

## DEVELOPMENT OF 'COTTON SEED SOCIETIES' ON A CO-OPERATIVE BASIS IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT

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It is generally possible for cultivators in the case of most crops, to stock part of their harvested crops for seed purposes for the year following ; but with regard to cotton, which is one of the most important industrial crops of the district, the ryot always experiences much difficulty in securing good seed, for he sells his crop as kapas (seed cotton) and naturally he cannot reserve his own seed for sowing purposes.

When seed is required for sowing, the ryots go to the next ginning factory, if there be one, or to the nearest dealer in cotton seed, and purchase their requirements for sowings. Often this seed is of inferior quality and costs much. Sometimes this seed might contain mixtures of different varieties of cotton grown in the District. The merchant is anxious to dispose of his stock of seed as quickly as he can and naturally tries his best to obtain as good a seed as possible, but still a trader cannot be expected to take as much interest in cultivation as a Vellala farmer. There is a saying in Tamil "செட்டிக்கும் பயிருக்கும் ஜன்மபகை" to the effect that 'a trader bears a born hatred for crops.' Therefore, he has no interest in keeping the seed pure and clean and this forms a serious hindrance to the development of good farming.

It is thus a serious handicap to the cotton growing ryot, that although he may grow a good crop of cotton, he is not able to get the best cotton seed for his sowings next season ; but has to depend on inferior seed from the bazaar. The ryot is no doubt shrewd enough to select the best quality out of the seed available with the merchant, knowing as he does that 'he will reap only what he soweth.' If the seed is bad, the out-turn is bound to be low, but since only bad seed is available he has to sow bad seed and accept the low yield. The effect of this is that the ryot gradually gets dissatisfied and feels diffident about growing this crop. It is, therefore, no wonder that we hear in some villages ryots saying in Tamil "இந்த பழாய்ப்போன பருத்திபோட்டு, வெள்ளாமையே கெட்டுப் போச்சு," (or literally) 'by raising this cursed cotton crop our farming has been ruined.' Therefore if the crop is to be improved and the growers are to be benefited, it is necessary in the first instance to maintain a supply of pure seed.

Good seed of superior strains of Cambodia cotton was, for a time, obtained from the Agricultural Department and sown by the ryots here and there for a season, but as they sold away their produce as kapas, they could not stock their own seed for the next season and had therefore necessarily to look again, to the Agricultural Department for a supply of seed. But it was obviously impossible for the Agricultural Department to stock sufficient seed to meet the demands from all the ryots.

To meet the demands of the ryots as far as possible and eventually to make the ryots obtain their own seed supply, the Agricultural Department made arrangements to open 'Seed Farms' in a few selected Cambodia cotton growing villages in and around Avanashi-Tirupur. Selected ryots were given

pure strains of Cambodia cotton seed evolved by the cotton specialist in each of those selected villages under the condition that they should grow the crop pure as per methods of farming advocated by the Department and under the supervision of Departmental officers. The kapas was to be picked clean, carted to a ginnery at Tirupur, where after collecting the produce of all the ryots, it was to be ginned under the supervision of the officers of the Department. The lint was to be marketed and sold at a premium, but the seed was to be purchased by the Department to be stocked and sold to the ryots during the next season.

The Department has been following this system for the last five or six years, but it was found that, with the limited staff at its disposal, and with other items of propaganda work on hand, it was not in a position to produce seed for more than about 10,000 acres yearly, from a total of 1,000 acres of seed Farm area. On the other hand, in Coimbatore District alone the area under Cambodia cotton is a little over one lakh of acres. Therefore if the whole area of this cotton in this District alone, not to speak of the surrounding Districts, was to be supplied with pure seed, many more farms will have to be started, and far more seed produced and stocked in different important village centres, to be distributed to the growers in different villages. This would be possible only through co-operative organisations. Although the principle of co-operation is well known in many villages, it has not yet led to the formation of real Agricultural Societies, or even to partnerships for the introduction of agricultural improvements. Each ryot goes his own old way and looks to the Government for further development. Therefore the Department had to go a step further and induce the seed farm ryots to form into a co-operative organisation, as, a 'cotton seed society.' They could, thereby, get the initial supply of seed from the Department, raise the cotton crop pure, obtain under the auspices of these societies financial help they may need for cultivation expenses from the District Urban Bank, pick the kapas clean, gin the produce together, grade the stuff together, and market the same co-operatively, and get back the seed to the societies for distribution to themselves and to their brethren in the neighbourhood for sowings in the next season. They could thus keep up a continuous supply of pure seed and increase the supply by forming more of such societies.

