

Book review

Kranz, J., H. Schmutterer and W. Koch (Eds) in collaboration with 152 scientists: Diseases, pests and weeds in tropical crops. Verlag Paul Parey, Berlin and Hamburg, 1977; 666 pp., 238 figures, 6 tables and 251 illustrations in colour; bound DM 98.

The book was initiated with support from the German Agency for Technical Cooperation in order to make background information easily available to those working in crop protection, to extension workers, agronomists and horticulturists in the tropics and subtropics.

The book covers diseases, pests and weeds of the major tropical crops in one volume. Emphasis is on symptoms, biology, ecology and control of the causal agents. Texts were written by 152 authors, all of whom can claim personal experience in their subjects, gained largely in the field.

To keep the volume concise, a limited number of the more pertinent examples was selected. Since all authors were asked to deal with their subjects under specific headings the book is highly systematic.

The order of presentation within the parts devoted to diseases, pests and weeds is by classes of pathogens and orders or families of pests and weeds, respectively. Literature references have been added to the text on the various harmful agents. Though limited in number these references are helpful to the reader who wants more detailed information. Apart from a general index a comprehensive host index guides the reader to organisms affecting a given crop.

Forty pages are devoted to diseases caused by viruses and viroids, followed by chapters on mycoplasmas (10 pages) and bacteria (32 pages).

The fungal diseases (162 pages) form an important section. Unfortunately there are many misprints and linguistic errors in the introductory pages on the various fungal groups; lack of captions to the figures is not fully allocated by explanations in the text.

Nematodes are dealt with on 19 pages. An introduction and general information on parasitic nematodes is supplemented by detailed treatment of eight specific pests.

There is a short chapter on mites (11 pages) and an extensive one, surprisingly without a general introduction, on insects (263 pages).

Vertebrate pests – birds and rodents – are discussed briefly only (9 pages). Since several slug and snail species are pests of rice, vegetables and other crops in the tropics, the exclusion of molluscs is regrettable.

Weeds (71 pages) form the final chapter.

The book is beautifully illustrated both in black and white and in colour. It is a major source for reference and gives a good survey of the present status of plant protection in the tropics and subtropics and is a laudable example of international scientific cooperation.

It is to be appreciated that the editors were not discouraged by the large number of pesticides nowadays available, but have dared to give the present state of affairs on pesticides, amounts and concentrations (all expressed in metric system measures).

The book will be useful to those active in crop protection in developing countries, whereas students with interest in this field can use it as a textbook. However, it has to be realized that a choice was made among the harmful agents in the world of plant protection.

J. van Dinther and D. Mulder