

Farming will never be a success unless the farmer
had more voice in the disposal of
his produce—P. Morrel.

THE JOURNAL
OF
The Madras Agricultural Students'
Union.

Vol XIV] MARCH & APRIL 1926. [No. 3 & 4.

Marketing of Plantains.

BY N. R. RAJAGOPALAN.

The cultivation of plantains in a Trichinopoly Village was described in the M. A. S. U. Journal Vol. X No. 3. An account is now given of their marketing.

Plantain is preeminently a crop the disposal of which necessitates intimate co-operation between the planter and the trader. Realising that in union lies strength, a few traders in Madras have organised themselves into definite groups. Of these, Messrs. Raghavalu Nayadu and Sons of Bunder Street are prominent. The shareholders in this group have invested Rs. 3,000 each and one of them works as manager.

Forward contracts are entered into with the cultivators in July—August and such places are selected as command facilities of quick transit by rail. A few villages which answer this description are Kattuputhoor, Mohanur, Nerur, Lalapet, Thottiyam, Velur,

Pandamangalam, Mullikarumbu in the Trichinopoly district, Tirupapuliya, Panruti and Pondicherry in the South Arcot district. During this season POOVAN is the only variety for which contracts are made. Agreements are made either for the whole crop in a plantation or for bunches of known size and quality. An average bunch is counted as such if it contains 12 hands. Depending upon the size of the bunches the rates vary from Rs. 40 to Rs. 90 per 100 bunches. An acre carries 800 bunches.

Contracts for Rasthali and Pachchavalai are entered into in January and February.

Commission agents in the villages transact all business for the trade and get a remuneration of Re. one for every cartload of 35 to 40 bunches that leave the plantation. There are few instances in which the commission agent is dispensed with. In such cases, the ryot allows the firm a discount of 12 annas per 100 fruits of Pachchavalai and Rasthali and Rs. 10 for 1000 bunches of Bangala. In addition he bears all incidental charges for cutting, loading and transport. All this may go up to Rs. 100 for a wagon load from Perugumani or Kattalai station on the S. I. R. But the firm bears all this expenditure if a commission agent consigns a wagon.

A railway wagon with 7 to 9 tons tare can hold 81 to 160 maunds and a covered bogie of 16 to 20 tons, from 120 to 320 maunds. Unit or B. C. G. wagon are charged 8 or 9 annas per maund from Perugumani to Madras. Bunches from one wagon fill 5 cartloads. The usual rate from the Egmore station to Bunder street is one Rupee per cartload. Any over-ripe fruits are disposed of among the fruit stall owners in the station. Fruit stalls are located in Madras at Triplicane, Mylapore, Chintadripet, Egmore, Purasawakam, Choolai, Perambur and Washermanpet. Orders are also booked from Guntur, Tenali, Ongole, Bapatla, Kavali, Nellore, Gudur, Nayadupet. in the North-east line, Tiruvellore, Arkonam, Renigunta, Cuddappah, Guntakal. in the North-west line. Unripe bunches are transported to godowns. These have compact airtight compartments and spacious show-rooms. Here, after 3 in the afternoon, the unripe bunches are closely packed one over another and smoked. When smoke permeates the whole atmosphere in the room, doors and windows are shut, crevices, corners and holes are plugged and plastered over

with cow-dung so that no smoke can escape. The next morning, the doors are thrown open for a time and the bunches examined. Bangala will be found quite yellow and ready to be disposed of immediately. Pachchavalai is partly green and can keep for 8 days more during which it finds a slow sale. The bunches are then taken out and are arranged vertically in regular rows with their butts turned above. In each row there are 6 bunches. The front bunch is very prominent by its elegant and big-sized hands, the other bunches gradually shrink in height and size. Six such bunches form what is called a "*thundu*" in Tamil and contain nearly 1,000 fruits. Only wholesale trade is carried on. Pachavalai, Rasthali, Bonthan, and Pachanadan are disposed of to merchants in units of a thousand. Big bunches of Bangala with 200 fruits in a bunch are sold at 7 to 10 Rs. per 1,000. The price is always fluctuating and it goes up sometimes to 12 Rs. Small Bangala bunches containing 75 to 150 fruits are sold from Rs. 3 to 6. Pachavalai and Rasthali are sold from 7 to 13 Rs. per 1,000. Bonthan is sold at $1\frac{1}{2}$ Rs. per 100. Raja fruits come occasionally and are sold at fancy prices. Fruits are graded into 3 classes:— (1) Bunches of big sized hands, (2) Small-sized hands and (3) Broken and wounded fruits. Rates are fixed according to quality at 4 to 6 Rs. per 1,000 of the small-sized hands and at 7 to 10 annas per 100 fruits of the broken quality. The firm also maintains a stall in Kothavalchavadi where the gumastahs sell the fruits for commission.

In the godown, there are 6 permanent labourers, a few casual labourers are also attached to it whose services are given when called for. Accredited customers either pay cash or carry on credit transactions but cash payment is always insisted on in the case of new customers. Transport of bunches is done in carts. Each cart can accommodate 5 to 6 thundus of Bangala and two to four thousand Pachavalai fruits and the charges vary from 2 to 4 annas per 1,000 fruits carried. Bills are paid within one week of their presentation but no security, advance or deposit is obtained from customers before supplying them with fruits. The stallman usually complains that fruits were thrust into the stalls in slack seasons, and the trader equally complains of overdues.

The firm maintains a staff of clerks who keep careful accounts of both the incomings and the outgoings. The profit and loss account is closed every month and checked half-yearly. Almost

every day the company's transactions do not fall short of two wagon loads of bunches the total value of which in a year may go up to Rs. 36,000. Charges per month in the shape of rent, establishment, allowances and contingencies run up to Rs. 500 a month or Rs. 6,000 a year.

With a starting capital of Rs. 8,000, the expenses for a year are :—

Interest at 12 per cent.	...	Rs. 1,152
Income tax	...	300
Profession tax	...	50
and establishment charges	...	6,000

Total Rs. 15,502

The value of the produce contracted is Rs. 36,000 ; total expenses Rs. 15,502. Net profit realized is Rs. 20,498 or roughly Rs. 20,000. Briefly the profit is sometimes estimated at Rs. 20 for every wagon of fruit obtained.

If planters could combine into a co-operative society, it is just possible that this trade becomes more steady and stable and the profits that find their way into the pockets of the middlemen reach the cultivator directly and considerably ease the situation of indebtedness even if it cannot enrich him.

Work of the Paddy Breeding Station, Aduturai.*

BY M. ANANDAN, L. Ag.

It is only by a proper appreciation of fundamental facts that a scientist can visualise, before he begins any work, its possibilities nay, more than that, its limitations. The most important of these facts are:—

- (1) that the paddy plant is as much a living organism as any one of us.

*A paper read at the ryots' conference at Aduturai.