

# SAN RAMON – BIG WITH PROMISE

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The coconut variety San Ramon, introduced from Phillipines, has long been in this country, but its potential has been realised only recently. San Ramon palms are majestic trees, very tall and erect with stout trunks and massive boles. There are at least three colour forms: green, brownish red (russet) and an intermediate shade of orange green (bronze). The nuts are large and round with a thick kernel which constitutes about 50% of the nut. As the nut is very large and round, it is often thought that its kernel is less in thickness when compared with other varieties. However, the available data show that San Ramon kernel is 1.4 cm in thickness while in other varieties it is 1.35–1.37 cm. San Ramon has the advantage of producing copra with a low Cost of Production since it has a very high copra content of 350–400 g. per nut while in other varieties it varies from 210–225 g. The commercial producer will benefit considerably in growing San Ramon as it will give about 2000 kg of copra per acre. Even though the number of nuts per palm is less in this variety compared with other improved varieties, the much greater size of nut more than compensates resulting in more copra per palm per year.

When considering the fibre industry, the amount of husk in the nut is also quite satisfactory. As the nut is large the probability of each individual fibre being long is more, although further research may be needed to ascertain the quality of fibre present. The shell of San Ramon is very thin and fragile. Because of this, there is a risk of damage to the nut during picking.

A special feature of San Ramon is its drought tolerance. This variety gave very high yields in years during which the general coconut yields were very low. For example, 1984 was very unfavourable for coconuts because of the prolonged drought of 1983 resulting in a substantial reduction in average number of nuts per palm. However, during this period San Ramon palms often yielded about 100 nuts/palm with husked nut weight over one kilogram and about 40 kg of copra/palm/year.

Various crosses using San Ramon are now under way; the main object is to transmit the drought tolerant nature of San Ramon and also its high copra outturn to the progeny.