CLONAL PROPAGATION IN COCONUTS

HOLTTUM,[1] Harland[2] and Haldane[3] have pointed out that, if coconut palms or other economically valuable palms can be propagated vegetatively, on the one hand high yielding trees can be multiplied indefinitely, and on the other hand the expenses of manurial trials can be greatly reduced, since trees derived from the same original by cuttings are likely to resemble one another very closely in the same environment. Vegetative propagation could be through cuttings, suckers or vegetative buds, or by grafting on to other seedlings.

Though the coconut is normally a single-stemmed tree, suckering is observed,[4] though rarely. This is perhaps an atavistic character, since it is normal in many less specialised palm species. I succeeded in separating eight suckers from one and four from another suckering coconut palm at the Central Coconut Research Station, Kayangulam, Kerala, and thus establishing clonal propagation. I also recently proved the feasibility of air layering the branches of branching coconut palms, which are very rare, separating the branches, and raising them as independent "seedlings" after inducing numerous roots in them.

Although conditions for the production of suckers and branches in coconut trees occur in nature, no deliberate attempt has yet been made to induce their formation artificially. In preliminary attempts on a small number of coconut sprouts and seedlings at Kayangulam, I have been able, by dividing a growing point, to induce the production of two suckers from a sprout. This interesting seedling is being maintained at Kayangulam. In Figs. 1 and 2, two coconut sprouts on their way to develop suckers can be seen. Details and further results will be published elsewhere.

FIGS. 1·2

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