

## Progress in the Development of Cotton and Other Crops in the Hambantota District.

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1. The work of the Southern Division in connection with cotton and other dry-land crops may be divided into the following sections:—

- A. The Marketing of the Produce.
- B. The development of the cultivation in a more settled form by the consolidation of chenas.
- C. Investigations in the utilisation of Rotation crops.
- D. The production of Improved Seed.

**With regard to A.**—Owing to increasing production, 2 Cotton Stores are this year being constructed to serve important buying centres where growers will be able to bring their produce at any time for sale.

The 4 Buying Centres are being provided with large balance scales as an improvement on the method of weighing the produce by means of Spring balances.

**In connection with B.**—The position to-day in the 3 Pattus is as follows:—

**Magam Pattu.**—Is capable of producing greatly increasing quantities of cotton, *i.e.*, by Chena Cultivation methods; and much attention is being given to the crop in many of the Interior villages, but the profit to be derived from the collection and sale of Ranawara Bark (*Cassia auriculata*) in the Coastal regions particularly—is a limiting factor.

**West Giruwa Pattu.**—Contains a fairly large area which is suitable, but very little has been done for Cotton. The villagers there are interested in the cultivation of chillies in addition to kurakkan.

**East Giruwa Pattu.**—Is the most promising part of the country for the development of cotton growing. There the people are really keen on the crop. The system of grouping Cotton chenas which has been successfully introduced this year, is a step forward. Some interest is already being shown in the

ploughing of cotton lands, and this season, at Hatagala and Welipatanwila, a number of growers are anxious for their leased lands to be ploughed, and arrangements are in hand for ploughing demonstrations on lands which have been cultivated with cotton for the last 3 seasons.

**As regards C and D.**—Last August the work of opening up two Cotton Rotation Stations in East Giruwa Pattu was begun. One is at Bataata (between Ranna and Hatagala on the Hambantota road). The other at Middeniya (between Talawa and Middeniya 17 miles towards the interior). Each of these Stations is considered to represent a typical economic holding of 25 acres—suitable for a cultivator and his family to earn his living by the cultivation of Cotton and Food Crops with the help of a plough and bulls, the idea being that the holding should be more or less self supporting, *i.e.*, 20 acres for the cultivation of crops in rotation, 5 acres for the necessary buildings and also for a pasture and fuel reserve. On each of these Stations 20 acre plots have been planted this Season—half of the area with cotton and the other half with cereals—there will be a change-over of crops next season—(cotton in cereals and cereals in cotton areas) and thus the Crop Rotation Scheme will be developed with the introduction of Legumes, chillies, etc. in the 3rd year.

For this season, satisfactory crops of two types of cotton, of kurakkan and other small grains, maize, sorghum, adlay, hill paddy and gingelly are maturing, besides chillies and tomatos. The removal of stumps is already being undertaken, so that ploughs can be used in time for the April-May rains. A comprehensive system of "Costings" is being kept by the Agricultural Officer-in-Charge who is quartered on the "Station." The necessary quarters for the staff have been erected, and Cotton Stores (for the Purchase Scheme), Cattle Sheds and also wells, are now being provided.

(ii) At the Main Cotton Experiment Station, Ambalantota (Magam Pattu).

(a) Last year the whole area was again ploughed with Tractors—this time in April-May. The advantages of ploughing such lands during this period have been strikingly proved by the results.

(b) 55 acres are under cotton.

Here

(i) Varietal and Spacing tests are being conducted.

(ii) Improved seed, by Mass Selection and Pedigree Seed Selection methods, is being raised.

(c) 16 acres are under Rotation Crops in acre plots. Kurakkan, Adlay, Hill Paddy, Sorghum, Tomatos, Chillies and Legumes (cow peas, dhall and green gram).

(d) Many of the crops are not yet harvested, but results are likely to be good in most cases and the cotton crop is very promising.

(e) To mention a few early results:—

(i) 1 acre of tomatos—in what has been a trying season has given a gross return of Rs. 130 and a nett profit of Rs. 70 has been secured.

(ii)  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre of kurakkan grown on land which has been cultivated with cotton for the last 5 years has given a calculated yield of 4 ammunas of grain per acre.

$2\frac{1}{2}$  acres of kurakkan grown on chena land have given a calculated yield of 2 ammunas per acre.

(iii) 1 acre of chillies has given a gross return to date of Rs. 86 which represent probably  $\frac{1}{4}$ th of the crop which may be expected.

Last year the Cotton grown on the Experiment Stations gave average yields of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  cwt. per acre, and, over fair sized blocks, of 7 and also 5 cwt. seed cotton per acre. There were several individual yields of 5, 6, and 7 cwt. secured by cultivators but the average yield from village grown cotton is low—and the reasons for this are being investigated.

As at present cultivated in Hambantota District, cotton is grown as a pure crop in chenas, either side by side with kurakkan—as in Magam Pattu, or in large chena blocks separate from the kurakkan chenas—as in East Giruwa Pattu or in Garden Lands on the outskirts of the larger villages such as Hatagala, Welipatanwila, and Ambalantota, and in such cases, it is often cultivated on the same land in successive years.

Under Chena conditions and taking an average yield of 4 cwt. of seed cotton and 4 ammunas of kurakkan, cotton at present prices compares favourably with kurakkan in respect of profit for the grower, but more labour is involved in its production.

Cotton is a money crop which is particularly well suited for village agriculture; for use as a rotation crop, with its comparatively deep rooting system it is well adapted, and its cultivation together with that of other crops, such as kurakkan, chillies, etc., should in time bring about a marked improvement in the economic conditions of the villagers in the drier parts of the district. Cotton is not a lazy man's crop but induces thrift and provides an incentive to a settled form of Agriculture—in the

permanent cultivation of dry lands.

Tables showing:—

(a) Total increase in production

(b) Increase in production by Pattus.

(a) Cotton Production, Hambantota District.

<i>Season</i>	<i>Cwts. (seed cotton)</i>
1922—23	15½
1923—24	710
1924—25	1,225
1925—26	2,700

(b) Cotton Production by Pattus.

<i>Season</i>	<i>East Giruwa</i>	<i>Magam</i>	<i>West Giruwa</i>
1922—23	9 cwt.	5 cwt.	1½ cwt.
1923—24	647 ..	38 ..	25 ..
1924—25	1,039 ..	164 ..	22 ..
1925—26	2,010 ..	658 ..	32 ..