Pest and Diseases:

No serious pests have been observed in the betel crop except leaf eating and sucking insects. These insects are nocturnal.. Damage by these insects is not severe due to their low population.

Betel vine is highly susceptible to bacterial leaf spot disease caused by Bacterium betel. When the farmers observe this disease, they immediately uproot the vine and burn it.

Collar rot disease is caused by a fungus known as Rhizoctonia spp. (possibly Rhizoctonia bataticola). This is a major disease during wet weather. When the disease is severe, it may wipe out the whole crop.

References:

* Indian farming 1981 April - control of pest and diseases of betel vine.

* Indian agric. 1975 Vol.19 - phytochemical studies on Bangla variety of betel leaf (piper betel lin.)

* Tropical crops - Dycoty ledons - J.W.Purseglove p. 436 - 440.

* The Sri Lanka Forester 1974 vol.XI.

SUBSIDY SUPPORT FOR PASTURE DEVELOPMENT

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Milk production in this country is around 450,000 litres per day. But the national requirement is approximately 850,000 litres per day. Therefore to fulfil the daily consumption needs, large amounts of milk and milk products are imported into the country. In 1983, 430 million rupees were spent to import milk and milk products.

To increase milk yield of cows, they have to be fed and looked after well. Feeding large quantities of concentrates to milch cows is expensive, and uneconomical. The use of fodder from improved pasture varieties as a major portion of the feed will lower the cost of production of milk. Therefore, the Government attempts to encourage farmers to grow

improved grass varieties that have a high nutritive value. To achieve this the government grants a subsidy for planting improved grasses.

The Department of Animal Production and Health offers the following subsidies to farmers, to help them to grow improved grasses.

	Total Payment/ Acre	Initial Payment 1 month after establishment includes land preparation & planting.	Final Payment 6 months after Planting & satis-factory establish-ment.
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1. For establish-ment of Pasture & Fodder on Lands in which Plantation crops have to be up-rooted in mid and up-country.	2000.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
2. Other lands in mid-country & up-country areas where no planta-tion crops have to be uprooted.	1500.00	900.00	600.00
3. For establishment of pasture and fodder on any other land not including 1 and 2. (Includes land with less than 30 coconut trees/Acre.	1500.00	900.00	600.00

The above subsidy is given to persons who satisfy the following requirements:-

1. Only a land owner or a lessee over 10 years is eligible for a subsidy. Half an acre is the minimum land where the subsidy is eligible.

2. The land should be planted with improved pasture variety (or varities) recommended by the Department of Animal Production and Health.

3. Lands already under pasture will not be paid the subsidy.

A coconut land is defined as a land carrying over 30 coconut trees per acre and it is the minimum extent eligible for receiving a pasture subsidy, offered by the Coconut Development Board Coconut lands of 1/2 an acre or more in extent, situated in areas with an evenly distributed rainfall over 60" per year, in the following districts are eligible for the pasture subsidy. Colombo, Gampaha, Kalutara, Galle, Matara, Kegalle, Kandy, Matale, Badulla, Puttalam, Kurunegala and Ratnapura. A subsidy of Rs.800/- is paid in two annual instalments of Rs.400/- each.

Other than planting of grass, the planting of Ipil Ipil is also eligible for a subsidy. This is also granted by the Animal Production and Health Department. The subsidy payment is Rs.1500/- per acre.

For application forms and further particulars about the subsidies offered by the Department of Animal Production & Health, please contact the Veterinary Surgeon of the area; details about the subsidies offered by the Coconut Development particulars could be had from their regional offices.

A NOTE ON WATER MELON

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Water Melon (Citrallus lanatus) can be grown during both seasons, Maha and Yala. But it is ideal for Yala cultivation due to better fruit quality. Melon fruits produced during the Maha season are watery and less sweet.

A humus rich soil with a good drainage, and a pH value between 6.0 - 7.3 is suitable for melon cultivation.