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SAMPLING FOR NEMATODE ANALYSIS

(This Advisory Circular replaces Circular No. N 1, Serial No. 2/85, issued in March 1985)

1. Introduction

Tea Nematodes are microscopic organisms, some species of which inhabit the tea plant and the soil around. Besides parasitizing their hosts, and weakening them, they interfere with the smooth uptake of water and soil nutrients, leading to severe nutrient imbalance.

The economically important nematode pests of tea are the following:

Pratylenchus loosi Loof – “root-lesion nematode” or “meadow eelworm”,
Radopholus similis (Cobb) Thorne – “burrowing nematode”, and
Meloidogyne brevicauda Loof – “root-knot nematode” (young and mature tea).

The distribution and preponderance of these species vary from location to location. In certain locations (such as in Uva, Mid country and in Deniyaya), the first two species may be found together, whilst in others (like *P. loosi* in Up country) they may exist singly. *M brevicauda* is now confined to one location, Kabaragala Estate in Padiyapelella, and may be found singly or in combination with *P loosi*.

2. Symptoms of damage

The typical symptoms are a slow decline in growth with the leaves turning a pale-yellow colour, and afterwards leading to premature flowering and fruiting of the bush.

3. Sampling for Diagnostic Purposes

Early detection helps to check the spread of nematode infestation. It could also curtail the extent of damage by enabling the adoption of appropriate and timely corrective measures. Such vigilance is most essential amongst newly planted young tea fields. Infestation can only be confirmed by microscopic examination of soil and root samples.

Soil and root sampling in the nursery/field should be assigned to a responsible person and be carried out under close supervision. An analytical report would only be as good as the sample submitted.

The procedure adopted at sampling in a mature tea field is different from that adopted in a new clearing and that adopted for nursery plants.