In this way, ten such 'Seed Societies' were organised among the seed farm ryots in the Avanashi-Perumanallur centres and got registered with the aid and assistance of the Co-operative Department. There are now about two hundred members with an area of about 1,200 acres of pure strain of Co2 Cambodia cotton under these ten societies and the seed that may be obtained by these societies in the next season will be about 400,000 lbs. which will suffice for about 16,000 acres in the coming season.

In spite of the slump in the cotton trade, and the consequent low prices obtaining in the Tirupur market for this commodity, the ryot's lint has been always getting a higher price than the local market rate, which fact could be seen from the statement given below. Further, these seed farm ryots have been getting a premium of about Rs 6 on an average, per pothi of kapas (Seed Cotton 260 lbs.) over the prevailing market rates from 1924-25 to 1928-29 five years, and having thus a profit of about Rs 10 per acre on an average every year. This is purely the result of growing the seed pure and co-operative ginning and marketing, and does not take into account the profit or the increased out-turn that the ryot is able to get from these improved

strains and adopting the farming methods advocated by the Department in the cultivation of this crop.

Besides obtaining for themselves higher prices, pure cotton seed, and better out-turn of crop, four of these societies have been able to get each a breeding bull of the Kangayam type from out of the common good fund saved at Rs 0-4-0 a pothi produced by each ryot, and are maintaining the bulls in good condition. About 150 cows of the locality were served in all by these bulls in 1929 and all of them have received the Government grant of Rs 100 per year per bull, (except in one case where a grant of only Rs 50 was given as the bull had not recorded the prescribed minimum number of services that year). This enables the ryots of the locality to improve their cattle also, which is yet another benefit conferred upon them by the organisation and working of these 'Cotton Seed Societies.'

It is needless, therefore, to dilate further on the advantages that would accrue to the ryots by the formation of such co-operative organisations. If all the cotton growing ryots are willing to be really benefited they could organise themselves into co-operative organisations, raise the crops pure under the auspices of the societies concerned, gin the kapas, and market the produce co-operatively, and arrange to get back all the good seed for distributing the same to all for sowing in their own area. If such an organisation exist in every village, in one or two years the whole of Coimbatore District may hope easily to produce a pure commercial type of Cambodia cotton, which would win for itself a high reputation in the cotton market. They would thereby relieve the Agricultural Department of seed distribution work carried on now by them and leave them free to devote their attention and energy to other items of propaganda such as demonstration of better methods of farming, and tackling new villages and centres. These organisations will really be easy of achievement if only the leaders of the local public of this District who are all known to be enthusiastic co-operators would take an intelligent interest in farming.

**Abstract statement showing comparative year-var transactions of the Seed Farm Cambodia cotton crop under the Co-operative Seed Societies in Avanashi—Tiruppur Area up to June 1929**

Crop year	No. of Societies (Villages)	No. of ryots	Area of seed farm	Quantity of seed sown	Amount obtained as for cultivation expenses	Quantity of kapas produced			Quantity of lint obtained			Quantity of seed produced			Sale price of lint per candy	Market rate for lint on the day per candy	Sale price of seed per 1000 lbs.	Market price of seed per 1000 lbs.	Rate of kapas per pothie	Market rate of kapas per pothie	Extra price got by ryots per pothie of kapas	Extra income per acre													
						RS	A	P	M	lb	C	lb	lb	lb									RS	A	P	RS	A	P	RS	A	P				
1924-25	4	85	663	16575	19410	0	0	987	324	173	155	1609	10305	0	0	289	0	0	40	0	32	0	0	58	0	0	52	0	0	6	0	0	9	0	0
1925-26	6	152	1059	26475	20780	0	0	1781	822	276	112	2901	33274	0	0	245	0	0	35	0	27	0	0	50	0	0	42	0	0	8	0	0	13	9	7
1926-27	6	148	1047	26175	15680	0	0	2278	312	394	485	3643	73243	0	0	235	0	0	55	0	47	0	0	49	0	0	43	0	0	6	0	0	12	3	0
1927-28	9	184	1005	25125	9840	0	0	1821	421	310	19	2944	37255	0	0	245	0	0	50	0	42	0	0	50	0	0	45	0	0	5	0	0	9	0	9
1928-29	10	170	1126	28150	10760	0	0	1831	715	309	88	2990	34255	0	0	245	0	0	40	0	32	0	0	48	8	0	44	0	0	4	8	0	7	4	8

C=One candy of lint: (500 lbs.)

P=One pothie of kapas (seed cotton)—260 lbs.

The seed rate is usually 25 lbs. per acre.

The extra price calculated is the difference between the amount the ryot gets now by ginning and co-operative marketing and the amount they would get by selling their produce as kapas alone.