

Field Handbook

Oil Palm Series

Volume 2

Immature

Objectives

Standards

Equipment

Materials

Procedures

Frequency

Timing

Task

Records

Environment

Safety

Notes



Ian Rankine and Thomas Fairhurst

Field Handbook
Oil Palm Series **Volume 2**
Immature
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Introduction

Over the past 40 years, the area planted to oil palm in Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Pacific Region has increased from 145,000 ha to 5,000,000 ha, in response to a large increase in the world demand for vegetable oils. During this period, estates have become larger as the potential for economies of scale in plantation management have been exploited. Plantation staff at all levels are now expected to manage much larger areas, in an era of unprecedented technological change. As a result of the rapid expansion in the oil palm industry, there is presently a shortage of qualified and experienced planters in all oil palm areas.

Meticulous attention to detail in nursery and plantation development, and field management as well as scrupulous care in the use of resources (land, labour, equipment and materials) is required if potential profitability is to be achieved in the present economic climate. The pace of change today means that managers have to gain and implement knowledge to achieve best planting practices much more rapidly than ever before. The trend of accelerated technological and information change will continue in the future, making change and rapid response to market economics an integral part of oil palm management. However, in order to attract quality personnel, plantation owners must convince new recruits that they are entering a profession in which they can develop and thrive. Clearly, this requires an investment in training and development.

During visits to plantations, we meet staff at all levels of management, who are in search of a set of consistent guidelines containing all the essential information required to implement each field operation properly. Frequently, managers have to repeat instructions, because an agreed set of standards and procedures is lacking. We also sense that junior staff frequently make mistakes in the field, not because they lack motivation, but because they are not properly informed of what is expected of them.

In the past, each planter went through a time-honoured process of training, starting as a cadet in charge of a small number of staff and area of oil palm. It was common for a newly appointed estate manager to have already accumulated 15 years of experience. Modern managers are expected to acquire the necessary knowledge and experience more rapidly, and this series of handbooks, released to coincide with 150 years of commercial oil palm planting in South East Asia, aims to contribute to this requirement. The Oil Palm Series draws on the wealth of experience and knowledge available and has been designed to contain all the essential information for each aspect of management in a clear, consistent and user-friendly layout. Each job is clearly described in terms of the objective, standard, equipment and materials, frequency, timing and task applicable for each task.

The handbooks form part of a suite of information, training and software aids for the oil palm industry, available from the Potash & Phosphate Institute.

Ian Rankine and Thomas Fairhurst

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Every oil palm planter who has participated in this dynamic industry over the past 150 years has made a contribution to these handbooks, through their example and search for improved field practices. We hope these handbooks will help estate managers to develop innovative and attractive management systems for oil palm plantations.

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