

PROGRESS OF CULTIVATION OF EXOTIC VEGETABLES IN UDUKINDA DIVISION, PROVINCE OF UVA

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THE cultivation of exotic vegetables has been undertaken extensively in Udukinda Division notably at the following centres : Bandarawela, Ettampitiya, Welimada, Gurutalawa, Palugama and Ambewela. Cultivation is done mostly as a market garden undertaking. The produce, before the emergency conditions, found a haphazard sale at different centres namely, Bandarawela, Diyatalawa, Welimada, Colombo and Nuwara Eliya markets. Transport and distribution were not well organized. Cultivators were content with receiving what they could realize at the hands of middlemen and other regular suppliers to markets. The question of transport even before emergency conditions was difficult. Big loads were not accepted on buses which was the most expeditious and convenient method of transport. In the circumstances transport had to be done by cart or on head over long distances. This was a slow and laborious process which did not suit a perishable product. Prices too were uneconomic. There was no organized system of marketing. All these factors were not conducive to the proper development of an important agricultural industry.

With the organization of a Co-operative Sales Society in Palugama which may be termed the chief producing centre, an organized system of marketing came into being. From the outset the difficulties of cultivators who joined the scheme were alleviated. Today a large number of cultivators have joined the society and are being considerably assisted in regard to disposal of their produce at attractive prices. The existing emergency conditions so far as production of exotic vegetables is concerned has been an unmixed blessing, particularly to those who have joined the Sales Society. The demand for exotic vegetables has increased beyond expectations in all the big centres mentioned above. The demand is well above production. Consequently prices have soared. Cultivators who sometime back were earning a meagre income are now earning big profits. A lorry has been placed at the disposal of the Sales Society by the C.D.C. for transport of vegetables. During the main cultivation season two lorries had been requisitioned for this purpose, one carrying a full load daily to Colombo. With the formation of the Sales Society and with its attendant advantages in respect of creating an organized industry, quick transport &c., cultivators have been benefited.

With a view to encouraging the production of better varieties and also in order to increase production and to instruct growers in improved methods of cultivation, a scheme was launched in 1941 to supply members of Co-operative Societies with free issues of imported vegetable seed. Since

the inauguration of this scheme the following issues have been made. In 1941 the issues were as follows :—

Beetroot	..	118 lb.	Knol Khol	..	14 lb.
Carrots	..	60 lb.	Tomato	..	16 lb.
Radish	..	50 lb.	Lettuce	..	6 lb.
Cabbage	..	40 lb.			

3,248 packets of seed imported from India were distributed among 619 growers of 28 Co-operative Societies. The results of the scheme on the whole were satisfactory and growers greatly encouraged. The Palugama Sales Society functioned effectively with increasing confidence on the part of the producers. It installed a provision store for the benefit of its members. In 1942 the cultivation scheme was pursued during the *Maha* season for the second year. Seed was imported from South Africa and India. The area for free distribution of seed was extended. Packets of seed varying from $\frac{1}{4}$ to 3 oz. were distributed among 1,337 members of 64 Co-operative Societies. The increase of recipients of seed in the second year of the scheme was 718 cultivators over and above the first year and 36 more societies were served. The issues made in *Maha* 1942-43 season were as follows :—

Carrots	..	210 lb.	Radish	..	50 lb.
Celery	..	15 lb.	Beetroot	..	10 lb.
Tomato	..	50 lb.	Cabbage	..	10 lb.
Cauliflower	..	50 lb.	Lettuce	..	10 lb.

Altogether 405 lb.

In the year 1943 a supply of seed was obtained from India as it was not possible to obtain seed from South Africa. In this year 1,337 members of 60 Co-operative Societies were supplied seed for the *Maha* cultivation season. Issues were made in two instalments as follows :—

	Variety of Seed	<i>Maha</i> , 1943	<i>Yala</i> , 1944.
Beetroot	122 lb.	27 lb.
Cabbage	63 lb.	17 lb.
Knol Khol	43 lb.	71 lb.
Leeks	8 lb.	1 lb.
Lettuce	8 lb.	1 lb.
Celery	9 lb.	—

During 1944 cultivation season free issues of seed were not made. Instead, cultivators were requested to purchase their requirements at controlled rates from registered dealers who were supplied seed by Government.

With a view to encouraging the cultivation of exotic vegetables on improved methods, a competition was held in 1943. This evinced considerable interest amongst the growers. The main object in view was to induce growers to prepare compost and to utilize it in their plots, a practice which is not sufficiently undertaken in the district.

Cultivators were also encouraged to produce their own requirements of seed of varieties that were found to seed readily under local conditions, namely, radish, lettuce, tomato, celery and carrot. A seed purchase scheme was also introduced and a supply of the following seed produced locally was purchased from cultivators :—15 lb. tomato ; 5 lb. radish and 5 lb. lettuce.