



Fig. 1
A root (wilt) disease affected coconut palm in Coimbatore

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ENQUIRIES REGARDING CULTIVATION, MANURING, ETC. OF COCONUT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE

Central Plantation Crops Research Institute,

KASARAGOD, KERALA STATE

AND THOSE ON PESTS AND DISEASES AND THEIR CONTROL MEASURES TO THE

Central Plantation Crops Research Institute,

Regional Station,

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PROBLEMS OF ROOT (WILT) DISEASE OF COCONUT IN TAMIL NADU

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Introduction

In Tamil Nadu coconut is being cultivated in an area of 116000 ha with annual production of 1132 million nuts. The area under coconut in this State increased from 66000 ha in 1950-51 to 116000 ha in 1980-81, and the production from 463 million to 1132 million nuts during the same period. The per hectare average nut yield per year also increased from 7015 to 9759. This increase is 114.1% more than the traditionally coconut growing state of Kerala and 86.0 per cent more than the all India average yield. There is still ample scope for increasing the area, production and per hectare yield in Tamil Nadu. But there are problems of very serious nature particularly diseases of uncertain etiology which might pose a threat of coconut production. The Thanjavur wilt disease of coconut is prevalent in the coastal districts of Thanjavur,

Ramanathapuram and Kanyakumari and also in the interior districts of Salem, Tiruchirappalli, Dharmapuri and Chinglepet. The Pencil Point disease is also prevalent all over Tamil Nadu, but this is only of very minor importance. The present and more serious threat is due to the spread of root (wilt) disease of coconut from the neighbouring State of Kerala.

Spread of Root (Wilt) Disease in Tamil Nadu

The root (wilt) disease of coconut which made its first appearance in three isolated pockets viz. one at Erattupetta in Kottayam district and two at Kallupara and Kaviyur in Alleppey district of Kerala in 1882 slowly extended its tendrils in all the directions in Kerala and made its encroachment in Tamil Nadu also. In 1972 the incidence of this disease was noticed in Kulasekharam and Ponmanai

villages of Kanyakumari district and Vallom village in Tirunelveli district in very isolated conditions (Gopinathan Pillai *et al* 1976) Fig. 2.

Recently one root (wilt) disease affected palm was identified in Coimbatore city which was confirmed by a team of scientists. Later on the information received from a farmer as well as from Dr. Shanmugam, Professor and Head of Department of Plant Pathology, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, a field near Pollachi was found to be affected with root (wilt) disease. In this field about 13 young palms are affected by the disease. Pollachi being on the border of Kerala still there is likelihood of existence of some more diseased palms.

Problems and Suggestions

In Kerala this disease has now spread to seven districts contiguously besides sporadic

incidences in Palghat, Malappuram and Calicut districts. But the situation in Tamil Nadu is not that bad now. However, the

disease incidence has increased in Kanyakumari district to a considerable extent from the isolated pockets noticed during

1972. Though the State Government is doing the eradication programme in a limited scale in Kanyakumari district only, the following are the suggestions for the total eradication so as to keep the disease off the coconut belts of Tamil Nadu.

- (i) The border districts adjoining to Kerala has to be surveyed in detail on a priority basis.
- (ii) Eradicate the diseased palms identified in all these districts, take up prophylactic plant protection measures, plant with quality seedlings preferably DxT and adopt good management practices.
- (iii) Regular monitoring of the recurrence of the disease and removal of such palms.
- (iv) Training of field workers for identifying the disease even at the very early diseased conditions.
- (v) Preventing the movement of seednuts/seedlings from the diseased areas to the non-diseased tract within the State as well as from the adjoining State of Kerala.
- (vi) Making the farmers aware of the root (wilt) disease problems and convincing them to co-operate in all our efforts in the eradication of the disease affected palms.

A co-ordinated, collaborative and timely approach will definitely prove to be a success since the incidence of disease is in its early stages in Tamil Nadu.

Reference

Gopinathan Pillai, N.; Lal, S. B. and Shantha, P. 1973 Distribution and intensity of Root (wilt) disease of coconut in Kerala. *J. Plant. Crops* 1 (Suppl) : 107-112.

