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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE

Government of Madras

DEPARTMENT

G.O. No.
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Dated

6. 2. 1872 195

Not to be folded or roughly handled

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF REVENUE, dated 18th January 1872.

Read the following letter from C. T. LONGLEY, Esq., Collector of Salem, to the Secretary to the Board of Revenue, dated 19th December 1871, No. 3,935:—

With reference to the Board's Proceedings of the 12th November 1870, No. 6,619, I have the honour to send you a copy of an interesting report from the Sub-Collector on the culture of Tobacco in his division. The sample* alluded to in his report is herewith forwarded.

* Sent separately.

2. I much regret that through an oversight the submission of this report has been delayed.

ENCLOSURE No. 1.

From J. F. PRICE, Esq., Acting Sub-Collector, to the Collector of Salem, dated Oosoor, 18th July 1871, No. 427.

With reference to your official memorandum, No. 1,091, dated 23rd November last, I have the honour to intimate the despatch by rail of a parcel containing specimens of prepared and unprepared tobacco, procured from different parts of my taluqs. Each of these is labelled with the name of the taluq from which it has been procured.

2. Tobacco is not largely grown in this division; the chief reason being, I believe, that the Southern Taluqs of the district, especially Salem and Utengherry, produce a sufficiently large supply of good quality to meet the export demand, and that the plant is therefore cultivated here for local consumption only.

3. The tobacco of Darampoory is, in my opinion, the best. The soil of the gardens in which the first quality is raised, is black regur with which large quantities of "bratti" ash, house rubbish, and a little stable manure have been mixed. In Kistnagherry and the Oosoor Taluq the soil of the gardens is chiefly red; the sites selected are usually small plots adjoining the village, and sometimes fields of about half or three-quarters of an acre at a convenient distance from it, and the droppings of sheep and cattle form the chief part of the manure used. In regur soils, which have not been opened by a large admixture of ashes and like manures, tobacco in this division at any rate, is extremely indifferent both as regards size and quality. In the red soils it grows well if watered, but it never is, except, perhaps, in the case of very small gardens close to the village, and a tank or well.

4. It is difficult to give full particulars of the soil in which each specimen sent was grown. Those from the Darampoory Taluq have been raised in what may be considered almost an artificial soil, viz., the black regur (cotton earth) mixed with large quantities of ashes and other household manure. The soil in which that from Oosoor, Pennagaram, Denkenicottah, and Kistnagherry, has been raised is all of one kind, a red loam; but this is not manured in the same way as the Darampoory land, but by penning sheep and goats on it for a week or so, and adding to their dung that of cattle. Ashes, as the red soils are of themselves sufficiently open, are not used.

5. There appears to be but one mode of cultivation adopted all through the division; and the main differences in the quality of each particular sample of tobacco are the result of soil, manure and curing, and the accident of a crop raised in one place having been watered by a better and more seasonable fall of rain than another.

At the end of August, or beginning of September, the seeds are sown in small beds covered with the branches of the milk-hedge (*Emphorbia*) and the water is sprinkled on these, this device being one to supply the place of the European watering pot and to keep up a supply of moisture. At the same time, the ground in which the tobacco is to be raised is prepared. If it is a small garden and close to the village, it is hand-dug two or three times and a quantity of sweepings and ashes is thoroughly incorporated with the soil. If it is of larger size, and well outside the

