Sri Lanka Tall (SLT)

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**Conservation**

Sri Lanka Tall (SLT) is conserved at the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute in Kasaragod (Kerala), and at the research stations in Aliyarnagar (Tamil Nadu), Ambajipeta (Andhra Pradesh) and Arsikere (Karnataka), India. Sri Lanka Tall is also maintained in Côte d'Ivoire.

**History**

Sri Lanka Tall was introduced to India in 1940. Among the six Talls from Sri Lanka, SLT resembles the West Coast Tall (WCT) of India in most morphological characters. However, some differences in fruit characters are noticeable. The weight of the fruit is slightly lower than that of WCT, while the kernel is thicker in the SLT. The husk proportion is higher in WCT (52.3%) than in SLT (40%). Harries (1971) reported that there is a similarity between the coconuts in East Africa, India and Sri Lanka. Based on DNA polymorphism and factorial correspondence analysis, the palms from India, Sri Lanka and West Africa formed a distinct group.

**Identification**

In Kasaragod, the palm grows up to 8-9 m with 36 leaves on the crown. The stem girth at 1 m from the ground level is 85 cm. Leaves are long with a strong and long petiole. There are about 345 leaflets which measure 128 cm long and 5.8 cm wide. The palms flower 10-12 years after planting. The palms are indirect self-pollinating type as there are intra- and inter-spadix overlappings. The fruits are medium-sized, but heavy. The husk content is slightly high. The kernel and shell are thick.

**Yield and production**

Fruiting starts 12 years after planting. The palm produces 70 fruits per year in Kasaragod; 68 in Aliyarnagar; and 83 in Arsikere. Fruits weigh about 1090g with nut weight of 648g. The copra content is 198g per nut in Kasaragod, and 120g in Arsikere.

**Other information**

Sri Lanka Tall is relatively tolerant to root (wilt) disease of Kerala. In Sri Lanka it has been crossed with Sri Lanka Green Dwarf under the name CRIC-65. The popular Tall variety (CRIC-60) of Sri Lanka is a cross between selected Sri Lanka Talls. In India, Sri Lanka Tall has not been used for breeding.

**References**

CPCRI. 1999. All India Coordinated Research Project on Palms (AICRPP) Annual Report Kerala, India.


Sri Lanka Tall (SLT)

20 cm
Sri Lanka Tall Ambakelle (SLT02)

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Conservation

Ten Sri Lanka Tall Ambakelle (SLT02) accessions representing more than 2500 living palms are conserved in international collections. This variety has been exported from Sri Lanka to Côte d’Ivoire, India, Jamaica, Thailand, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea.

History

In Sri Lanka, the coconut palm is known as the “tree of a hundred uses”. The oval photograph in the pictures plate shows one of these uses, which is religious, festive and unusual. The Sri Lanka Tall Ambakelle (SLT02) is not a traditional coconut type. It is a variety improved by Sri Lankan researchers, and known in that country as CRIC60. Since the 1960s, CRIC60 has acquired world popularity for its productivity and drought resistance. It is produced in the Ambakelle seed garden.

Identification

The SLT02 belongs to the same group of Talls originating from India and Africa. Compared to West African varieties, it produces fruits that, although oval, are heavier and of better composition, with more meat and less husk. Ripe fruits do not have the equatorial belt, a kind of pleat in the husk epidermis, which is frequently found in West African Talls. The stem is larger in diameter (by 8%) and has tighter leaf scars (by 8%); the leaflets are also narrower (by 9%).

Yield and production

In Côte d’Ivoire, CRIC60 starts flowering, on average, a little under six years after planting. It starts bearing on the 7th year, with 24 fruits per palm per year on average. From the 8th to 12th year, production fluctuates between 40 and 50 fruits per palm per year; it then continues to increase, yielding 76 and 102 fruits on the 16th and 17th year, respectively. The fruits weigh an average of 1349g and contain a nut weighing 827g; once dried, the 436g kernel gives around 270g of fairly oil-rich copra.

Other information

Controversy over the type of variety to be disseminated – hybrid or Tall coconuts – has been at the centre of discussions in Sri Lanka, where a hybrid between the Green Dwarf and the Sri Lanka Tall is distributed as CRIC65. Farmers, who have only cultivated Tall coconut palms for centuries, did not embrace this new hybrid variety. According to them, the husk fibres of the hybrids did not have exactly the same characteristics, the wood was of poorer quality, and the flavour of the meat was less pleasant. However, in terms of yield (number of nuts or meat weight), experimental results showed that hybrid CRIC65 was better than the improved Tall CRIC60. Its superiority is particularly expressed in the first 12 years, and then the difference fades and disappears. However, the first 12 years are clearly decisive for the profitability of a coconut planting. In the 1990s, Sri Lankan researchers designed an original experiment intended to select coconut palms with greater drought resistance. Embryos were removed from seednuts of variety CRIC60 and transferred to test tubes containing culture media with high concentrations of salts supposed to reproduce a kind of artificial drought. The few embryos that survived were grown and removed from the tubes. Some have reached the stage of adult coconut palms, which are currently being assessed for their drought resistance.

Reference

Sri Lanka Tall Ambakelle (SLT02)