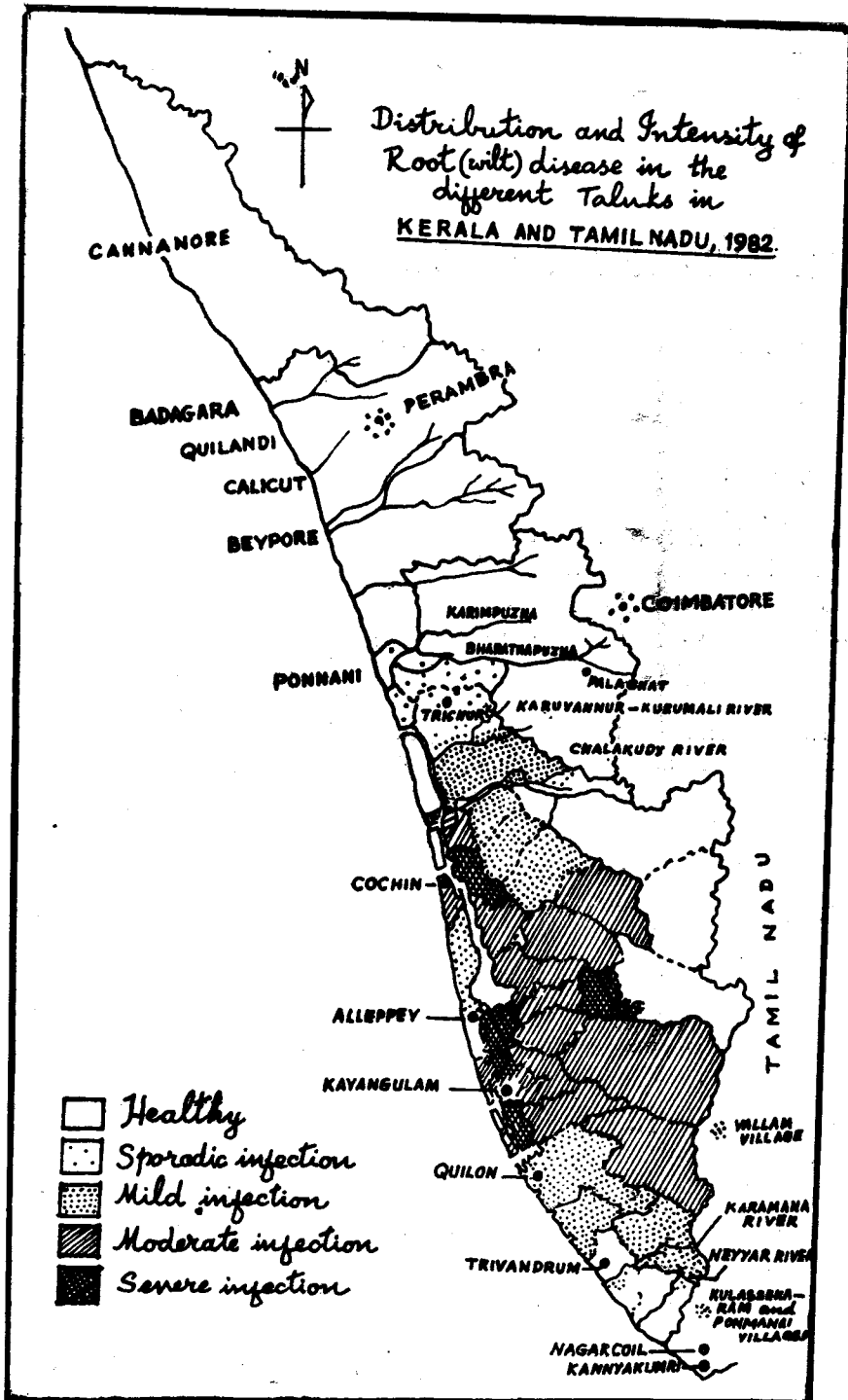


Fig. 2