

# Madras Agricultural Journal

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## Editorial.

**Review of the Work of the District Economic Councils.** The Government have recently reviewed the work done by these councils during the quarter ending 31st December 1936. We are gratified to read there that 'the progress so far made is encouraging. The councils in most districts have completed or nearly completed the preliminaries necessary for starting work and a few councils have started some work.' We also note with satisfaction that during the period under review, a few councils have arranged for the training of persons in veterinary matters, in maternity and general rural reconstruction work, while many others have in addition carried out actual improvements in rural education, sanitation and water supply. It is also claimed that as a result of these endeavours, a desire to improve has been roused amongst the villagers—a really most encouraging feature for the future and a valuable *sinequanon* of the success of the present drive for rural uplift.

The Government have, while recognising the difficulties involved, stated that the villagers should be prepared to tax themselves if the improvements that have been initiated so far, and those that will be planned in the future were to prove to be of lasting benefit. While agreeing entirely to this useful dictum, we may state that the Indian ryot, with his age long traditions to contribute to the village funds for the maintenance of temples, festivities, and recreations, and for the repairs of tanks, wells and buildings, will quickly appreciate the justness of a levy for the continuance of beneficent activities of the present organisations. We wish however, to point out that advantage may be taken of the existing knowledge on the present position of these ancient village systems. In most villages these methods have fallen into disuse because of the loss of regard for the verdict and the experience of the village elders, and of the unwholesome increase of absentee landholders who generally take no interest in the village welfare. More important than either of these is the fact that the margin of savings from the agricultural incomes has become reduced to a nearly vanishing point.

If therefore any levy were to meet with adequate response, it is essential that programmes that aim at increasing the income of the cultivator must be set on foot in preference to works in other directions. It appears to us that greater importance should be attached



to items like making of composts introduction of high yielding crop varieties, development of fruit cultivation and of bee and poultry keeping, improvement of marketing methods, and the encouragement of cottage industries. Apart from these, early and efficient arrangements will have to be made to stop the drain of wealth from the village to the courts and money-lenders. We are sure that when the villager begins to enjoy the fruits of these endeavours, he will only be too glad to subscribe and thus pave the way for further work. We are afraid that till that stage is reached, voluntary contribution will not flow on a scale we wish to have. We should suggest as an alternative that a tax on agricultural incomes in each village above a certain minimum may be thought of for the development of the much needed work of rural reconstruction.

**Training of farmers' sons in practical agriculture.** In the July issue of this journal we referred to the Government's approval of a short course of training in practical agriculture to be given to 150 youths chosen from agricultural families. The scheme was primarily designed with a view to relieve unemployment amongst the educated and at the same time to direct their attention into activities which will be beneficial both to them and the country. It was therefore hoped that it would attract a large number of applicants.

We understand that the response from the above class had not been in some places as good as expected and that even those that turned up did not take kindly to the course. Among the several probable causes that may readily be ascribed to this turn of events, the more important appear to be that these men coming as they do with no experience of manual work, naturally evince certain disinclination to hard field work generally expected of tillers of soil. They moreover, do not seem to possess even rudimentary knowledge of the local conditions of crops or croppings and as such find it difficult to fit themselves up into the short course and to study intensively the aspects that will be useful to them later on their own farms. It seems to us that if greater stress were laid, at the time of selection of candidates for training, to the nature of agricultural experience they have had on their farms, this drawback would be easily got over and the success of the scheme would be better assured.

We would also urge in this connection that business aspect of farming has to be instilled in their minds at each stage of cultivation and that maintenance of complete costings of all operations and their later scrutiny are essential for their ultimate success. The students may in addition be made to visit, in company with the departmental officers, typical villages where high grade farming is practised. We feel sure that such visits will put them in personal contact with successful farmers and will create in them greater confidence and resourcefulness in their later life as agriculturists.



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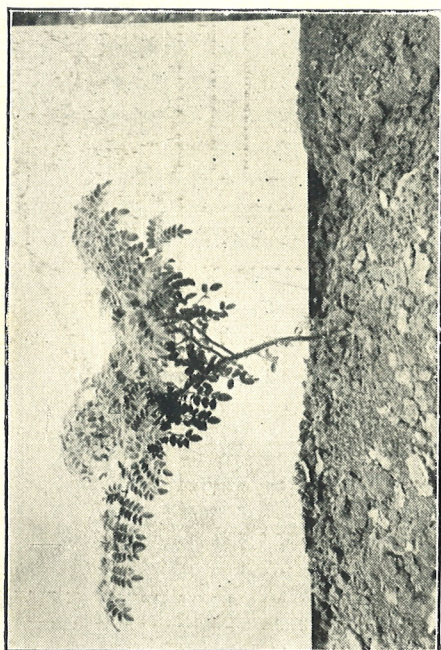
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