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Groundnut and Indigo in a South Arcot village.

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Alambadi is a village in the Vettavalam Zamin, Tirukkoilur Taluk and is two miles from Mohiyur Railway Station.

Area. It has an area of 60 kanies of tank-fed lands and 280 kanies of drylands (one kani equals 1.33 acres).

Assessment. The assessment varies from Rs. 2-3-0 to Rs. 7-4-0 per kani, an extra assessment of Rs. 2-1-0 being levied for the second crop of paddy.

Prices. Wet lands are sold from Rs. 900 to Rs. 1,500 and drylands from Rs. 300 to Rs. 500 per kani.

Cattle. For a unit of 5 kanies of dry or wet lands a ryot keeps a pair of cattle.

Working-classes. Kavandars form the working classes. Labourers or Padials belong to the Adi-Dravida class and are engaged for a whole year. They each get kambu or ragi kanji to the value of one-fourth Madras measure per day plus 14 marakkals of grain per month. (Capacity of one marakkal is 162 cubic inches). One padial is engaged for every kani of land to be cultivated by a landlord.

Physical features of the soil. The soil is sandy loam underlain by red soil two feet below.

Monsoons North-east monsoon rains which fall from July to November favor most. The summer showers during April, May and the late rains of January are scanty.

Wells. In a part of the outskirts of the village there are five wells which water seven kanies of garden lands. The water is brackish but is considered fit for Indigo extraction. These wells have cost about Rs. 500 each.

Holdings. The average holding of a ryot is 10 kanies of dryland and 2 kanies of wetland. 7 kanies of dryland are under groundnut and 3 are sown with cumbu and cholam. Periasamba—a sadaisamba paddy which is of six months duration is transplanted in the wetland.

Crops. The chief crops are groundnut, indigo, horse gram, red gram, cholam and lablab in drylands and paddy in wetlands.

Rotation in drylands. Groundnut is a first crop from June to December. Ragi and horsegram mixed is sown by a small number of ryots as a second crop, the rate being 4 M. M. of Ragi and 6 M.M. of horsegram per kani. Those who own indigo vats cultivate indigo and gingelly after groundnut. Indigo occupies the ground from Marghali to Adi i.e., December to August. If the land is cleared in July groundnut is sown again. For seed purposes one kani of Indigo is allowed to ratoon from July to October in which also is sown horse gram by giving a single ploughing. Every year the same system of cultivation goes on in all lands.

Groundnut as a rainfed crop. The sandy loam of this village is best suited for the cultivation of groundnut.

The preliminary cultivation commences after the summer (May) showers of Chitrai; 6 ploughings are given. The last two are for covering the manure and sowing the seed. A pair works one-fourth kani in a morning of two hours the hire for which is 4 as, and 24 such pairs are needed for a kani for 6 ploughings.

The fields are manured at 8 cartloads of Farm Yard Manure per kani.

The chief variety of groundnut sown here is Mauritius. The showers of June—July (Ani) help sowing. Seed rate is 12 marakkals or 36 M.M. of kernel per kani. The proportion of shell to kernels by weight is as 5 : 8.

4 pairs of cattle with 4 drivers and 4 female coolies can dibble seed in one kani of land behind a country plough a span apart. Women get 2 as a head per day of four hours.

Weeding and hoeing. Hariali, nut and bulb grass are common. A weeding and hoeing is done in August by 15 or 18 female coolies. Labour engaged depends on the amount of weeds present. Wages are now 2 as. per head in addition to kanji equivalent to one-eighth M. M.

Flowering. Groundnut crop thrives well during the rains of August, September and grows 9 in. tall with its branches at a similar distance, 8 to 10 ovaries of fertilised flowers have penetrated into the soil by the end of July. During September the branches put forth further flowers which later on develop into pods.

Second weeding and hoeing. This is a state when the crop needs a thorough weeding and hoeing. Simultaneously after the soil stirring in September the pistils find an easy way into the soil and develop pods. In every pod there are from one to three kernels. The size and number of seeds in a pod depend upon the fertility and loose texture of the soil.

Enemies "Kadalai Verpoochi", "Surul poochi", "Hairy caterpillars" are common. Crows and jackals rarely attack the crop.

Time for harvest. Groundnut harvest commences from November. After the cessation of rain groundnut is pulled by the 15th of Karthigai (November 30). Sometimes harvest is interrupted by heavy showers when picking is continued into January. The harvest of July-sown groundnut after December is not profitable as most of the pods rot. The moist condition of the soil in November facilitates easy and thorough lifting of all pods. After Karthigai (November) the pods get imbedded in the soil which gets hard in December. Groundnut crops grazed by cattle need immediate harvest and neglect entails loss through germination of the nuts owing to moisture in the soil.

Harvesting. During November when labourers are plenty hundreds of coolies pull the crop. 3 or 4 kanies are finished in a day. While pulling, most of the pods come along with plants and the few

buried in the soil are immediately searched for and collected with the handhoe. A woman gets 3 pies for every 3 M.M. of pods gathered and in a day collects 32 M. M. Sometimes it so happens that 10 or 12 women are engaged and they are able to pick half a kani of groundnut in a day. After December the soil gets very hard and the hand-pulling becomes a difficult task as most of the nuts are left in the soil unremoved but they do not germinate.

Therefore the necessity arises to lift the pods by ploughing with country ploughs. With one pair and 12 women $\frac{1}{2}$ kani of groundnut is picked in a day. In this harvest only 16 M. M. can be collected by a woman in a day, as most of the pods remain buried below the soil. In some parts of Tiruvannamalai cultivators receive Rs. 8/- per kani by allowing pig owners to graze their pigs on the land already once picked.

Yield:—The maximum yield is 50 kalams per kani. An average yield from a kani of land is 40 kalams of unshelled nut. 1 kalam is 24 M. M. The harvest of Thai (January) fetches only 30 kalams; stems and leaves form 4 cartloads per kani. These are trampled in wetlands as green manure or fed to cattle.

Preparing for the market:—After the harvest the next attention paid is for drying of pods which is thorough. Seeds from December harvest are preferred for next season sowing. Heavy and healthy nuts are selected from the whole produce. 6 persons sitting on the floor beat 50 kalams of pods in a day and they get 2 as. for every kalam of kernel. The pods are spread in layers and beaten with a long stick.

Sale of produce:—The seeds are purchased by Messrs. Ralli Brothers of Tirukkoilur. Commission agents are busy at work who make an agreement with the company as early as September furnishing a security of Rs. 1000/- to supply 1000 bags of shelled groundnut. They get 1000 gunnies from the company, the cost of which is deducted later on. A whole-sale contract at Rs. 50 to Rs. 75 per baram of shelled nut is made according to the existing market rate.

There are also decorticators worked by power. The groundnut decorticated by machine fetches better price than the hand beaten produce. An increase of Rs. 10 per baram is common as the thinner red coating of the kernel is not peeled off in machine husking. For every bag of 72 M. M. of shelled seed Rs. 4-8-0 are charged. A baram of shelled groundnut of 20 maunds is sold at prices ranging from Rs. 40 to Rs. 75. An average yield of 2 barams of shelled nut is obtained from a kani of land.

Nuts are exported to Marseilles.

(To be continued).