



Basal Stem Rot: Fungi

Why in News

Researchers from **Kerala** have identified **two new species of fungi** from the **genus *Ganoderma*** that are **associated with coconut stem rot disease**.

Key Points

▪ About:

- The two fungi species are ***Ganoderma keralense* and *G. pseudoapplanatum***.
- The **butt rot or basal stem rot of coconut** is known by several names in different parts of India: Ganoderma wilt (Andhra Pradesh), Anaberoga (Karnataka) and Thanjavur wilt (Tamil Nadu), to mention a few.
- The infection begins at the roots, but symptoms include **discolouration and rotting** of stem and leaves. In the later stages, flowering and nut set decreases and finally the coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera*) dies.
- A reddish brown oozing is seen. This oozing has been reported only in India.
- Once infected, recovery of the plants is not likely. Not surprising then, that this causes a huge loss: By some estimates made in 2017, in India, around 12 million people are said to depend on coconut farming.
- Another sign of infection is **presence of shelf-like “basidiomata,”** which are the fruiting or reproductive structures of the fungus, on the tree trunks.

▪ Fungi:

- Fungi can be **single celled or very complex multicellular organisms**.
- They are found in just about any habitat but **most live on the land**, mainly in soil or on plant material rather than in sea or freshwater.
- A group called the **decomposers grow in the soil** or on dead plant matter where they play an important role in the cycling of carbon and other elements.
- Some are **parasites of plants causing diseases** such as mildews, rusts, scabs or canker.
- A very small number of fungi cause diseases in animals. In humans these include skin diseases such as **athletes' foot, ringworm and thrush**.

Source: TH