

SUMMARY

Because of the importance of the coconut sector to Sri Lanka, the Government has made a tremendous effort to increase coconut production in the last few decades. In order to achieve this goal several subsidy schemes have been introduced; these are aimed at encouraging farmers to adopt packages of "established technology" based largely on monocropping. However the predominance of smallholders in coconut production and heterogeneity of this sector have not been considered in the past strategy and thus, the technology being promoted for small grower via the subsidy schemes is inappropriate to his conditions.

Moreover Government policies have taken a consumer-oriented approach, aimed at keeping down domestic price of coconut. Farmgate prices are also depressed; by the structure of export duty (which is an important source of revenue for government); by the involvement of several middle dealers in the marketing chain; by the absence of village level organizations for meaningful farmer participation and to look after the interests of the resource-poor farmer.

Other than this, "top-down" development approach is prominent and hence the needs of resource-poor farmer are not regarded in the development projects. No means are available for the rural-poor to participate in, or even to collaborate or cooperate with development programmes. The result is non-achievement of the national goal of increased coconut production.

This dissertation highlights the above factors which hinder the development efforts of the coconut sector and explores a new suitable strategy which could be adopted for future development. It proposes that the two essentials of an effective coconut development strategy are appropriate technology innovations and assurance of a remunerative price

for the grower. These two essentials were given very little or no place at all in the past.

The emerging conclusions are that a new strategy for coconut development should be based on :

- (i) Change of approach from "top-down" to "bottom-up" to facilitate the fulfilment of farmer needs, especially for the most needy group of resource-poor.
- (ii) Adoption of a "mix-approach" in development instead of a technology transfer approach. The extension service should be re-organised and equipped to suit this approach. Special emphasis should be given to building up of local level organizations which are based on self-reliance and self-management in order to handle marketing, processing, inputs distributions, supply of credit facilities and finally to make the resource-poor voices heard to achieve a remunerative price for their products and to demand action for development of appropriate technology for their needs.
- (iii) A target-specific approach in which needs of the resource-poor category are paid particular attention. Appropriate technology innovation process and building up of farmer organizations should be started from the resource-poor class. Farming system research will provide a proper mechanism to generate appropriate technology for different "recommendation domains". In this approach research, extension and farmer interactions will become an important feature and hence this process should be facilitated with the necessary adjustments of Coconut Cultivation Board (CCB) and Coconut Research Board (CRB).

(iv) Building up of organizations as an evolutionary process instead of establishing them in a bureaucratic line. Non-formal education and more of the experience of established local movements could be explored in the process. This process should be adjusted to suit the local conditions including social, cultural and economic factors.