for interaction due to the isolated nature of the concerned institutes. PLACROSYM in this context is a laudable effort that has helped to bring together researchers, extension workers and all others connected with plantation crops industry, for consolidating and exchanging available knowledge on these challenging crops.

During this symposium, a special discussion on "Mycorrhizae" was also arranged for the benefit of the researchers in this exciting and new field. The participants had the chance to share the expert views of Dr. C. L. Powell, a leading scientist in this area of research. Besides this, there was a discussion on the prospect of establishing a National Information Centre for Plantation Crops to promote the dissemination of research results among the fellow scientists all over the world for mutual benefit. A book exhibition was also organized at the symposium venue.

Although the participation in the Symposium was satisfactory, there has been a general feeling that ample scope existed for improving the quality of papers and standard of presentation. With a view to encouraging high quality research and attracting presentation of high standard research papers, the PLACROSYM Standing Committee and the ISPC Executive Committee have decided to institute awards for the best paper presented in future Placrosyms as also for the best article appearing in the Journal of Plantation Crops. We are happy that the C. S. Venkata Ram Memorial Trust has come forward to institute two awards, one each for this purpose. It is hoped that these incentives will help to improve the standards of research contributions in future Placrosyms.

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