

### **Preliminary evaluation of banana (*Musa Spp.*) introductions in Sri Lanka**

Banana (*Musa spp.*) is widely distributed all over the country but various constraints such as lack of quality banana cultivars and disease problems like Sigatoka, Panama and viruses limit its production. Since a breeding programme is an expensive activity, introduced cultivars were tested for yield, fruit quality and disease resistance.

Five accessions namely FHIA-01 (AAAB), FHIA-02 (AAAA), FHIA-03 (AABB), Pisang Ceylan (AAB) [which is a synonym for Embul], Yangambi km-5 (AAA) from INIBAP and IC2 (AAAA) from Belgium were evaluated with two local cultivars Embon (AAA) and Embul (AAB) during a two year period starting from 1997 at the Horticultural Crop Research and Development Institute. FHIAs are reported as resistant to Sigatoka and Fusarium wilt (Panama disease). A Randomized Block Design with six replicates was used.

FHIA-03 was a cooking type and the rest were dessert types. The average bunch yield ranging from 24 kg in Embon to 14 kg in IC2 revealed significant differences. Though the yield of FHIA- 01 & FHIA-02 are not significant from Embon and Embul, their fruits have an attractive appearance. Fruit softness and the shattering character of FHIA-01 and FHIA-02

may have the problems for export if special handling is not practiced. The number of fruits per bunch is significantly higher (Av. 240) in Pisang Ceylan (PC), Embul and Yangambi km-5 but fruits are smaller. The brix values ranged from 19- 24 and flesh colour of FHAs were creamy white. High preference was given to Embon, PC and Embul from the sensory evaluation test. With regard to diseases, on visual observations all the cultivars were susceptible to Sigatoka and most of the viruses, but Panama disease was not observed. The cultivars were conserved at Angunakolapellessa for further studies.