

Work in the Central Division.

F. BURNETT, M.C., M.A. (Oxon),

Divisional Agricultural Officer, Central.

IN order that the general work being done by the Divisional Agricultural Officer and the Agricultural Instructors generally be more clearly understood, I will very briefly review some of the chief work at present being carried out in the Central Division. Our work is chiefly concerned with the village cultivator and may be divided under the following headings:—

1. Recommendations for the general agricultural development of the division; Experiment Stations, etc.
2. Liaison duties.
3. Demonstrations and lectures on Topical questions of the day.
4. Farm School Education, Peradeniya.
5. School garden work.
6. Co-operation.
7. Correspondence.

Under heading 1, I will only give particulars of some of the most recent important works recommended and since taken up in the Central Division.

A. It was found after repeated trials of pure-line paddy seed obtained from the central station, Anuradhapura, that the resulting yields were very unsatisfactory owing to various causes; the chief being due to acclimatization. The difficulty was in getting the crop to mature at the time when the adjoining fields were ready for harvest. From the results obtained it could be said that in the majority of cases the paddy seed had the quality of varying its age from the time of germination to the time of harvesting according to its environment and until acclimatized. As a result we now have in the Central Division 4 paddy experimental stations of approximately 5 acres each; one at Katugastota, one at Kegalla, one at Kotmale and one at Nalanda. Recommendations have also been made for two more stations to be started, one at Matale and the other at Inamaluwa.

Pure-line paddies which have been successful at Katugastota have been distributed to the villagers and the area under pure-line paddy is increasing—for instance in 1922 from an experiment made with pure-line paddies B 12 proved successful

and gave a yield of over 50 bushels per acre compared with the average yield of 30/40 bushels per acre from the local variety. During the present Maha season 43 cultivators are growing this type and the approximate extent under B 12 is 60 acres in Harispattu. B 11 cultivated by one man in 1925, is in this season being grown by 6 cultivators and the extent is 5 acres. The age of B 11 and B 12 at Katugastota is 5 months. Of the Yala types Hk 15 has spread most successfully in the villages. It has practically replaced local Heenati in Kondadeniya village. The area planted last season being 40 acres, and the yield per acre on the average was 40 bushels compared with 25 bushels local Heenati. Age of Hk 15 is $4\frac{1}{2}$ months. Hk 13 is of a shorter age than local Heenati 4 months. The latter is in favour when the South-West Monsoon is delayed. Pure-line seed of B 11 and 12 have been supplied for trial this Maha season at Kegalla and Kotmale.

In addition to the work done in pure-line paddy, systematic transplanting and green manuring have been most successful in this district. Five demonstration plots of sunn-hemp were laid out on the fields uncultivated during last Yala season and a very fine plot was cultivated on the paddy station itself. Applications for sunn-hemp have already been made by the cultivators for trial on their fields this Yala season.

B. Work has commenced on the opening of two general experimental stations at Kegalla 37 acres and Dambulla 25 acres. At these stations the testing and comparison of various village economic crops will be made and also the growing of crops in rotation.

C. Recommendation of the restoration of two tanks in the Walapane District, viz., Rattiriyapotha and Welahindawewa; recommended by the Director of Agriculture in collaboration with the Divisional Agricultural Officer, and since advised by the Assistant Government Agent, Nuwara Eliya, that the expenditure for this work has been approved by the Government.

D. The development of the areas where suitable pure-line paddies have proved successful.

E. The initiation of village agricultural associations in the Uda Palata Division.

Liaison Duties.—Mr. South, the Field Officer, Malaya, writing in the *Malayan Rubber Journal* makes an apt comparison of the duties of the field officers as follows:—"You will all remember that during the war it was customary to have a special qualified officer known as the liaison officer, acquainted with the work or the language or both, to make separate units of the army acquainted with each other's duties and thus to ensure the most efficient co-operation between them."

In agriculture one of the duties of the Divisional Staff is not only to carry out Experimental work but also, to act as the administrative branch of agriculture or the connecting link between the village cultivator and the Research officers. The Divisional Staff, Central, are therefore, conducting what may be termed the following liaison experiments:—

A. Investigation of plantain disease at Rambukkana in co-operation with the Mycologist and the Entomologist. Full progress made at this station is fully given in my yearly report. To summarize, various root diseases have been identified, including *Rhizoctonia bataticola*, also the Aphis (*Pentalonia nigronervosa*) reported in Queensland to be the primary cause of plantain disease in Australia, have been found.

B. Pure-line paddy work, the testing of pure-line paddy seed supplied by the Economic Botanist at Katugastota, Kegalla, Kotmale and Nalanda.

C. The planting of five acres of budded rubber for testing and eventual isolation of high yielders, in co-operation with the Rubber Research Officers, at Kegalla.

D. The dissemination of agricultural knowledge and results of such experiments to the villager. The latter is perhaps the most difficult of all, and therefore the most interesting, and after I have dealt with the other divisions of my work, I will describe what is being done in this connection in Uda Palata.

Demonstrations and Lectures.—The Divisional Staff have delivered lectures from time to time at various centres and recently have given demonstrations in budding at Kegalla, Matale and Gampola.

Farm School, Peradeniya.—This also comes under the supervision and direction of the Divisional Agricultural Officer. Recently the programme of work has been thoroughly overhauled. A new prospectus is being printed. Adjoining the school we are establishing a pure herd of Scind cattle. If anyone would like to be shown over this herd at any time and to see the arrangements made for the sterilization of the milk before delivery, I shall be very happy to take them round.

Co-operation.—There are 40 societies in the Central Division of which the Divisional Agricultural Officer is the Assistant Registrar.

Agricultural Shows and Competitions.—Last year three shows were held, one at Alawatugoda, one at Katugastota and one at Kandy. Also there were various competitions. The popularity of these competitions can be seen when this year at Matale there are 293 entries for one competition alone.

School Gardens.—The number of registered school gardens in the Central Division up to the end of the year 1926 was as follows:—Government 162 and Grant-in-aid 31. Agricultural

implements to the value of over Rs. 3,000 was supplied to newly registered school gardens during the year. A large number of gardens was visited and recommended for registration under the code, but owing to the lack of funds provided through the District Agricultural Committees, they have not been registered. 52 prizes to the value of Rs. 700 were given and bonuses were recommended to 16 grant-in-aid school gardens.

Agricultural Associations.—The getting in touch with the village cultivator is by no means an easy problem. My latest efforts, however, have met with a certain amount of success, and that is by the organization of village agricultural associations. Since last November, 4 such agricultural associations have been formed in Uda Palata division and these are being tried as an experiment in order to test their usefulness.

Already several meetings have been held and it will be seen from the motions brought forward for discussion what a great benefit such associations can be to the goiyas.

The societies have been very fortunate in electing enthusiastic Chairmen and we are endeavouring to make these associations to be of the same value to the village cultivator as the Planters' Associations are to the Planting community generally.