

>

Title: Regarding decay of coconut and arecanut plantation.

SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR (CALICUT): Sir, coconut is an important oil yielding crop of India, especially in the southern States. Kerala alone accounts for around 46 per cent of the total cultivated area in the country. Unfortunately, the annual rate of growth in Kerala has been declining. This is mainly due to debilitating incidence of root (wilt) disease, pest like Eryophid mite and inclement weather like drought. Out of the 15 crore of coconut palms in Kerala, two crores of palms have been affected by the dreadful root (wilt) disease. Further since 1997 there is rampant attack by eryophid mite as a result of both, it is estimated that Kerala state loses nearly 300 crores of nuts annually and financial loss of Rs. 1200 crore. Wilt disease, pests and inclement weather has also badly affected another plantation crop of Kerala namely arecanut which is grown on a large area by farmers to supplement their income along with coconut. The situation is further aggravated by the falling price of these produce which have put the farmers in a pitiable situation.

The Minimum Support Price (MSP) scheme for copra has not brought any solace to coconut farmers of Kerala since not even 5 per cent of the farmers do not process coconut into copra. The reduction of basic customs duty of edible oil like palm oil, soybean oil, sunflower oil every now and then by the Government of India has also extenuated the price fall of coconut oil, copra and coconut. We apprehend that with the implementation of regional Trade Agreements like SAFTA and ASEAN, the situation will become more grave and the plight of 3.5 million coconut farmers in Kerala will be in distress.

Studies made by various committees and commissions like Commission on World Trade Organization's concerns in agriculture headed by Dr. M.S. Swaminathan and Committee constituted by Coconut Development Board with Dr. K.V. Bavappa as Chairman have recommended rejuvenation of old and senile plantation in a phased manner by replanting with quality planting materials. The Coconut Development Board has accordingly prepared a project report for replantation and rejuvenation in the traditional States namely Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa, Orissa and Union Territories of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep over an area of 4.56 lakh hectares, which is under consideration of the Government. The total project cost is reported to be Rs. 6320 Crore with a subsidy component of Rs. 1382 crore.

I strongly urge the government to clear this project without further loss of time as the coconut and arecanut farmers all over the country particularly in Kerala have pinned all hopes of their survival with this project. Any further delay in implementation of the project will only add to the miseries of the growers.[\[r20\]](#)

MR. SPEAKER: Now, Shrimati Sujatha. Please be brief.