village, it is manured, as I have before said, by penning sheep and goats on it and supplementing their manure with that of cattle. The ground is then well worked by cross ploughing at least five or six times. This is not all done at once, but at intervals during the time that the seedlings are growing. About six weeks after the time of sowing, the young plants, which require constant watering and protection, are about 4 or 5 inches high and ready for transplantation into the gardens or fields destined for their reception, and these have been finally prepared by making in them low ridges about a yard apart and a foot wide on top. On these the young plants are set out at intervals of about 18 inches. They are shaded and watered regularly until they have fairly taken root, and then, as far as my personal observation goes, and it has been frequent on this point, the plants are allowed to depend entirely upon the rains which, at this time, should be falling. Theoretically, they are irrigated once every five or six days. In about two months from the time of transplantation, the plants, under favourable circumstances, have grown to a height of from 2 to 3 feet and the flower shoots begin to appear. During this time they have been hoed and cleared of weeds some two or three times, and when they have reached the stage above indicated, they are earthed up, and the tops are either cut or pinched off, leaving a stem of about 18 inches or two feet. The lateral shoots thrown out by this operation are carefully removed as soon as they make their appearance, as, if allowed to grow, they would diminish the size and impair the quality of the main leaves, which should be from five to eight in number. About the end of January or beginning of February the larger leaves begin to assume a pale yellowish green colour which is considered an indication that the plants are ready for cutting. I have no doubt, from many specimens that I have seen, that much tobacco is spoiled owing to mistakes on this point which is, however, one in which the only guide is experience. The plants are now cut with a sharp knife as near the ground as possible, and are arranged in rows as cut. The cutting takes place in the morning and the plants are left that day to dry on the spot where they were cut. The careless grower leaves them in the same place for sometimes two or three days; but the more careful cultivator collects them the next morning and taking them to his house dries them by exposure for a fortnight to the sun and night dews, which alternately dry and soften them, the exposure of each side being for a week at one time. This done, the tobacco, enveloped in *Varaga*, and if that is not procurable, *Shannal* or flaggy straw, is placed in pits dug in the earth, covered up and left to ferment for a week, at the end of which time it is taken up and the leaves are stripped off the stems and made up into bundles. The stems and coarse bits of the leaves are retained either for snuff-making or for admixture with the tobacco sold to the poorest classes, and the bundles of leaves, which are squeezed together with the hand, are again put up in layers with straw, the ends of the bundles being exposed to the air and pressed for six weeks or two months by placing large stones on the pile, which every second day is opened and turned. At the end of this time, the tobacco is considered fit for use and is then made up in bundles, surrounded either with grass or straw, and stored.

6. There are slight differences in the periods of the curing operations, but the chief of them consist in varying the time during which it is finally packed before being pronounced ready for use. The success of such variations must, of course, depend very much upon atmospherical conditions, as, for instance, burying tobacco for a week during a very dry season would perhaps cure it to perfection, whilst the same operation, carried out during a very rainy season, would, in all probability, cause a complete failure.

7. It will be observed from the account which I have now given, that the most important and delicate operation of tobacco-curing, viz., hanging the leaves strung on cords to gradually dry in a cool and airy building and manipulating them during this process, is omitted by the natives of these parts. That it is unknown in India cannot be said, for, in the North Arcot District, which adjoins this, the practice of drying is generally observed. I imagine that the pressing and tying in bundles takes the place of the other mode of treatment, and that the tobacco grown in this division being intended for home and local consumption, the growers do not consider it worth their while to spend their time and money upon the more elaborate method of preparing it.

8. That exotic tobacco can be grown here with complete success I have long since ascertained by actual experiment, and had I not failed in the curing process, I have no doubt that the sample produced would have been an extremely good one. For the reasons which I have before given, I am unwilling to make any further experiments in this line at my private cost. I have, however, arranged to distribute the seed received by me to such persons as may be willing to give it a trial, and I will ascertain and report how it turns out.

(True Copy.)

(Signed) C. T. LONGLEY,
Collector.

The Board are much obliged to Mr. Price, the Sub-Collector, for his careful and interesting report which will be communicated to the Superintendent of Government Farms and to the Agri-Horticultural Society.

(True Copies and Extract.)

J. H. Remington
Sub-Secretary.

To the Superintendent, Government Farms.

.. the Honorary Secretary, Agri-Horticultural Society.

Copy to the Collector of Salem.

.. to the Secretary to Government, Revenue Department.

Exd. T. Cartledge.

4/13/85

Received 872. Dispatch

Board of Revenue,

MADRAS.

P. 505

PROCEEDINGS, 18TH JANUARY 1872, No. 126.

Copy 9 Feb 72

Encl.

Received 10/2

JANUARY.

No. 126.

Tobacco.—Report of Acting Sub-Collector of Salem on cultivation of—, in his division, communicated to Superintendent of Government Farms and to Agri-Horticultural Society.

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1 File Board of Revenue Feb 72

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K. S. S. S.
6 March 72