

Book Review.

Coconut Growing.

This latest addition to the series of Oxford Tropical Handbooks presents a concise coverage of coconut agronomy for the plantation owner. The book does not pretend to be an authoritative text on the subject, and in fact other publications of a more technical nature are recommended in the Bibliography, for those who wish to read further.

The subject matter for the ten chapters in the book has been well chosen. Sub-headings are used to advantage, as are photographs and diagrams related to topics discussed in the text.

As the publication is very concise, it has been necessary to severely limit detail in certain sections. This applies particularly to chapters on soil fertility and pests and diseases. However, the author has, on the other hand, made valuable attempts at costing for many operations, and this information should prove most interesting to plantation owners.

It is stressed that while returns per acre obtained from coconut plantations were quite high in the past, such is not the case today. Various aspects of management aimed at achieving the maximum net return are discussed, and the advantage of adopting improved cultural practices is emphasised.

Unfortunately, the author's experience has been limited, and certainly has not encompassed the Territory of New Guinea. Therefore, the reader has to make allowances at times for what

may seem erroneous statements. Thus, for example, while in the Seychelles it may take three years for the coconut palm to show a yield response to fertilizer application where soil is deficient, in New Guinea a definite response to such treatment is noted after two years.

A brief coverage of the Botany of the Palm is given, with illustrations being used to advantage. Factors concerning the establishment of a plantation are discussed, with the author stressing the high capital outlay which is necessary to establish a plantation today. This is indeed a major problem for undeveloped tropical countries, where money is not readily available.

Copra drying has been discussed in a fairly informative chapter. Different aspects of sun, smoke, and hot-air drying are introduced, with preference being given to the last method.

The author has striven to keep his language simple, and may in fact be criticised for at times using terms which are far from technical. Thus the description of viruses as "minute organisms even smaller than germs" is below the standard desired in a publication of this nature. Nevertheless, the book should be a useful text for planters, who should regard it as a junior companion to the larger monograph by Menon and Pandalai.

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