Conference will begin with a series of meetings in Adelaide, South Australia from August 22 to 31, followed by a 12-day tour of southern South Australia, Victoria and southern New South Wales to show delegates something of Australian research and agricultural practice. The final sessions will be held in Canberra, Australia's national capital, from September 13 to 15, 1949.

Mowing Checks Orchard Soil Erosion: An interesttng experiment in the control of soil crosion in a citrus grove has been in progress for three years at Kurrajong Heights, New South Wales, and the results have been particularly successful. The citrus grove was on steeply sloping land, and there was a continual loss of soil from water erosion. The owner of the property consulted the Department of Agriculture, and was advised to try controlling weed growth by mowing instead of cultivation. A small motor-operated mower was used whenever the weeds grew high enough to cut. Mown weeds were left on the ground. They provided a useful mulch in dry weather and decayed in the wet season to keep the soil in excellent physical condition. This practice preserved the mat of roots in the topsoil. Soil loss by erosion has been completely checked, even during periods of heavy rain. Only cultivation the orchard now receives is superficial treatment with a rotary hoe to a depth of 1½ inches, once a year when the main application of fertilizer is given. Improvement in the grove has been striking, and three other orchardists in the district have adopted the same methods.

Letters to the Editor

Further Experiences of an Educational Officer in Farming: Our Fruit Specialist was pleased to send for publication, extracts from the report I had sent him at his request. This was published under the title "Experiences of an Educational Officer in Fruit Farming" in Vol. No. XXXIV October 1947 of the Madras Agricultural Journal. This report has probably given readers an incorrect impression of this farm. That would not have mattered but for the fact that the article resulted in some letters to me from some farmers. With the repeated Editorial requests for brevity in mind, I shall be as brief as possible even at the risk of obscurity.

I planned a plan which differed from all the innumerable plans which made up the spate of plans for post-war and post-independence reconstruction experienced in recent years. While all the latter were made for the Government or someone else— chiefly Government, to carry out, mine had the unique feature that it was intended for me to work on, and it was not a Five year plan. I do not believe there is any magic in the figure Five. My favourite figure is three. In any case at my age, three years is a period long enough to look forward to. At the completion of my first three-year plan, I sent the above-mentioned report to the Fruit Specialist. Now, I have completed my second 3-year plan and commenced my third.

The two possible misconceptions are:— (1) That this farm is only an orchard. (2) That I am practising some combination of Hydroponics and soil-less culture compounding weird chemical mixtures, and juggling with pHs and other strange combinations of the alphabet.

I have my fair share of vanity (some would go further than that). In my vanity, I aimed at making this a "Pilot Farm" to demonstrate what scientific farming means. At the very outset I had to find the answers to two questions—what type of farming? What system of farming within the type? The answer to the first was obvious and that was "mixed Farming". The answer to the second was more difficult. It took me two three-year periods to find the answer. My third three-year plan is devoted to putting into practice, on an ever-increasing scale, the system evolved.

My system is "Mixed Diversified Farming" calculated to yield a profit and at the same time to build up the fertility of the soil. We have now an orchard, live stock (also "mixed" consisting of cattle including two stud-bulls presented by Sri G. V. Narayana, now Oil Seeds Specialist, goats, fowls and ducks), paddy, pulses, root crops and fodder i. e., grasses as well as deep-rooted and perennial and seasonal legume substitutes for lucerne.

Being a science graduate my idea of scientific farming was that of the Rothamsted School. All one has to do, I thought, was to use as manures various chemicals out of chemical factories. At the start there was a lot of them available which nobody wanted. Also groundnut cake of which I was buying some three tons annually for manure and cattle feed. Soon, fortunately very soon, I awakened to the fact that, instead of adopting practices which any ryot could copy, I had drifted into what few could imitiate. At the same time, the shortage of supplies began to develop. I foresaw "controls" would soon come in, which would effectively cut off all supplies. Even otherwise, I had strayed so far from my goal that I got alarmed lest I lose my bearings altogether.

About this time began a lot of talk and planning about starting ammonium sulphate factories by the Government of India. This brought forth a solemn warning against the use of Ammonium sulphate from Sir Albert Howard. I had never heard of him, yet I was intrigued. He must be somebody important for such a heterodox pronouncement to hit the newspaper head-lines. I found out and bought and read his books. Here, I thought, was an opportunity in my difficulty. And I took to composting by the Indore process. At first, I wondered—where is the organic waste on this desert of mine for composting? The most remarkable feature about this composting business is that if you set about it with determination, the more compost you make the more the organic waste you find you have overlooked which is asking to be composted. This composting is a great game that grows on you.

The last 12 months, I achieved something like a 100 tons of compost. One of the goals of my third three year programme is to achieve 500 tons of compost annually. I am confident I can do it.

The nett result is that I have recreated fertility in a goodly fraction of our acreage I don't need any soil analysts to tell me so; my plants and crops give me more reliable proof. During the last three years the only use I have put my sprayer to is whitewashing my buildings. The only insecticide I use is a little "Gammexane" in my seed-store; and to get rid of fleas and lice on my live-stock.

What is most important is that I no longer need buy any manures or fertilisers. Anybody is welcome to my quota of fertilisers and groundnut cake.

I have made my desert bloom like the rose.