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## ASIAN COCONUT COMMUNITY

In July 1970, Mr A. Harris, Programme Director (Economic), visited the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East in Bangkok and established contact with the recently formed Asian Coconut Community. This Information Circular briefly outlines the nature and possible significance of the Community and the relationship established between the South Pacific Commission and the Asian Coconut Community.

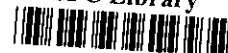
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The coconut industry in Asia and the Pacific islands has much in common. Firstly, the coconut palm is a source of food and shelter, income, and foreign exchange. Secondly, the industry is generally stagnating in spite of rising demand, and the marketing and processing methods are generally inefficient.

In order to overcome some of these problems a group of Asian countries together with ECAFE officials gathered in 1968 to discuss what action could be taken. It was decided that a regional organisation - the Asian Coconut Community - should be established to enable a co-ordinated and concerted attack on the problem to be made.

The potential importance of the Asian Coconut Community is indicated by the fact that about 80% of the world's coconut production and international trade in coconut products is accounted for by the member countries - Ceylon, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand. The Community's functional structure, consisting of five divisions, reveals the type of work that is planned. The divisions are: production and protection, processing and by-product utilisation, trade and markets, investment and finance, and lastly, the publication, information, statistics, education and training division. The results of the Community's efforts should be relevant to Pacific islands in considering the future of their coconut industry.

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The possible importance of the Community to the Pacific islands is also shown by the application for membership made by Fiji and Western Samoa. However, as only States which are members of ECAFE are eligible for membership, many of the Pacific islands are excluded from direct membership.

To assist in overcoming this problem the South Pacific Commission has been in contact with the Community, and has been invited to attend the Community's meetings with observer status. In this capacity the Commission can present the views of the Pacific islands on problems of the coconut industry that concern them. It has also been agreed that there should be an exchange of information on all aspects of the industry. As this information is received the Commission will distribute it to the islands for their use.

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