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SESBANIA SPECIOSA - A NEW CROP OF ARGO- INDUSTRIAL PROMISE IN DRY ZONE

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Sesbania speciosa Taub. is considered to be a suitable agro-industrial crop in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka. Agronomical studies carried out with this crop at Polonnaruwa and Trincomalee Research Stations and the estimation carried out at the Paper Mills at Valachenai, have shown the ability of the crop to sustain a quality raw material for the Paper Industry.

Sesbania, a legume of wide adaptability and profuse nodulation, has the ability to fix nitrogen and to grow without added nitrogen. Inoculated plants of Sesbania, at eight weeks growth, were estimated to contain 2.1 percent Nitrogen in contrast to 0.8 percent with the uninoculated control. The rapid growth habit with an abundant production of green material is of interest in terms of Agriculture and Industry. Sesbania is widely used in India for the improvement of the soil in organic nitrogen as in the reclamation of alkaline and sodic soils. The seed being abundant in production, nutritive and highly proteinous, has potential for the livestock feeding, especially in poultry.

On the Industrial side, the yield of dry raw material for the paper manufacture was 16,568 Kg/hc. with a pulp yield of 46 percent. The quality of the pulp and the properties of the fibre were of a standard grade, suitable for the manufacture of quality paper.

Discussion will be based on the results obtained in the field as well as in the laboratory on the agro-industrial aspect of the crop.