

COCONUT ROOT (WILT) - DISEASE OF UNCERTAIN ETIOLOGY

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Coconut root (wilt) disease is causing a serious concern specially in Southern parts of India, where coconut has the largest area under plantation. Even though it was reported by Butler nearly 50 years ago, the causative agent of the disease is yet to be determined. The positive mode of diagnosis is only on the basis of visual symptoms.

Various researchers have attributed the association of different agencies with the disease. Fungi was isolated from the rotted roots. Association of the nematode, bacterium as also the virus and even mycoplasma have been suspected to be involved in this disease. The diagnostic pathology is extremely difficult in a plant like coconut where the disease takes many years to manifest itself but this aspect can be settled by intensive comparative anatomical studies of young seedlings from diseased and healthy areas.

For better understanding of the disease etiology, all the information need to be pulled in and well defined inter-se priorities be evolved. Even the name appears to be a misnomer and till we understand the problem more fully, it may be advisable to refer to the malady as 'Coconut decline' rather than 'Coconut root (Wilt)'.
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