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PLANTING DENSITIES AND PLANTING SYSTEMS FOR COCONUT *(COCOS NUCIFERA* L.)— A STUDY OF VEGETATIVE CHARACTERS

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It has been customary to plant coconut on the corners of a geometrical figure – a square, a rectangle or a triangle - giving approximately 65 palms per acre.

There is general agreement that the triangular system of planting while giving more palms per acre, makes more demands on the environment and light reaching the ground is progressively reduced after the first few years growth. Furthermore the trangular system of planting hinders cultural operations as well as the growing of intercrops particularly during the 5th to the 25th year of growth of the coconut palms. As mixed cropping with permanent intercrops may be the pattern of the future, planting densities and planting systems for coconut are under investigation.

The results are presented of a staitstically designed field trial at Pothukulama Research Station where 16 different spacings of Coconut ranging from a low density of 45 palms per acre (111 palms per hectare) to a high density of 116 palms per acre (297 palms per hectare) are compared.

In this interim report, the influence of spacing on the growth and period for initial flowering indicates that (a) spacing has no significant influence on total leaf production, (b) spacing has a significant effect on the length of leaves and the girth of the trunk and, (c) it has no significant effect on the period taken for initial flower production.

It is likely that a better assessment between the different densities will be brought out when yield data – number of nuts and the weight of copra – are considered in the next few years.