



## Editorial

The *Journal of Tropical Agriculture* has had a long (44-year) and illustrious tradition of publishing papers on a variety of academic subjects relating to agriculture. Ever since the first issue of the journal (initially biennial in frequency) was published in March 1961 as the “*Agricultural Research Journal of Kerala*”—under the distinguished editorship of Professor CKN Nair—this journal remained a preferred medium of publication for the academia not only in Kerala, but also in other parts of south Asia and the tropical Africa. Furthermore, many of the papers published in this journal formed the basis for evolving crop husbandry practices for the state of Kerala—periodically compiled by the Kerala Agricultural University as the “*Package of Practices Recommendations: Crops*”.

The scientific community has indeed broken new ground in many directions, and year by year it finds how it can improve its methods and develop fresh usefulness. Its constant effort is to evolve solutions to the pressing problems of the farmers. What Shri S.K. Patil, former Minister for Food and Agriculture in the Government of India noted in his message of March 9, 1961 to the inaugural issue of this journal is perhaps relevant even today. He wrote at a time when the scientific underpinnings of Indian agriculture was rather fragile, that “agriculture is no longer an occupation of merely traditions and practices. Depending upon individual resources and enterprise, it is becoming more and more a scientific undertaking in which scientific knowledge is playing an increasing part in making this occupation more fruitful”.

Obviously, today there are several contemporary challenges facing *agriculture* in general, and *research* in particular. As a leading vehicle for scientific communications, this journal encourages authors to submit manuscripts reporting the results of innovative research on all aspects of agricultural production in the tropics. In addition to the regular ‘experimental’ studies, manuscripts that present farm-based research or that emphasise the relevance of the work to local stakeholders, besides topical reviews on themes of current relevance are welcome. The spread of articles, however, has—of necessity—to depend upon what readers want and authors submit, but it is our intention to encourage, wherever possible, a wide pan tropical approach. To reflect the changing needs and relevance of the journal articles, the journal has been re-christened as it is at present since June 1993 (i.e., starting with volume 31). Furthermore, encouraged by a newly appointed editorial board, we redefined the remit of the journal (see inside cover). Corresponding changes were also effected in the layout and cover.

Last, but not the least, a word about the period from submission of a manuscript to publication; this can be protracted and occasionally frustrating. Nevertheless, since, I took over as editor in April 2004; I have been looking at ways to process manuscripts as efficiently as possible. We believe a more rapid turnaround of manuscripts is in the best interests of readers, contributors and also authors considering submitting their manuscripts to the journal. We are also keen to increase the rate of turnaround of the manuscripts further. We are gratified that many of our reviewers complete their evaluation within the target three-week period. The longest part of the whole process, is inevitably, the period during which the authors respond to the reviewers’ comments. This period is sometimes prolonged, especially if the revised manuscripts are subject to further review. Our rejection rate is currently *ca* 40% of the manuscripts submitted (for the 80 manuscripts received between January 2003 and October 2004).