

Coconut

#8



Botanical name: **Cocos nucifera**

Common name: **Coconut**

Tongan name: **Niu**

Other names:

DESCRIPTION & USES

Scientific name - *Cocos nucifera*, Tongan name - *Niu*.

Almost all crops in Tonga are intercropped with coconuts. Commonly known as the tree of life, the products of the coconut palm are used for many purposes, including food for human and animal consumption, fuel and building materials. Coconut products, chiefly copra, fresh and whole nuts are sources of exports earnings.



KINGDOM OF TONGA



Coconut

PRODUCTION NOTES

Climate: Coconut trees require a minimum of 1300mm of rain, warm temperatures, abundant sunshine and high relative humidity.

Soil: Requirements for coconuts are free-draining, light soils. The palms can withstand soil salinity but are intolerant of waterlogging.



Propagation: Seeds are germinated in seedbeds and transplanted as seedlings, usually about 30 weeks of age when three leaves have developed.

Planting density: Spacing of about 9m x 9m is commonly used when crops are grown between palms, or 50 palms/ac.

Intercropping: Crop production under coconuts is widespread. It is not possible where palms are closely planted, or before they have grown to a reasonable height. Tall crops such as bananas and cassava should not be planted closer than 3m from the young coconut palms or they will provide too much competition. Spacing of 8m x 15m (or wider) should allow for intercropping. Tractor ploughing closer than 2m to coconut trees can seriously damage root growth, and therefore, productivity and life of the trees.

Pests and diseases: The main pests of coconut palms in Tonga are the rat, rhinoceros beetle, stick insect, coconut flat moth and coconut spike moth.

Growth period: Palms normally start to bear after 6 to 7 years and are in full production at 15 to 20 years old. The expected productive life is 60 years.

Processing: It takes approximately 5000 nuts to make 1 tonne of copra. To make copra the nuts are opened, then left in the sun to dry so as to make meat extraction easier. The meat or green copra is then dried by the sun or hot air kiln to produce copra at a rate of 55 percent by weight. Sun drying requires 60 to 80 hours of sunshine within a 10 days period or copra will be spoiled. Hot air kilns are usually made from old drums and corrugated iron. Discarded husks are used as fuel.

Marketing Notes:

Copra prices tend to be volatile, depending on world market prices. Some coconuts are sold in the market and export as green nuts or whole mature nuts. Prices for these other end uses are generally higher than for copra production.

[For more information](#)

Address: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests (MAFF)