

Wet or Dry Nursery—Which is preferred for Paddy in the Godavari District ?

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Nurseries for the Samba crop are mainly dry in the Ramachandrapur taluk and mostly wet and sometimes dry in the Amalapur and Rajole taluqs; for the second crop, however, they are mostly wet and occasionally dry in Ramachandrapur and invariably wet in the latter taluks.

The conditions which influence the choice of the one or the other are many.

The nature of the soil is one. On stiff clays and loams with an impervious substratum and on soils of saline nature, wet nurseries are usually raised perhaps with a view to prevent the salts from coming up to the surface. But on less clayey soils having a pervious sub-stratum, the dry system is generally adopted.

The adequacy of water supply in summer is another. When the source of water supply is limited in ponds or wells, the nurseries cannot but be dry. Even in such places, a small portion of the seed-bed is put under the wet method after the opening of the canals to provide seedlings for late plantings as in the Ramachandrapur Taluq. In the Rajole and Amalapur Taluqs, the earlier opening of the canals is largely availed of in raising wet nurseries with canal water, water in the ponds and wells, if any, being used to irrigate arecanut and other gardens.

The availability of labour for ploughing also influences the choice of the method of raising seed-beds. In the Rajole and Amalapur Taluqs, men and cattle are engaged in ploughing coconut and arecanut gardens after the harvest of paddy, as on this operation depends the yield of the gardens in the ensuing year. Hence, ryots do not find much time to plough land for paddy seed-beds. In the Ramachandrapur Taluq, on the other hand, where there are no coconut topes, men and cattle are at leisure after the harvest of paddy and they, therefore, have enough leisure to plough their nursery plots.

The raising of a second crop of paddy is another factor influencing the choice of the method of raising seedlings for the first crop. In certain villages of the Ramachandrapur Taluq, for instance, where the whole land is put down under Dalawa crop, there will not be sufficient interval for the ryot to prepare his land satisfactorily for dry seed-beds. In such cases, wet seed-beds are raised.

The adequacy or otherwise of summer showers is another consideration. When summer showers are received, the tendency of the ryot is to have the nursery plots ploughed and kept ready. In the Rajole and Amalapur Taluqs. the ryots consider economy and ease in preparation one of the chief reasons for adopting the wet method.

Last but not least in importance is the nature of seedlings obtained in either case. There is a diversity of opinion in regard to the relative merits of the seedlings obtained under the two different methods. According to the experiences of the ryots in Ramachandrapur, seedlings from the dry nurseries are healthier, easier lifted, establish sooner when planted, have better disease-and drought-resisting capacity and give a higher yield of a better quality than those under the wet system. But the above merits are claimed also for the seedlings raised under the wet system in the Rajole and Amalapur Taluqs. The Ramachandrapur ryot says that seedlings in the wet seed-bed come out in lumps when lifted and some break and many suffer in handling. Consequently, the planting operation is rendered difficult and more labour is required for planting. As roots of seedlings are matted together, the tendency of the women coolies is to plant them in bunches. This is strongly contested by the Rajole and Amalapur ryot who says that the seedlings under the wet system do not fare so badly. The only serious draw-back in wet seedlings, he says, is that they grow very slowly in the wet seed-bed on account of the compactness of the puddle, while the one point in favour of the seedlings raised under the dry system is that they can be kept longer in the seed-bed.

These conflicting opinions in regard to the relative merits of the seedlings under the two systems are worthy of investigation, a thorough knowledge of the conditions under which the one or the other may advantageously be adopted being essential to the successful cultivation of paddy.
